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LGBTI - the new media target in place of Roma?

(The image of minority and vulnerable groups in Bulgarian media)

Summary

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1. Introduction

This is a summary of a report, issued on 23/06/2023, which examines how Bulgarian media portrayed traditional minority groups, specific vulnerable groups such as LGBTI, as well as migrants from the Middle East, North Africa, and Ukraine, crossing or residing in the country. The research pays particular attention to the use of hate speech against these groups in the media.

The concept and conduct of the study are motivated by the harsh reality in countries like Bulgaria, which have made transition from authoritarianism to democracy, but are still coping with many unresolved problems in the political, economic and social spheres. These problems, as a rule, generate distrust, fear and hatred of the Other, who is seen as a threat to social systems, order and security, and the future of the nation. Factors such as the intensified global migrations; the rise and the crisis of the neoliberal ideology with the distortion of basic principles of political correctness; the rise of nationalisms and populism; the triumph of the Internet and social media that have made access to and dissemination of information but also disinformation easier than ever have all contributed to the amplification of these attitudes among the public. All these phenomena are manifested to one extent or another in the former communist countries of Eastern Europe and are particularly relevant in Bulgaria, the poorest and most corrupt country in the EU. The Bulgarian society is always between the idealisation of "traditional values", which are as a rule conservative and patriarchal, and political correctness, which sometimes takes distorted forms that prevent real problems from being named and solved.

Against this background, Bulgarian media, which is experiencing a crisis under the pressure of digitalisation, on the one hand, and changing economic models, on the other hand, function precariously in a neurotic, confused, and increasingly aggressive society.

Taking into consideration these socio-political realities, we monitored leading and popular Bulgarian media in order to study the media image of minority and vulnerable groups. The research efforts focused mainly on the attitudes, including hate speech manifestations, towards: Roma, Turks (excluding publications about the Movement for Rights and Freedoms party), Bulgarian Muslims (Pomaks), Jews, Armenians, Macedonians (referring to those Bulgarian citizens who claim Macedonian identity in the population censuses), the LGBTI community, but also migrants, including from Ukraine (Ukrainian refugees).

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2. Methodology

The survey of Bulgarian media for this report covers the period January-February 2023. The selection of relevant publications for the analysis was done through a systematic Google search (based on a set of keywords). A total of 13 key media outlets were monitored: the news websites of bTV, Nova TV, BNT and BNR, the online editions of the daily newspapers *Telegraph*, *24 Hours*, *Trud*, the news-analytical websites *Dnevnik*, *Sega*, *Darik News*, *Epicenter*, *Glasove* and the weekly *Weekend*, which is published only on paper.

The research is based on the method of standardised quantitative content analysis. It allows to cover large amounts of material over long periods of time with the aim of their objective selection, i.e. coding according to specific pre-defined categories. The monitoring methodology includes a manual for the research and coding of publications in the relevant media, as well as samples of basic tables for content coding of each edition (so-called coding diaries).

The researched content was coded on the basis of the following pre-defined categories: minority group/vulnerable group, genre, author, and attitude (of the journalist/author) toward them. The 'attitude' category was broken down into five sub-categories: 'positive and rather positive' attitude, 'neutral', 'negative and rather negative', 'negative with hate speech', 'can't judge'. For a better orientation in the attitude of journalists or media towards particular minorities and vulnerable groups, we took guidance from the Code of Ethics of the Bulgarian Media (2004), which states:

*"2.5.2. We will not indicate race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, mental or physical condition if these facts do not bear significant relevance to the meaning of the information."*²

As for "hate speech", which is criminalised in the Bulgarian Penal Code, there are different definitions. For the purpose of this analysis, we used the definitions provided by the Association of European Journalists - Bulgaria (AEJ):

(i) *"Expression of hostility, discrimination, intolerance directed at people on the basis of a particular group characteristic - race, ethnic or national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, etc."* (ii) *"Intolerance promoted as aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility towards minorities, migrants and people with an immigrant background."* (iii) *"Approval or denial of genocide or crimes against humanity recognised by an international court decision are also included in the category of 'hate speech'."*³

The report is structured as follows: after the introduction and explanation of the methodology, a generalized image of minority and vulnerable groups in the researched media is presented. The media's attitude towards individual minority and vulnerable groups is then analysed, as well as the language of hatred towards them, if any. This is followed by a kind of short portraits of the individual media, based on their attitude towards the Others and a conclusion. There are two appendices to the report: the first contains the instructions for coding the media content, and the second - the titles of all the selected publications; enriched with 25 tables.

² National Council for Journalistic Ethics, <https://mediaethics-bg.org/%D0%B5%D1%82%D0%B8%D1%87%D0%B5%D0%BD-%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B5%D0%BA%D1%81-2/>

³ Spassov, Theodor, Rada Naslednikova, Simona Veleva (2021). Hate speech is not just words. Guidelines for journalists (in Bulgarian). Association of European Journalists – Bulgaria (AEJ), Sofia, https://aej-bulgaria.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/not_just_words_2.pdf

3. Generalised image of minority and vulnerable groups in the media

In the course of the study, we selected 739 publications matching the specified categories and subcategories. As illustrated by the data in Table 1, the Bulgarian media most often informs about migrants - 63% (465 publications) of the researched material. These publications are twice as many as all other publications about minority and vulnerable groups combined. This can be explained by the large migrant flows during the period under review, coming from the Middle East and North Africa, and passing through Bulgaria in the direction of Western Europe. It can be assumed that the increased disclosure of the channels of illegal trafficking of migrants by the law enforcement authorities also contributes to the total dominance of the "migrant" issue in the news stream compared to other "minority" topics. Against this background, the relatively low number of publications on migrants from Ukraine - 31 (4%) - is striking. It can be explained by the transformation of the dynamics of the refugee flow from Ukraine, which peaked immediately after the Russian aggression against this country in early 2022.

Roma and LGBTI groups come second and third with approximately the same number of publications: 99 (13%) and 89 (12%). The fourth position is taken by publications on the "Jewish" theme - 32 publications (4%). Their focus is on the Holocaust anniversary and the fate of Bulgarian Jews, rather than specific cases involving members of this minority group in the present.

Statistically insignificant in relation to the examined population are the publications about Armenians (9), Turks (7), Bulgarian Muslims (5) and two dossiers coded in the subcategory Other. At the same time, it should be noted that the monitoring did not find any publications about Macedonians.

Table No.1: Minority group/vulnerable group category

Minority/Vulnerable group	No. of publications	%
Migrants	465	62,92
Ukrainians (migrants)	31	4,2
Roma	99	13,4
LGBTI	89	12,04
Jews	32	4,33
Armenians	9	1,22
Turks	7	0,95
Bulgarian Muslims (Pomaks)	5	0,68
Other	2	0,27
Macedonians	-	-
	739	100.01

Source: own research, January-February 2023.

NB: Percentages total more than 100 due to rounding in individual subcategories.

The media outlet with the largest number of publications on the studied issues is *24 Hours*, with 142 publications (65% of them are about migrants plus two publications about refugees from Ukraine; 17% - about LGBTI; 13% - about Roma, etc.). Second is *Trud* with 90 publications (nearly 60% are about migrants plus eight pieces about refugees from Ukraine; 1/5 - about LGBTI; six publications are on "Jewish" topics, etc.). Next is the news website of the Bulgarian National Radio (BNR) with 79 publications (2/3 of them are about migrants plus four pieces about refugees from Ukraine; nearly 1/5 are about Roma; six publications are about LGBTI, etc.). During the observation period, the bTV news website had 71 publications relevant to the topic of the study

(almost 2/3 of them on "migrants" plus 5 on refugees from Ukraine; 13% on Roma; 3 publications on Roma and Armenians for each group, etc.). The Nova TV news website has 60 publications (almost 70% of them are on "migrant" topics plus 8 publications on Ukrainian refugees; 6 publications are on Roma; 5 on LGBTI, etc.), *Telegraph* - 57 publications, BNT news website and *Epicentre* - 47 publications each, *Darik News* - 38 publications, *Weekend* - 36 publications, *Dnevnik* - 33 publications, *Sega* - 20 publications, *Glasove* - 19 publications.

Coverage of minority and vulnerable groups – predominantly news-related and impersonal items

In the total set of studied publications, the informational texts - shorter or longer news items, correspondence, etc., clearly dominate. They account for almost 90% of the publications. It is normal to have fewer analytical texts given the complex subject of minorities. Interviews, reports, interpretive texts and portraits account for 12% of the total number of publications.

Since the vast majority of the publications are informative texts, it is not surprising that as many as 55 percent of the materials, in many cases shorter news items, are not signed by individual authors. Forty percent of the publications are written by journalists. Only 16 percent are authored by experts and even fewer - six, by politicians. The modest representation of the two subcategories as authors of publications can be seen as indirect evidence of the more superficial interest of the Bulgarian media in the issues, which are subject of this study. It is noteworthy that not a single author has been identified as a member of a minority or vulnerable group.

4. The media's attitude towards minority and vulnerable groups

Specifics of the "migrant influx" in the mainstream media

As shown in Table 2, the number of stories about migrants in the monitored media is many times higher than all the stories about other minority and vulnerable groups combined. The following storylines emerged in the media coverage:

- Information about chasing/capture of migrants by the authorities and trafficking in migrants;
- Political use of the topic: for PR, most often by the Attorney General's Office; for attacking political opponents, most often by the political party GERB (the ruling party 2009-2020), but also by the Attorney General's Office against the Interior Minister of the political party "We Continue the Change" (the lead coalition partner in the government 2021-2022), as well as against the caretaker government appointed by President Radev (2021);
- The tragedy with 18 migrants who died in the village of Lokorsko, near Sofia;
- International perspective -- how Europe and the world views the problem;
- An expert view on the migrant issue.

The majority of the monitored media do not have a clearly defined attitude towards the migrant issue and the fate of the migrants themselves. The attitude towards them is rather passive; it is rarely sympathetic, but it is not negative either, most often it is generally neutral. Such are over 90% of the publications ("Siyka Mileva: Organisers of trafficking in Bulgaria are being investigated", bTV, 16.01.2023; "After a chase, 10 migrants from Afghanistan were caught in the car of a drugged driver near Ihtiman", *24 Hours*, 27.02.2023). Eight percent of all 465 publications about migrants are generally positive towards them or their group ("Syrian with a barber shop in

Sofia: There is no life there, there is an hour of electricity a day", bTV, 20.02.2023; "Krum Zarkov: Let's stop talking about people, even refugees, as locusts", BNT, 17.02.2023) There is no material that can be defined as negative, and there are no publications with hate speech. As a rule, the publications monitored lack the migrant point of view.

The publications on migrants, which are mostly shorter or longer information texts, do not have a proactive attitude, the media has a reactive approach to the daily problematic and sometimes tragic migrant stories. Media rarely sent their own reporters to the scene, hardly ever invited experts, and most often used information and commentary from other media. The fate of the migrants themselves was rarely in focus. The tragic case near the village of Lokorsko in Sofia, in which there were many dead and injured, was an exception to some extent. Nevertheless, like in other tragic events involving migrants and minorities in Bulgaria, sensationalism prevailed at the expense of humanity and understanding ("Terrible tragedy: 18 migrants found dead near Sofia", *Telegraph*, 17.02.2023; "See photos of the coffin truck in which 18 migrants died", *Trud*, 18.02.2023).

The overall approach, however, is careful and does not go to extremes. Although some publications inform about "migration pressure", the monitored publications did not present migrants as a major threat to the country and did not generate hatred and anti-immigrant feelings. The aspect of migrant trafficking and law enforcement's handling of them is much more in focus.

The news-analytical websites *Sega* and *Dnevnik*, which are quality editions, and the public BNR, have a different attitude on the topic compared to the other monitored media. The media's distinctly informational approach in these two media channels to this topic is enriched with more background and context to the facts. The sensationalism is seriously limited; priority is given to the serious discussion of the topic. These media published in-depth analyses of the causes of trafficking ("5 awkward questions about trafficking in migrants", *Sega*, 20.02.2023; "When migrants are turned into a business", *Dnevnik*, 27.02.2023). They devoted their own journalistic resources in the coverage of the topic and invited serious experts. BNR also published an interview with Georgi Bardarov, a writer and university lecturer, which focused on the topic of migrants as an opportunity for Bulgaria ("Associate Professor Georgi Berdarov: We are seeing huge migrations on the ground" , BNR, 9.01.2023).

Table No.2: Attitudes towards migrants

Type of attitude	No. of publications	%
Neutral	428	92,04
Positive and rather positive	37	7,96
Negative and rather negative	-	-
Negative, with hate speech	-	-
I can not judge	-	-
	465	100

Source: own research, January-February 2023.

Unlike the publications about the African and Asian migrants, the articles about the Ukrainian refugees are written almost entirely in a positive tone ("Young Ukrainian artists arrange charity exhibition in Varna," (*Trud*, 21.02.2023), is just one example). This is the case with nearly 85% of the publications about this vulnerable group; four articles are neutral and only one is negative. *Reduced anti-Roma discourse, but without a qualitative change*

In 40 percent of the publications informing or, less frequently, analysing problems of the Roma community, the attitude towards its representatives or the group can be defined as neutral. In almost 1/3 of the publications the attitude follows different registers of the positive tone. In another 1/3 of the publications, however, the attitude is predominantly negative, with 10 publications visibly "stamped" with hate speech. By comparison, hate speech occurs occasionally, as an exception, in relation to the other minority and vulnerable groups covered by this study.

Despite the seemingly balanced coverage of the Roma presented above, the real weight of hate speech tips the scales towards the predefined, negative attitude which has dominated the media in the last three decades. The media image of the Roma, which has seemingly evolved towards a more neutral one, still implicitly contains rather negative components. Media attention focuses on criminal stories (domestic crimes, police actions against crime in neighbourhoods, vote buying). Expressions such as "a group of Roma attacked", "five Roma attacked", "a Roma businessman has screwed up his friends, blackmailing them for money and causing turmoil in the ranks of the Roma mafia", etc. are common. Roma persons rarely have the voice, their point of view is generally missing from the media "narrative". ("Roma beat and robbed a 25-year-old in Velingrad, they were detained", *24 Hours*, 16.01. 2023; "Roma attacked doctors in Vratsa after a car crash which caused the death of a child", *Trud*, 10.01.2023; "Seven bullets for a Gypsy baron after racketeering", *Trud*, 14.01.2023, "Two Roma families fought in Montana, a policeman was injured", *24 Hours*, 19.02.2023)

The widespread practice of suggesting that the ethnic origin of the perpetrator (Roma) is the root cause of the criminal act persists and it is a characteristic approach only in the portrayal of Roma. When the media reports a crime committed by an Armenian or a Turk, the description is neutral, without logical linking of the act with ethnicity, in all monitored publications, as a rule.

Table No.3: Attitude towards Roma

Type of attitude	No. of publications	%
Neutral	40	40,40
Positive and rather positive	28	28,28
Negative and rather negative	21	21,21
Negative, with hate speech	10	10,10
I can not judge	-	-
	99	99,99

Source: own research, January-February 2023.

NB: Percentages total less than 100 due to rounding in individual subcategories.

The media coverage of the Roma during the observation period displayed some new approaches as well. On the one hand, there was a visible reduction in the number of anti-Roma articles in *24 Hours* and *Trud*, compared to the same period in 1997 and 2019. Less visible but still perceptible is the lower intensity of the aggressive attitude towards Roma in the media. The present study did not identify articles blaming the entire Roma community for a wide range of problems in the country, e.g. socio-economic crisis, poor educational results at national level, election fraud, etc. In January-February 2023, the 'Roma' issue was definitely not the primary negative focus in the media as it had been until recently. Although the proportion of publications with a negative attitude towards the Roma remains high (in certain articles even hostile), in both *24 Hours* and *Trud*, in terms of volume and frequency, the materials about the representatives of this group are significantly fewer. In *Trud*, for example, there were only four publications on the topic in the first two months of 2023, compared to 52 in 1997 and 78 in 2019, in the same period. In *24 Hours*,

there were only 19 publications in 2023, compared to 52 in 1997 and 91 in 2019. The "Roma" topic received relatively poor coverage also in other media which were monitored only in 2023 (*Epicentre, Glasove, Sega, Dnevnik, Darik news, Nova TV, bTV*), and in some it was completely absent.

The generally reduced media interest in the "Roma" topic goes hand in hand with a partial reduction of media prejudice and aggression towards Roma.

In 2023, in terms of content, it is noticeable that the media language towards the Roma is characterised by relatively more careful expressions. The dehumanisation of the Roma community, its satanisation, vulgar expressions, offensive conclusions about the entire ethnic group, which were characteristic of the media portrayal of the Roma until recently, have decreased. The previous practice of presenting ordinary criminal cases as ethnically motivated, anti-Bulgarian acts (e.g. the case in the village of Voyvodinovo in 2019, when 56 Roma were expelled from the village after a domestic incident that escalated into a brawl between a commando and two Roma teenagers) is no longer visible. However, it should be noted that the abrupt change in the media coverage of the Roma has not resulted in a more positive or inclusive attitude, but mainly in the form of reduced amount of publications on "Roma" issues plus some qualitative improvements in information provided.

The research provides five possible reasons for the fading of the anti-Roma discourse in the media:

- the weakening of the political-oligarchic dependencies in the media after the anti-corruption protests in major Bulgarian cities in 2020, as a result of which the Roma are less and less in the role of scapegoats for serious problems of the society;
- a possible change in the public mood – the "Roma" topic has lost its attractiveness for the wider audience;
- the "migrants' issue" which overwhelmed the public discourse in the researched period;
- the identification of the LGBTI people as an alternative target for the anti-liberal media;
- a possible increase of professional journalistic work and adoption, albeit reluctant, of higher ethical standards.

It would be premature to define this phenomenon as a normalisation of the media discourse with respect to the Roma. Rather, it can be concluded that the main theory of the anti-Roma discourse which held the Roma responsible for all crises in the country, has lost its grip on society. Public attention has shifted to the responsibility of the political-oligarchic elites; the "migration" topic; other "targets" such as the LGBTI community.

LGBTI - the new target?

The study identified 89 publications about the LGBTI community during the research period (January-February 2023). About half of the publications have a neutral tone. The publications, which fall in the negative register, comprise 40 percent of the selection, with 17 publications including hate speech. Several editions, such as *Trud, Epicentre, Glasove*, and to a lesser extent *24 hours*, have actively presented the community, demonstrating increased interest, passion and negative orientation. In *Trud*, for example, the representatives of this group are most often presented as "gender"-ists, and the topic is generally referred to as "gender ideology". Expressions, such as "brutal gender fraud", "sodomite locusts", "gender disorientation", "Brussels' obsession with gender ideology", "revision of biology and normality", etc., are prominent. The LGBTI people are often presented as a threat to society, to normality, to the future of the country:

'perversion and pathologies that are increasingly openly reaching out to our children'; 'consistent and offensive behaviour - they have already conquered the universities, soon the schools, next are the kindergartens'; "They are indoctrinating the brains of the young"; "Gender worshippers, pedophilia advocates"; "The fact is that with the money of the global villain George Soros and his worldwide network of darkness, attempts are being made to buy for pennies the souls and consciences of professors and students", etc.

Trud's intensive coverage of the topic is impressive with 18 publications (out of 90 selected publications on all topics in this edition), 14 of which with hate speech or with negative tone. Various authors and experts condemn the observed group with a lot of emotion and stigmatizing expressions. Harsh expressions are used, insulting qualifications are often highlighted in the title. An eloquent illustration of this is the article entitled, "Save Sofia: the next brutal gender scam" (*Trud*, 16.01.2023)

In fact, the attitude and the style of stigmatisation, dehumanization, satanization, presentation of the group as a problem and a threat to the country - are very similar to *Trud's* attitude and style towards the Roma in the recent past. The observation that the articles about Roma (negative as a rule) have decreased, giving way to a greater number of negative articles about the LGBTI community (or "genderqueers", as they are now pejoratively presented in this kind of media), leads to the assumption that there has been a change of the "target". The poisonous media arrows are now aimed in another direction. If we take the *Glasove* website, which is indicative of the socio-cultural orientation of dozens of smaller websites, two-thirds of the articles identified within the entire researched subject are on the LGBTI theme. The theme stands out as a high priority for the edition and the attitude towards the representatives of the group is visibly negative. The LGBTI community is described as a threat to normality, undermining the foundations of society, endangering children and so on. Further comparative and retrospective research on a larger number of media is needed to establish whether there is indeed a refocusing of the 'anti' discourse in the media.

Table No.4: Attitudes towards the LGBTI community

Type of attitude	No. of publications	%
Neutral	45	50,56
Negative and rather negative	19	21,35
Negative with hate speech	17	19,10
Positive and rather positive	8	8,99
I can not judge	-	-
	89	100

Source: own research, January-February 2023.

As already noted, other traditional minority groups in Bulgaria are very rarely subject of independent media coverage (the exception is the "Jewish" issue, but mostly because of the Holocaust anniversaries). The image of Turks, Muslim Bulgarians and Armenians can be described as traditionally benevolent. Unlike the Roma, they are described as no different from the majority, seen as an integral part of "Bulgarianness".

5. Conclusion: How Different Media Portray the Other?

It is difficult to give a generalised assessment of the media portrayal of the researched groups, mainly because of their heterogeneity. The traditional minority groups - Roma, Turks, Muslim Bulgarians (Pomaks), Jews, Armenians - are Bulgarian citizens, have lived for centuries in the local lands and are more or less part of the common socio-cultural context together with the majority of ethnic Bulgarians. The two groups of migrants -- from the Middle East and North Africa, and from Ukraine, are citizens of other countries and are part of a more or less different cultural context. In this sense, it is difficult to compare their portrayal with that of traditional minority groups. Public attitudes towards them are different and so is the media image. The LGBTI group, on the other hand, has other specific characteristics, based not on ethnicity, nationality or religion, but on sexual orientation or gender identity, which also predetermines a different attitude.

On the other hand, as it is clear from the analysed content in 13 TV, radio, news and analysis websites and newspapers, the media do not display a uniform attitude towards these groups, both in general and individually. Media attitude towards traditional minority groups is different from that towards migrants and still different towards the LGBTI community. Separately, within the group of the traditional minorities there are differences, sometimes very significant, if we compare for example, the media coverage of Roma and of Turks.

The observation gives us grounds to conclude that despite the serious deficits in the Bulgarian media system, diagnosed periodically by reputable international and Bulgarian NGOs and institutions, there is pluralism in the media space (albeit with defective fields), in the coverage of the Others, the vulnerable groups in society. This not yet fully mature pluralism manifests itself along the liberal-conservative axis.

Apparently, the majority of the media outlets studied have adopted the classical postulates of the socially responsible journalism (building on the liberal theory of media freedom). The professional standards derived from the basic ethical norms of the journalistic profession are set out in the Code of Ethics of the Bulgarian media. Obviously, the editorial policy of most of the monitored media takes into account the values, such as respect for minorities, respect for human rights, exclusion of hate speech; basic principles of political correctness are also observed.

There are, of course, nuances in the liberal media spectrum. Some media are more active in the coverage of minority and vulnerable groups. These are *Dnevnik*, *Sega*, BNR (especially its program "Horizon by Noon" with Irina Nedeva as a presenter). We can also include individual programmes of BNT ("Small Stories"), Nova TV ("No Man's Land"), etc. They address the problems of minority and vulnerable groups not only on an informational occasion, but also give room for in-depth analyses by renowned experts, demonstrate a clear and active position, and strive to educate the public rather than passively follow the events.

Liberal values and the social responsibility of journalism, including towards the groups in the present study, are generally taken into account by the editorial policy of all three major TV channels. However, some deficits are also noticeable which can be explained by cautious attention to the more traditional and conservative parts of the auditorium.

Several media outlets which were found disrespectful, in one degree or another, of professional ethics with regard to minority and vulnerable groups, can be conditionally classified as belonging to the more conservative sector, such as: *Trud*, *Glavo*, *Epicentre*, and in some form, albeit more sophisticated, *24 Hours*.

The once influential newspapers have a shrinking audience, but their positions on certain groups and issues remain quite conspicuous. Their editorial line has a clear stance against the principles of political correctness in particular, and the cultural component of neoliberalism, in general. The LGBTI community clearly emerges as their main target group and its top ranking as a target of hate speech in this study, is owing to the publications in these particular media outlets. LGBTI people are portrayed in vividly negative colours, as a major threat to the country, our national identity, and normality.

At the same time, the proportion of negative publications about Roma, including hate speech, remains high, but in significantly reduced proportions compared to previous years. In spite of some already cited cases of more in-depth coverage of Roma issues, it can be argued that Bulgarian media, in general, still do not consider this minority group as an integral part of the Bulgarian society. The research showed that the negative coverage of some of the media is now directed towards another group. While, after 1989, over the transition years in Bulgaria, the Roma were constructed as the enemy in the majority of the media, such an attitude is now noticeable towards members of the LGBTI community. Key terms imposed in the media such as "gypsy criminality", "ciganisation", etc. are less frequent, while the use of "gender ideology", "genderism", "Istanbul Convention", etc. as a symbol of the evil, is increasing.

With regard to migrants, the media have generally maintained a neutral and, one might say, normal tone. It is to be welcomed in view of the real threat of generating strong anti-migrant sentiment in some of the media and among wider sections of society. This prudent media reaction has undoubtedly contributed to shaping relatively normal public attitudes on the issue. Of course, the situation with the migrant flows is dynamic, and it cannot be guaranteed that the media's previously balanced stance towards migrants from the Middle East and North Africa and their positive attitude towards those from Ukraine will remain constant.

With regard to the other traditional minority groups in Bulgaria - Turks, Muslim Bulgarians, Jews, Armenians, the prevailing media attitude is positive.

LGBTI – the new media target in place of Roma? (The image of minority and vulnerable groups in Bulgarian media) is a report, developed within the framework of the project "Scaling up the role of civil society of vulnerable communities in Bulgaria to respond to discrimination, intolerance, hate speech and hate crimes" (EQUAL TOGETHER). The project is co-financed by the European Union programme "Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values" (2021 - 2027) and it is implemented by a consortium coordinated by the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee in partnership with NGO "Organization Drom", NGO "Roma Academy for Culture and Education", NGO "ASSOCIATION INTEGRO", Liberal alternative for Roma civil union, and the Youth LGBT organization Action. The content is solely the responsibility of the author and can in no way be taken to reflect the position of the European Union or the European Commission. The European Union or the European Commission do not bear any responsibility.