

Evasive decisions on complaint filed by Via Iuris, MEMO 98, Transparency International Slovakia and RSF shows worrying cracks in independent oversight of Slovakia's public broadcaster

Slovak and international NGOs regret the lack of adequate action by the media regulator over systemic breaches of professional standards, notably concerning impartiality and pluralism, in the TV news coverage of the public broadcaster, Slovak Television and Radio (STVR), and condemn the overall ignorance by the broadcaster's internal oversight body, the STVR Council, on their complaint. The complaint was filed with both the regulator and the oversight body last April.

The Council for Media Services, the Slovak media regulator, decided on 7 July 2026 to launch administrative proceedings against the *STVR* over a lack of impartial and pluralistic TV news coverage in the case of just 1 out of 15 programmes [challenged](#) by the NGOs Via Iuris, MEMO 98, Transparency International Slovakia and Reporters Without Borders (RSF).

That case was the broadcast of a news [piece](#) on alleged censorship of political content on social media under the previous Slovak governments, broadcast by *STVR* on 19 November 2025. The Council found that the report may have breached the legal requirements for objective and impartial news coverage by presenting a strongly worded political statement by the Slovak interior minister as a new development without providing a sufficient context or an adequate counterargument.

The administrative proceedings, which can result in sanctions against *STVR* – such as an order to broadcast a notice of the violation or a financial penalty in case of repeated violations – can last up to six months.

In the case of other eight news programmes, the media regulator recognized problematic coverage, but refused to launch administrative proceedings against the public broadcaster, [arguing](#) that the legal threshold for such an action had not been reached. The Slovak and international NGOs, which filed the complaint in April based on the Act on Media Services and referring to the European Media Freedom Act, were informed about the authority's decision in mid-July.

The *STVR* Council, staffed exclusively with nominees of the current ruling coalition of Prime Minister Robert Fico, discussed the NGOs' complaint, but did not issue any formal opinion. While discussing the complaint in the *STVR* Council's sessions, David Lindtner, one of its members and adviser to the prime minister, repeatedly [accused](#) the organisations of "political and ideological activism."

The organisations behind the complaint believe that the rejection of their thorough and well-founded complaint by the Council for Media Services and the failure by the *STVR* Council to duly examine it show worrying cracks in independent oversight of public broadcaster. They regret the legally formalistic and seemingly politically motivated approach of the media regulator and condemn the *STVR* Council's lack of interest in fulfilling its legal role of holding the public broadcaster accountable.

Regulator ignores its own secretariat's expert opinion

By choosing to launch administrative proceedings over only one news programme, the Council for Media Services — which has members on its board elected by the current ruling majority and perceived as politically-affiliated, and whose independence is further [threatened](#) by a new reform — did not take into account the problems identified by the [opinion](#) of its own secretariat, an expert body. The working document of the secretariat initially labelled two news programmes contested by the complaint as potentially illegal and considered another six problematic. One of the three members of the college, which was deciding on the complaint within the Council for Media Services, criticised one more news programme and proposed to launch administrative proceedings in a total of four news programmes. But these opinions were not reflected in the final decision of the college of the Council for Media Services.

Moreover, the NGOs' complaint was rejected by the Council for Media Services in the case of at least two other programmes with the argument that the broadcaster “balanced” the lack of impartiality and pluralism in different programmes. By doing so, the media regulator diverted from its usual jurisprudence, judging the news programme as an isolated broadcast that must be impartial and pluralistic individually, without taking into account previous broadcasts or other programmes.

The STVR Council neglects its duty

Regarding the STVR Council, although it examined the complaint submitted by the four organisations at three sessions between April and June, the discussion was always held on the sidelines of those meetings. During the June session, which officially included the complaint on the agenda, the unsubstantial exchange between the STVR Council's members lasted for only three minutes and ended without any formal vote. On 7 July, the STVR Council forwarded to the NGOs a document it called “the position of the STVR” indicating complete and unquestioning alignment with the position of the broadcaster, which the STVR Council is responsible for overseeing. The unsigned, undated document dismissed the content of the complaint while referring to STVR's “freedom of programming”.

The undersigned organisations will continue monitoring STVR's news coverage against high standards of impartiality and pluralism imposed by the national and European law on public broadcasting and advocating for its editorial independence with Slovak and European authorities.

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