

Slovakia: Via Iuris, MEMO 98, Transparency International and RSF file complaint over lack of impartiality and pluralism in public broadcaster's TV news coverage

Based on extensive content monitoring, Slovak and international NGOs asked the media regulator to act on the public broadcaster's alleged breach of its legal obligations to provide objective, impartial and pluralistic news.

On 24 April, the NGOs defending rule of law and media freedom, Via Iuris, MEMO 98, Transparency International Slovakia and Reporters Without Borders (RSF) submitted a formal complaint to the Slovak media regulator, the Council for Media Services, over the failure of the public broadcaster *Slovak Television and Radio (STVR)* to provide impartial and pluralist news coverage in line with the Slovak Act on Media Services, the *STVR Act* and the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA). The complaint was also sent to the broadcaster's oversight body, the STVR Council.

The complaint drafted by Via Iuris is based on extensive monitoring of the main evening TV news programmes of *STVR* and Slovakia's commercial channels conducted by MEMO 98 in [November 2025](#) and [February 2026](#), as well as a targeted [topical analysis](#) concerning the TV news coverage of the fourth anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2026.

The findings, supported also by separate monitoring of Transparency International Slovakia (from [July 2025](#), [October 2025](#), and [November 2025](#)), point to repeated and systematic shortcomings in relation to legal obligations on public service broadcasting in Slovakia, particularly the requirements of objectivity, impartiality, and pluralism as defined under the national media legislation and relevant European standards.

"Under the STVR Act, the public broadcaster is supposed to provide impartial, balanced, and objective information. However, the monitoring of STVR's news coverage suggests that the broadcaster may have repeatedly broken these legal rules. That is why we believe it's important to report these potential failings to both the Council for Media Services and the STVR Council."

Andrej Krajnak

Attorney cooperating with Via Iuris

"Unfortunately, the monitoring findings have confirmed that the state capture of public media — which civil society and the experts have been pointing out since the establishment of STVR in 2024, and to which the public has responded with an unprecedented decline in trust — is well-founded: TV news coverage has a systemic problem with impartiality and respect of professional standards. If society is to remain free, it needs public service that offers information that is complete, verified, and free from direct pressure or indirect self-censorship."

Ivan Godarsky

Media and Legal expert at MEMO 98

“The current complaint further reinforces Transparency International Slovakia’s earlier findings from our analyses of the broadcaster’s main TV news programme, ‘STVR News,’ conducted in summer 2025 after the current management took office and again last autumn following the launch of its new format. For some time now, ‘STVR News’ has been marked by reports with a pro-government slant or even by PR-style overtone, while critical topics and voices have been increasingly muted. In doing so, STVR is betraying its public service mission and losing credibility.”

Michal Pisko

Director of Transparency International Slovakia

“The political pressures on public broadcasting, facilitated by its recent legislative and funding overhaul, gave rise to biased news coverage. But we are not standing with our arms crossed against what is now internationally called ‘the Slovak scenario’. I am grateful to our Slovak partners for the cooperation on this joint filing based on the national and European legislation, which is our first step in returning the public broadcasting to the Slovak citizens.”

Pavol Szalai

Director of the RSF Prague Bureau

Allegations of imbalance and lack of pluralism

The complaint highlights multiple instances where *STVR*’s TV news coverage failed to ensure impartial and comprehensive representation of relevant actors and viewpoints in politically and socially sensitive stories.

These include cases in which only one side of a dispute or political issue was given meaningful airtime, while opposing voices, independent experts, and affected stakeholders were either absent or insufficiently represented. In several reports, according to the complainants, editorial framing appeared to rely heavily on statements from government representatives without adequate contextualisation or critical counterbalance.

The organisations also point to concerns regarding editorial sequencing and placement of stories, non-existent or selective use of contextual information, and the use of framing that may have influenced viewers’ interpretation of important socio-political events.

A particular focus of the complaint is *STVR*’s coverage of the fourth anniversary of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. While acknowledging that the topic was given prominent placement and included international inputs and basic factual framing, the complainants argue that the overall treatment not only lacked depth, human perspective, and sufficient contextual balance, and moreover, that the television coverage, in fact, offered its audience a heavily distorted, even manipulative form of visual reporting.

The legal and European frameworks cited

The complaint references obligations under Slovak media legislation, particularly Section 25 of the Act on Media Services, which requires broadcasters to ensure plurality of information, objectivity, and impartiality in news programming.

It also invokes the public service mandate of *STVR* under its founding legislation, as well as principles enshrined in the EMFA, which emphasises the role of public service media in providing independent, diverse, and trustworthy information.

In addition, the complainants refer to relevant case-law of European and national courts stressing the importance of accuracy, transparency, and separation of facts from commentary in news reporting.

Request to the media regulator

The organisations ask the Slovak media regulator to assess whether the identified broadcasts comply with legal obligations on impartiality and pluralism. They also urge the authority to consider the broader pattern emerging from the monitoring, rather than treating each issue in isolation.

They argue that the findings may indicate structural weaknesses in editorial practices rather than isolated editorial errors.

STVR's statement from February 2026, [claiming](#) its TV news coverage is “balanced” is the result of a selective interpretation of external content analysis, the full version of which was provided to RSF based on its freedom-of-information request.

The Council for Media Services, which itself pointed out the over-representation of ruling parties in *STVR*'s political debate programmes in 2025 in its [annual report](#) published in late March 2026, can impose sanctions on the public broadcaster for non-compliance with the law, ranging from formal notices to financial penalties.

Slovakia is ranked 38th out of 180 countries and territories in the 2025 RSF [World Press Freedom Index](#).