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# TELEVISION BROADCASTING AND ITS MULTIMODAL APPROACH IN RELATION TO VISUAL AND HEARING IMPAIRMENT IN SLOVAKIA

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## Abstract

The paper defines specific aspects of monitoring the television contents with citizens of Slovakia with visual and hearing impairment. It focuses on the analysis of respecting the percentage of programmes with audio description, open or closed captioning and interpretation into sign language which is in Slovakia strictly defined by the Act on Broadcasting and Retransmission. The aim of the article is to compare the real broadcasted programmes percentage for specific groups of audience with the set minimal percentage defined by the legislation. The research study includes both public television and commercial television broadcasters. The statistics of broadcasted programmes up to 2012 show the recurrent violation of the quota set by the law with consequent sanctioning of televisions. More positive results appeared as a result of the amendment of the Act on Broadcasting and Retransmission from 2013 with the effect from 1 January 2014. Televisions themselves show interest in the issue which can be proved by the fact that there was no violation of the percentage set by the law in 2013 and 2014. However, there are still several significant deficiencies in the legal amendment, e.g. the law does not specify the types of broadcasted programmes for the group of handicapped audience, their broadcasting time and not even does it define whether rebroadcasting of once broadcasted programmes is included into the percentage of programmes broadcasted with multimodal approach.

*Keywords:* television broadcasting, multimodal approach, visual impairment, hearing impairment

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## 1. Introduction

Since 2007 Slovakia has had an effective legal amendment of broadcasting for people with visual and hearing impairment, i.e. the multimodal approach. It is a complementary content service broadcasted concurrently with a particular television programme service allowing the people with visual and hearing impairment access to programmes or other parts of programme service. In practice it is the obligation of televisions to broadcast the set percentage of

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their programmes with closed or open captions, in sign language of people with hearing impairment or audio description for people with visual impairment. The aim of the study is the content analysis of broadcasting structure of television stations broadcasting in Slovakia. We try to detect whether and to what extent do the televisions respect their legal obligations towards handicapped members of the audience. The content analysis includes both public television and commercial television broadcasters. The research objects are all programmes broadcasted in 2013 and 2014 where the development of programmes with multimodal approach has been monitored since 2011.

### **1.1. Multimodal approach in legislation**

The Act Nr. 308/2000 of Coll, On Broadcasting and Retransmission in § 18, section 3 obliges the broadcasters to provide multimodal access to programme service securing the broadcasting has at least:

- 50% all broadcasted programmes with closed or open captions corresponding with the plot of the broadcasted programme,
- 3% of all broadcasted programmes interpreted into sign language or in sign language for people with hearing impairment,
- 20% of all broadcasted programmes with audio description for people with visual impairment [NRSR, *Act Nr. 308/2000 of Coll. On Broadcasting and Retransmission § 18, section 3*, [http://www.rvr.sk/\\_cms/data/modules/download/1390832132\\_zakon\\_308\\_2000\\_2014-01-01.pdf](http://www.rvr.sk/_cms/data/modules/download/1390832132_zakon_308_2000_2014-01-01.pdf)].

The Act on Broadcasting and Retransmission obliges the broadcaster with a licence (televisions Markíza and Joj with their other programme services) to provide multimodal access to the programme service in order to make sure that the broadcasting of each programme service includes at least:

- 10% of all broadcasted programmes with closed or open captions corresponding with the plot of the broadcasted programme or interpreted into sign language of people with hearing impairment or in their sign language,
- 3% of all broadcasted programmes with audio description for people with visual impairment [NRSR, *Act Nr. 308/2000 of Coll. On Broadcasting and Retransmission § 18a*, [http://www.rvr.sk/\\_cms/data/modules/download/1390832132\\_zakon\\_308\\_2000\\_2014-01-01.pdf](http://www.rvr.sk/_cms/data/modules/download/1390832132_zakon_308_2000_2014-01-01.pdf)].

This obligation derives from the European Union directive obliging each member state and candidate countries to secure its execution by means of own legislation. However, the obligation does not apply to local television stations or broadcasting abroad.

The Act on Broadcasting and Retransmission also states that all televisions are obliged to mark all programmes broadcasted for people with visual and hearing impairment directly when broadcasted, in the announcement and even in TV guide. Broadcasting for people with visual impairment should be marked in TV guide with the 'AD' symbol and for people with hearing impairment with a symbol of a slashed ear. However, many TV guides do not

use these symbols without having any reasons for doing so. In broadcasting of some Slovak televisions we may come across written or verbal information: "This programme includes audio description for people with visual impairment" or with a note "closed captions".

Due to the amendment of the Act on Broadcasting and Retransmission from 2013 the broadcasters, when requested, are obliged to provide the Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission with the data necessary to control the execution of obligations related to the multimodal access. In Slovakia the broadcasters are obliged to provide the following data:

- a) Data about percentage, number and time span of broadcasted programmes with closed captions, open captions, audio description for visually impaired and interpreted into sign language of people with hearing impairment.
- b) List of broadcasted programmes with closed captions, open captions, audio description for visually impaired, programmes interpreted into sign language of people with hearing impairment stating the date and broadcasting time. [NRSR, *Act Nr. 308/2000 of Coll. On Broadcasting and Retransmission § 18d*, [http://www.rvr.sk/\\_cms/data/modules/download/1390832132\\_zakon\\_308\\_2000\\_2014-01-01.pdf](http://www.rvr.sk/_cms/data/modules/download/1390832132_zakon_308_2000_2014-01-01.pdf)].

The amendment from 2013 requires closed or open captions to correspond precisely with the story of the broadcasted programme.

### ***1.2. Technical parameters of broadcasting for people with visual and hearing impairment***

Once there is the legal amendment of the television broadcasting with audio commenting and captioning it is necessary to explain the way how commentaries and captions reach people with visual and hearing impairment. Audio commenting is acoustic captions that briefly and aptly describe main parts of a story, gesticulation, mimics, decorations or setting. These descriptions are narrated during the breaks between dialogues. For visually impaired users AD – Premix is a technically easier method, i.e. commentaries are mixed with original soundtrack by the broadcaster and mixed signal is transmitted to the receiver as a second soundtrack. If the programme is not broadcasted with the commentary for visually impaired, the second track is used to broadcast the original (foreign language) sound. This applies to programme equipped with dubbing into Slovak. The second method is the AD – Receiver Mix. In this case the commentary is transmitted by an independent soundtrack and with original sound of the programme mixed not until received. Unlike the first method, AD – Receiver Mix allows the regulation of commentary volume to original sound ratio and also independent listening to programme with commentary (e.g. by using headphones) and at the same time without a commentary (by other members of a household). To receive a commentary the visually impaired people have to switch the language of a programme to the second soundtrack often designated as 'mul' (the designation may vary depending on the type of TV receiver or set-top-box). In April 2013 'speaking' TVs with audio guide in Slovak appeared also on Slovak market [B. Mamojka, *Commented broadcasts for blind people*

finally in Slovakia, <http://www.blindrevue.sk/komentovane-tv-vysielanie-na-slovensku>].

As far as captions are concerned we speak about several formats providing various needs of individual people with hearing impairment. In Slovakia we most frequently classify captions into two basic types, i.e. open and closed. Open captions are on the screen all the time and it is not possible to switch them off. However, we see them rarely, mostly with older films and programmes. Nowadays, in Slovak televisions it is possible to watch programmes with closed captions only via Teletext. Every TV station has a specific Teletext number, e.g. 666, 777, 888, where the people with hearing impairment can find closed captions to the broadcasted programme; provided the production has captions.

Concerning the quality when captioning programmes it is important to use comprehensible and readable captions, avoid overlapping of letter with TV image, make them correspond with the content (they must involve all the information accessible also to common viewers). Captions must be grammatically and stylistically correct. Regarding formal aspects, it is important to understand that captions must include also information that is not involved in the audio form. By doing so the length of captions grows in direct proportion and has impact on duration range during which the captions are displayed on the screen. When captioning for adults the rule is to have single line on the screen for 3 seconds at least, with double line it should be for 1-2 seconds longer. In general, several colours are used when captioning to determine individual people, noise or comments. The colours of captions must differ to avoid any confusion when identifying them. Seldom is there any discussion in professional literature on the preferred colour of captions for people with hearing impairment. Type size of captions should not distract a person when watching; it should allow the perception of image information without any problems and at the same time it should make reading the information in captions possible. The length of a caption has a direct influence on the type size. Regarding fonts Times New Roman or Arial in bold, italics or standard font is preferred. Sometimes a different font is used to indicate direct speech or a comment [1].

The main goal of the audio description is the comprehensibility. Such a description is characterized by four basic components of information: when, where, who and what. A narrator has to filter what is important. He should not express his own opinions or interpretation of events. Narration should describe what is going on. The first rule is to use present simple as the narration informs a viewer what happens in that particular moment. It is extremely important for the viewers to know exactly what is happening on the screen.

## **2. Methodology**

The main goal of the research study is a detailed structure analysis of the Slovak TV stations with specific focus on the fact whether and to what extent do they respect and obey the legislative directives regarding their obligations

towards visually and hearing impaired citizens. The purpose of the study is to make research on the effectiveness of the current media legislation and the level of adherence to it by public television and private TV stations. Regarding the specific character of physical impairment we have focused on the issue of programmes with audio description, open or closed captions and interpretation into sign language. The study uses the method of secondary data analysis based on selection, analysis and interpretation of accessible statistic information and descriptive data referring to television programmes for visually and hearing impaired viewers. In the study we have used the research strategy focused on a detailed analysis of the legislative framework covering individual mutual relations and interactions originating between TV broadcasting and people with a specific type of physical impairment.

From the methodological point we concentrate mainly upon the latest trends, specific features and problems originating in the researched area. The Report on the state of broadcasting is published in Slovakia annually. It includes the statistics from individual televisions about multimodal access. Televisions themselves monitor these data and send them to the Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission. The data is published in three-month cycles. In our research procedure we focus on the shares analysis of all area-wide commercial televisions and public television in the period between 2013 and 2014.

### **3. Analysis and interpretation of data**

#### ***3.1. Analysis of adherence to legislation effective in the Slovak Republic***

In 2013 and 2014 according to the quota submitted to the Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission by individual televisions there was no violation of the Act on Broadcasting and Retransmission. During 2013 and 2014 the first channel (Jednotka) of the public TV broadcasted on average 61.50% of programmes with closed or open captions, 4.83% of programmes interpreted into the sign language of hearing impaired and 23.74% of programmes with audio description (Table 1). The second channel of the public television (Dvojka) broadcasted monthly 55.59% of programmes with closed or open captions, 8.04% of programmes interpreted into sign language of hearing impaired and 26.72% of programmes with audio description (Table 2). From the above mentioned it follows that the public TV pays in its programme service increased attention to programmes with open or closed captions since the average share exceeds the set legal quota by more than 10%. The second programme service of the public TV offers an increased share of programmes interpreted into sign language.

We have monitored the average shares of programmes also with commercial broadcasters. TV Markíza between 2013 and 2014 broadcasted 13.63% of programmes with captions or in sign language of hearing impaired and 6.5% of programmes with audio description for visually impaired every month (Table 3).

**Table 1.** Statistics of broadcasted programmes with multimodal approach of programme service Jednotka (RTVS) for 2013 and 2014 (in %).

MONTH →												
MULTIMODAL APPROACH ↓	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<b>2013</b>												
captions	63.46	61.62	55.64	63.79	59.18	69.62	68.80	67.40	60.02	61.88	63.88	64.97
sign language	3.28	4.72	3.13	3.04	4.28	3.41	4.04	3.27	3.58	6.00	5.38	5.11
audio description	21.89	21.68	21.04	22.38	23.06	22.09	22.41	20.12	27.71	28.23	20.42	23.82
<b>2014</b>												
captions	63.08	56.40	55.68	55.89	56.80	56.96	67.13	65.14	53.16	56.15	59.20	70.21
sign language	5.28	4.78	5.63	5.93	4.57	5.73	5.88	5.48	5.74	5.93	7.02	4.81
audio description	24.54	27.02	26.92	27.14	20.41	22.47	21.59	20.56	23.69	26.02	29.88	24.56

**Table 2.** Statistics of broadcasted programmes with multimodal approach of programme service Dvojka (RTVS) for 2013 and 2014 (in %).

MONTH →												
MULTIMODAL APPROACH ↓	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<b>2013</b>												
captions	60.62	56.30	51.81	56.51	50.92	53.42	59.80	60.14	50.89	54.41	58.79	53.89
sign language	7.26	5.67	7.28	5.77	4.85	7.48	7.88	6.61	7.31	10.37	10.26	8.71
audio description	21.21	26.87	26.92	22.32	23.44	28.23	22.47	24.07	39.33	35.08	29.94	29.87
<b>2014</b>												
captions	54.19	50.41	50.67	54.76	54.68	54.35	58.89	54.34	54.35	60.98	57.16	62.00
sign language	10.37	8.30	10.48	10.92	8.56	9.45	5.86	6.02	10.49	5.49	8.77	8.87
audio description	24.24	25.18	24.78	21.16	20.47	29.07	20.85	22.07	28.20	24.77	35.75	35.10

**Table 3.** Statistics of broadcasted programmes with multimodal approach of programme service TV MARKÍZA for 2013 and 2014 (in %).

MONTH →												
MULTIMODAL APPROACH ↓	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<b>2013</b>												
captions/sign language	10.00	11.00	15.00	12.00	11.00	12.00	14.00	16.00	11.00	10.00	10.00	13.00
audio description	3.00	4.00	7.00	6.00	8.00	9.00	7.00	11.00	7.00	6.00	3.00	5.00
<b>2014</b>												
captions/sign language	17.00	21.00	16.00	13.00	17.00	14.00	11.00	13.00	16.00	12.00	19.00	13.00
audio description	6.00	6.00	7.00	8.00	14.00	10.00	7.00	5.00	5.00	4.00	3.00	5.00

**Table 4.** Statistics of broadcasted programmes with multimodal approach of programme service TV DOMA for 2013 and 2014 (in %).

MONTH →												
MULTIMODAL APPROACH ↓	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<b>2013</b>												
captions/sign language	10.00	11.00	10.00	11.00	10.00	12.00	14.00	10.00	11.00	13.00	11.00	11.00
audio description	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	4.00	3.00	4.00
<b>2014</b>												
captions/sign language	12.00	19.00	19.00	17.00	14.00	16.00	14.00	16.00	22.00	27.00	26.00	14.00
audio description	6.00	5.00	5.00	4.00	4.00	7.00	7.00	4.00	5.00	4.00	4.00	9.00

**Table 5.** Statistics of broadcasted programmes with multimodal approach of programme service TV DAJTO for 2013 and 2014 (in %).

MONTH →												
MULTIMODAL APPROACH ↓	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<b>2013</b>												
captions/sign language	11.00	12.00	16.00	13.00	10.00	12.00	12.00	10.00	13.00	12.00	20.00	21.00
audio description	6.00	5.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	7.00	4.00	5.00	15.00
<b>2014</b>												
captions/sign language	16.00	16.00	13.00	11.00	11.00	13.00	15.00	13.00	12.00	10.00	12.00	15.00
audio description	6.00	4.00	6.00	5.00	5.00	8.00	3.00	6.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	6.00

**Table 6.** Statistics of broadcasted programmes with multimodal approach of programme service TV JOJ for 2013 and 2014 (in %).

MONTH →												
MULTIMODAL APPROACH ↓	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<b>2013</b>												
captions/sign language	13.60	16.00	16.60	13.90	10.60	10.00	12.30	13.50	20.10	22.20	20.30	13.80
audio description	11.60	13.10	10.80	10.70	8.40	6.60	6.30	5.30	10.50	11.80	8.00	6.70
<b>2014</b>												
captions/sign language	12.20	24.40	15.80	18.50	22.00	23.40	16.00	15.30	14.90	20.00	12.60	17.00
audio description	6.60	8.50	9.60	10.70	6.50	6.70	6.60	9.40	7.10	10.30	6.60	6.60

**Table 7.** Statistics of broadcasted programmes with multimodal approach of programme service TV JOJ PLUS for 2013 and 2014 (in %).

MONTH →												
MULTIMODAL APPROACH ↓	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<b>2013</b>												
captions/sign language	11.50	11.50	12.00	16.20	11.30	10.20	10.50	11.80	11.00	10.50	11.10	14.50
audio description	7.00	8.80	8.90	9.20	6.10	5.50	4.20	5.70	5.80	4.80	6.40	6.70
<b>2014</b>												
captions/sign language	10.80	14.50	10.60	10.60	11.70	13.30	10.40	13.40	12.80	10.70	10.30	10.30
audio description	9.10	8.10	6.00	5.50	8.30	5.80	6.10	6.00	6.00	6.30	5.30	6.40

**Table 8.** Statistics of broadcasted programmes with multimodal approach of programme service TV WAU for 2013 and 2014 (in %).

MONTH →												
MULTIMODAL APPROACH ↓	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<b>2013</b>												
captions/sign language	-	-	-	13.10	10.80	10.30	11.00	10.90	12.10	10.50	11.10	14.50
audio description	-	-	-	9.50	8.70	5.00	4.30	4.30	4.80	4.80	6.40	6.70
<b>2014</b>												
captions/sign language	11.60	12.30	10.70	10.10	10.50	10.10	11.30	10.50	11.60	11.60	10.30	11.80
audio description	5.70	5.70	6.20	5.70	6.40	5.40	5.60	7.90	6.70	5.60	5.10	6.50

Similar average shares were kept also by its other programme services, e.g. TV Doma (14.59% of programmes with captions or in sign language and 4.38% of programmes with audio description) (Table 4) and TV Dajto (13.29% of programmes with captions or sign language and 5.13% of programmes with audio description) (Table 5). TV JOJ (16.46% of programmes with captions or sign language and 8.55% of programmes with audio description) (Table 6) and its programme services TV JOJ Plus (11.74% of programmes with captions or sign language and 6.58% of programmes with audio description) (Table 7), and TV WAU (11.28% of programmes with captions or in sign language and 6.05% of programmes with audio description) (Table 8) show in comparison with TV Markíza and its programme services on average almost equal percentage of programmes with open or closed captions or programmes interpreted into sign language. However, regarding the programmes broadcasted with audio description TV JOJ and its programme services achieve noticeably higher shares.

The listed statistics are much more positive when compared to the shares published for 2011 and 2012. In 2012 it was only TV JOJ and JOJ Plus that presented their yearly statistics of broadcasted programmes with multimodal access. The public broadcaster (TV channels Jednotka and Dvojka) did not present these percentages of programmes until September 2011. TV Markíza and Doma have been presenting these shares since May.

All the televisions and their programme services provided the Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission with programme shares with multimodal access for every calendar year of 2012. TV Dajto has been presenting them since September 2012 when it started broadcasting. Majority of them meets the legal limit. However, there have been some violations. Below we list the imposed sanctions for individual television stations during 2011 and 2012. They were thoroughly analysed in a previous article [2].

The broadcaster started with the broadcasting of WAU programme service on 15 April 2013.

### ***3.2. Analysis of sanctions enforcement for violation of current legislation***

The Slovak Act on Broadcasting and Retransmission states that the Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission firstly provides the broadcaster of a programme service with a notification about the violation of the Act via the Internet. In case of repeated infringements the Council imposes a financial penalty of 3 319 € up to 66 387 € if the broadcaster violated specific obligations of a broadcaster in transmitting programmes in public interest and providing multimodal access to programme service [NRSR, *Act Nr. 308/2000 of Coll. On Broadcasting and Retransmission § 67*, [http://www.rvr.sk/\\_cms/data/modules/download/1390832132\\_zakon\\_308\\_2000\\_2014-01-01.pdf](http://www.rvr.sk/_cms/data/modules/download/1390832132_zakon_308_2000_2014-01-01.pdf)].

In 2011 the Council observed two violations of provision § 18 section (3) Nr. 308/2000 of Coll. by channel Jednotka (RTVS) since in the period between January and June and July – August the broadcaster did not reach the

programme shares with multimodal access in the range set by law [M. Mistrík, *Report on the state of broadcasting in the Slovak Republic and the activities of the Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission for 2012*, [http://www.rvr.sk/\\_cms/data/modules/download/1371463333\\_Sprava\\_o\\_stave\\_vysielania\\_a\\_o\\_cinnosti\\_\\_RVR\\_za\\_rok\\_2012.pdf](http://www.rvr.sk/_cms/data/modules/download/1371463333_Sprava_o_stave_vysielania_a_o_cinnosti__RVR_za_rok_2012.pdf)]. In September 2011 it did not reach the set shares of broadcasting with multimodal access regarding captions and interpretation into sign language of hearing impaired. For the law violation the Council imposed two sanctions on the broadcaster – notifications about the law violation. Concerning the second public channel (Dvojka) the Council observed also two law violations. From January to June 2011 the broadcaster did not reach shares of broadcasting with multimodal access set by the law in the use of captions and audio description for visually impaired. In July, August and September 2011 the channel did not reach shares of broadcasting with multimodal access set by the law in the use of captions, in September 2011 in interpretations into sign language and in July and August 2011 in audio description for visually impaired. Two sanctions were imposed by the Council – notifications about the law violation.

In 2012 the Council determined the violations of provision § 18a Act Nr. 308/2000 of Coll. by TV MARKÍZA – SLOVAKIA, LLC. In January, February and March 2011 it did not reach shares of broadcasting with multimodal access set by the law and in April 2011 it did not reach the share of programmes with audio description. The Council imposed a sanction on each programme service – notification about the law violation. The Council noted two violations of law provision and imposed sanctions on the broadcaster - notifications about the law violation also with the MAC TV broadcaster, LLC. in its programme service JOJ PLUS in September 2011, later also in October, November and December 2011. The broadcaster did not reach the share of programmes with captions or in sign language of hearing impaired.

In 2013 the Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission terminated administrative procedure against the broadcaster MAC TV, LLC. It determined the violation of provision § 18a. In May, June and August 2012 it admitted 10% share of programmes broadcasted with captions or with audio description for hearing impaired, which is less than the legal limit. The broadcaster was fined 3 319 € Council. In 2011 and 2012 there were various sanctions imposed due to the violation of legal quota (notifications, financial penalties) whereas in 2013 and 2014 there was no violation of percentages set by the law in Slovakia. The only financial penalty was imposed on the broadcaster MAC TV, LLC for violating § 16 section (3) point 1. It states the broadcasters are obliged to store uninterrupted records of the broadcasting for 45 days starting with the first day of their broadcasting in adequate quality.

The financial penalty of 6 638 € was imposed by the Council on the programme service TV JOJ based on the non-delivery of such broadcasting records with audio description for visually impaired in the period between 1–28 February 2013 [Ľ. Kukliš, *Press release from the meeting of the Council for*

*Broadcasting and Retransmission on November 5, 2013*, <http://www.rvr.sk/sk/spravy/index.php?aktualitaId=2213>].

#### **4. Conclusions**

“Life with visual impairment is not easy. However, due to the rapid development of modern communication and assistance technologies even people with blindness and low vision have knowledge about information, can deal with them and in this way overcome obstacles resulting from their impairment.” [3] The statistics of broadcasted programmes with audio description, captions and sign language in 2013 and 2014 show perfect observance of legal quota which is a huge progress in comparison with previous two years. In numerous cases the televisions even broadcast programmes with multimodal access beyond the percentage shares set by the law. However, it is a paradox that in many cases does the broadcaster broadcast a programme with captions or audio description but during the transmission the end user finds the programme without them. Thus, visually and hearing impaired have to face technical problems as well.

We believe another problem is caused by the fact that the law does not exactly specify which types of programmes should be broadcasted with audio description, captions or sign language. Neither does it specify the broadcasting time. What is most important, it does not explain whether rebroadcasting of programmes should be included into the percentage of programmes broadcasted with multimodal access [4]. Based on the list of programmes with audio description provided to the Union of Visually Impaired and Purbblind of Slovakia by TV Markíza we cannot miss almost “unnatural” rebroadcasting of a TV series episode or broadcasting of some programmes between 1 a.m. – 5 a.m. what we regard as factitious accomplishment of legal quota. Visually impaired watching these TV channels can daily watch TV series *Two and a Half Men* (the same episode twice) during a day and once early in the morning (4:15 a.m.), one episode of *N.C.I.S.* and two romantic films by Rosamunde Pilcher at weekends. Also the Radio and Television Slovakia and its programme services (*Jednotka*, *Dvojka*) provide the visually impaired with a list of programmes with audio description. Compared to private TV Markíza and its programme services the list provided by RTVS is more diverse regarding both programme types, number of programmes and broadcasting time. It includes drama, TV series, documentaries, comedies, historic and romantic films, some of them broadcasted even during primetime. Due to unknown reasons TV Joj does not provide the public with a list of programmes with audio narration for visually impaired.

Legal amendment of broadcasting for visually and hearing impaired effective in Slovakia also supports “... critical thinking competence including critical understanding of media and the ability to critically assess media contents” [5].

The Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic prepares an amendment of the Act on Broadcasting and Retransmission regarding closed captions for hearing impaired. The Slovak Association of the Deaf believes it would be

positive if the caption production respected unanimous rules. They want to complement the amendment with time schedule for broadcasting of closed captions up to 100% in all Slovak TVs. The Ministry has been declaring since the beginning of negotiations that the percentage of programmes with multimodal access, i.e. with closed or open captions, in sign language or with audio description for visually impaired, is nowadays not to be increased.

The Central European Regulatory Forum discussed multimodal access as one of the main topics on the meeting in 2012. Romania and Slovenia admitted to have the biggest problems with the execution of criteria. The representatives from the Czech Republic emphasized the term 'access' in the law should be replaced by 'audio description' mentioned in the EU regulation. The original term could cause misinterpretation of the law and televisions would only need to change dramaturgy of some types of programmes. On the contrary, the Hungarian broadcasters strive to achieve the highest percentage and they believe to have 100% of programmes broadcasted with captions by 2015. We believe the time has come for us in Slovakia to progress with multimodal access in more complex legislative framework, improved quality of audio description, captions and sign language. These measures can significantly contribute to the improvement of lives of handicapped people as their perception of media contents can be "affected by the actual media technology" [6]. The results of our study show that to improve the current state a more effective collaboration of individual TVs broadcasting in Slovakia is needed. The same applies to the removal of some technical barriers complicating watching TV programmes by handicapped people.

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