



**UÇAN SÜPÜRGE**  
KADIN İLETİŞİM VE ARAŞTIRMA DERNEĞİ

# **A non-sexist, non-ableist, accessible and inclusive media is possible!**

## **Monitoring Report on the Representation of Women with Disabilities in the News Media**



This monitoring report has been prepared with the support of ETKİNİZ EU Programme. Flying Broom Association is solely responsible for the content and the comments contained in the report.

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## Introduction

The study on Monitoring Human Rights Violations against Women with Disabilities in the Media was designed to create a driving force for the media to become an important tool and advocacy space in fighting for the rights of women with disabilities. It was developed to give visibility to human rights violations against women with disabilities in the media and to encourage the production of news with a perspective that empowers women in the fight against these violations. The study also aimed to involve women with disabilities, whether organised or not, in media monitoring, to make women with disabilities in organisations active and productive, and to contribute to making other rights activists interested in disability issues. Selected news items from newspapers and websites were analysed using indicators. A discourse analysis of the main TV news bulletins was carried out in the light of the indicators. The order, duration and title of news items on disability issues in the main news bulletins were analysed.

The monitoring findings draw attention to the violation of the rights of women with disabilities, particularly in news content, by recognising the inadequate/underrepresentation of women with disabilities in media content and supporting their media visibility. It provides evidence that the media not only violates the human rights of women with disabilities, but also discriminates against and marginalises them, in addition to making them invisible and neglected as individuals. It was also noted that there were news stories that were free from stereotyping, that treated the disabled woman or girl as an individual with rights rather than as an object of the news, or that included the views of those entitled to those rights. These were limited in number and the framing of these news items focused on women's success stories and 'heroised' women with disabilities. However, these news items failed to draw attention to the challenges faced by women and girls with disabilities in other areas of life (education, health, accessibility of public spaces, romantic or social relationships) on the basis of both ableism and gender.

To sum up, the monitoring study revealed that the media portrayed women and girls with disabilities from a certain perspective and with stereotypes.

*These are the result of the lack of knowledge and the prejudices in society about disability, as well as the reflection of the discrimination caused by the gender inequality in the language and thinking.<sup>1</sup>*

*One of the most important factors that lead to the exclusion of people is language. Words that negatively emphasise the differences of people with disabilities cause people to feel worthless. This kind of language is used by professionals such as doctors, therapists and teachers, but also in newspapers and on the street.<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Flying Broom Women's Communication and Research Association (2023) Page 14.

<sup>2</sup> Association for Monitoring Equal Rights - Van Hearing-Impaired and Families Association (2017)

## METHOD

Flying Broom Women's Communication and Research Association sought answers to the following questions at the beginning of the media monitoring study supported by Etkiniz EU Programme:

- What are included in the right to information of women with disabilities?
- How do we describe the barriers preventing us from exercising our right to information?
- How are women with disabilities represented in the news? How does the media see and portray us?
- What kind of communication and co-operation do we provide with women journalists working in the sector?
- What are our demands, expectations and priorities that we would like the media to cover?
- Is the media accessible to people with disabilities?
- How can the media help girls with disabilities learn about their rights and articulate their needs for an independent life?
- Do we know what course of action to take when the media violate our rights or remain silent about violations?
- Are we able to use new technologies and new modes of communication?
- In which topics do we need to improve our knowledge and skills?

Within the scope of the monitoring study, an Advisory Board was established to exchange information and experience on these questions.<sup>3</sup> The Advisory Board meeting was held online on 30 September 2022. The selection of the media outlets for media monitoring was carried out after this meeting. In addition, an online forum on Representation of Women with Disabilities in the Media and Combating Rights Violations against Women with Disabilities was held on 23 December 2022. The forum was attended by women with various disabilities and rare diseases, as well as rights advocates and journalists working on disability and gender issues.<sup>4</sup> The need for disabled people to have a media where they could express themselves, exercise their right to democratic participation and create public pressure, and the reasons why women with disabilities were not visible in the media as a subject of rights were discussed in this forum. Feedback was received on how the results of the media monitoring study could help women with disabilities in their advocacy and communication activities. In addition, principles and ways of working for a media that is not sexist, racist, ableist, speciesist and homophobic, and that is inclusive, egalitarian, accessible and centred on human rights and gender were discussed.

All feedbacks were a source of guidance both in this report and in the preparation of "A Guide for Journalists, TV Broadcasters, Podcasters and Non-Governmental Organisations on What to Know When Reporting and Interviewing Women with Disabilities".

**Five newspapers, three news websites and three television channels from the Turkish media were selected for the monitoring study.** In selecting the newspapers, the criteria were the political backgrounds, prevalence and frequency of coverage of disability-related content of the printed sources of news subject to monitoring. It was also deemed necessary to include a news agency in the monitoring universe. For this purpose, the news agency,

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<sup>3</sup> See ANNEX 1: Advisory Board

<sup>4</sup> See ANNEX 3: Workshop Participants List

which covered domestic news and disability issues the most and was the bearer of the official ideology, was included in the monitoring. As news websites, two media outlets were selected: one mainstream website and one website engaged in human rights journalism. As for TV, channels that were followed the most were identified.

Media outlets where media monitoring was performed:

Birgün	Posta	Sözcü	Cumhuriyet	Yeni Şafak
Anadolu Agency	Habertürk	Bianet		
Fox TV	CNN Türk	Star TV		

The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) was utilised to identify monitoring indicators. GMMP<sup>5</sup> emerged in 1995 as a result of the conference on Women Empowering Communication organised by the WACC. The Global Media Monitoring Project has been instrumental for change in many places, from academic papers, to developing methodologies for monitoring projects in other areas such as ethnicity, and to policy-making processes. The GMMP's classic six main categories, namely "politics and governments", "economy", "science and health", "rights and legislation", "crime and violence", "celebrities/media/arts/sports", were joined by "gender and related issues" as a seventh topic in the monitoring in the year 2020.<sup>6</sup>

News items on women with disabilities that appeared in selected media outlets between January-December 2022 were determined. A total of 94 news items were analysed using indicators<sup>7</sup>. In addition, 6 TV main news bulletins were monitored and analysed on December 3, International Day of Persons with Disabilities and on a randomly selected day within the Disability Week between May 10<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>.

- 2 news items from Birgün newspaper
- 3 news items from Posta newspaper
- 8 news items from Sözcü newspaper
- 7 news items from Cumhuriyet newspaper
- 5 news items from Yeni Şafak newspaper

**a total of 25 newspaper articles were analysed**

- 51 news items from the Anadolu Agency news website
- 12 news items from the Habertürk website
- 6 news items from the Bianet website

**a total of 69 internet news items were analysed**

- News within 2 news bulletins from Fox TV television
- News within 2 news bulletins from Star TV television
- News within 2 news bulletins from CNN Turk television

**a total of 6 television news bulletins were analysed.**

The results of the monitoring study were analysed in the context of rights and freedoms provided within the scope of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD) and its Additional Protocols, the General Comments of the UN

<sup>5</sup> <https://whomakesthenews.org/the-gmmp/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://whomakesthenews.org/gmmp-2020-final-reports/>

<sup>7</sup> See ANNEX 2: Monitoring Indicators

Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and Law No. 5378 on Persons with Disabilities, Law No. 5510 on Social Security and General Health Insurance, Law No. 2828 on Social Services, Law No. 3294 on Encouraging Social Assistance and Solidarity, Law No. 5393 on Municipalities, Law No. 5216 on Metropolitan Municipalities, and the National Action Plan on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for 2023-2025.

<b>Relevant International Human Rights Standards</b>	<b>Areas of Fundamental Rights</b>
Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)	Equality, Right to life, Communication
United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) <sup>8</sup>	Accessibility, Right to life, Liberty and security of person, Freedom from exploitation, violence or abuse, Protecting the integrity of the person, Liberty of movement and nationality, Living independently and being included in the community, Personal mobility, Freedom of opinion and expression, and access to information, Respect for privacy, Respect for home and the family, Education, Health, Habilitation and rehabilitation, Work and employment, Adequate standard of living and social protection, Participation in political and public life, Participation in cultural life, recreation and leisure and sport
UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, General Comment No. 3 on Women and Girls with Disabilities	Discrimination, violence, access to justice
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)	Equality of opportunity in education, labour, health services, and in all aspects of economic and social life, equality in civil rights

<b>Relevant National Legislation, Action Plan</b>	<b>Areas of Fundamental Rights</b>
Law No. 5378 on Persons with Disabilities	Life, health, education, protection, participation in public life, accessibility, support for care
Law No. 5510 on Social Security and General Health Insurance Law No. 2828 on Social Services Law No. 3294 on Encouraging Social Assistance and Solidarity	Co-payment for prosthesis, orthosis, tools and equipment (Right to Health and Living Independently) Salary for women with disabled children Protection, care, rehabilitation, counselling and support services Equal opportunities in education and employment Accessibility Full participation in the spheres of culture, leisure, sport and religion Provision of orthopaedic and other auxiliary tools and equipment in accordance with standards (Right to Health and Living Independently)

<sup>8</sup> <https://insanhaklarimerkezi.bilgi.edu.tr/media/uploads/2015/08/03/EngellilerinHaklarinaIliskinSozlesme.pdf>

Law No. 5393 on Municipalities Law No. 5216 on Metropolitan Municipalities	Accessibility, Urban life, social services and benefits Service units for the disabled providing information, awareness raising, orientation, counselling, social and vocational rehabilitation services
National Action Plan on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for 2023-2025	Protection of rights and justice, Inclusive education, Health and well-being



## Representation of Women with Disabilities in the Media and Violations of Their Rights

Media is a concept that covers a wide range of communication tools including all kinds of verbal, written, printed, visual texts and images. This concept includes printed media such as newspapers, magazines, books, brochures and audio-visual communication instruments such as television, radio and cinema. Currently, the internet, billboards, social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and digital media have also been added to the scope of this concept. The media is often described as the 'fourth estate'<sup>9</sup> (after the legislature, executive and judiciary) and the 'third sector' after the public (state) and private sectors (economy). The media has also been described as the 'other government'<sup>10</sup>. Such a 'powerful' instrument should convince us that relations between us as citizens and institutions can be more democratic. We need the media to recognise that there are other lives, that others also have rights and freedoms, and to see the reflections of our political, social and cultural behaviour. The media must be the voice not only of those with power and property in society, but also of all those who are ignored, neglected, disempowered, alienated and marginalised.

Since the 1990s, the mobility and diversity in the media sector (such as the increase in the number of newspapers and televisions, the uncontrolled expansion of internet media, and the popularity of social media) have brought about new concerns regarding women's representation in the media. Media organisations resort to various means to gain more followers in a competitive environment and thus more profit, and while doing so, they continue to instrumentalise women, children, disabled people, LGBTI+ persons, refugees and all other neglected / disempowered segments. The dominance of an approach that reinforces the subordinate position of women in media products and content has led to a language that limits women to the roles of object of desire, sufferer/victim or wife/mother. This is the reproduction of gender roles shaped by patriarchal norms through the media. Women and girls with disabilities are also confined within these stereotypical representations and are subjected to double discrimination in terms of both gender and disability.

Media monitoring from a gender perspective deciphers the gender discriminatory discourse disseminated by the media through the content it produces and draws attention to the violence and discrimination reproduced through communication instruments. **'Media monitoring' is a new, necessary and effective way of combating all forms of gender-based discrimination, violations and violence in print / video / online / social media.** This is

<sup>9</sup> Carlyle, T. (1840)

<sup>10</sup> Rivers, W.L. (1982)

because the media is one of the spheres where the language of discrimination is most prevalent, and it is also the sphere where messages on combating discrimination can be disseminated to the broadest audience. Freedom of information, freedom of thought and expression are the rights guaranteed by international human rights conventions. Media organisations should encourage the exercise of these rights and inform the society accordingly. The media is both an effective instrument for NGOs in their advocacy activities and a goal for our fight against violence, hate and discrimination, which it mediates or contributes to their reproduction. From newspapers to television shows, from news websites to social media, all means of communication represent a great force in solving social problems. However, since most of these instruments are commercialised for profit, they often put their social responsibilities on the back burner or even forget about them.

Invisibility of women with disabilities leads to invisibility of their needs, experiences, problems, struggles, priorities, demands, achievements, labour, identities and the violations of rights that they are subjected to. As incomplete and false representations circulate in the examples of women with disabilities in media contents/products, prejudices are reinforced in the society, stereotypes become widespread and well-known mistakes are repeated.

In order to amend the circumstances that lead to rights violations, these violations need to become visible. In order to look at the media through the eyes of the 'marginalised', to strive for their visibility in the media, to develop a perspective to ensure that all neglected communities (such as the disabled, women, refugees, children...) are represented in the media without being subjected to any violations of rights, and to combat violations of the rights of the disabled in the media, it is essential to identify these violations in the first place. The way to do this is to use media monitoring with a critic's eye as a human rights monitoring tool. The main purpose of monitoring is "to provide a basis for action in the area subject to monitoring". It is carried out to make advocacy for the implementation of correct and effective laws and practices in the field in question based on the evaluations made.<sup>11</sup>

**It is necessary to utilise the potential of the disabled women's community in the production of media content.** Within the general struggle for the rights of the persons with disabilities, the struggle of women with disabilities is a unique domain and this domain needs a gender equality perspective. Organised and unorganised women have had to add the struggle against gender-based problems, equal access to resources, having a say in decision-making mechanisms, etc. to the struggle against the specific problems of the domain. The media, with all its institutions and instruments, is an important force in overcoming prejudices against persons with disabilities and raising public awareness on this issue. When used as an advocacy instrument, the media can facilitate the organisation of persons with disabilities.

**The first condition for creating a communication and media environment that respects the human rights of persons with disabilities is to ensure accessibility.** Accessibility, which is highlighted in Article 9 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ratified by Turkey, is not only related to the access of persons with disabilities to venues, public transport or services, but also to all tools, products, information, technology, etc. to ensure their full and effective participation in public life. *"Accessibility means that any place, product, content, service, facility, or even digital environment is understandable,*

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<sup>11</sup> Flying Broom Women's Communication and Research Association, from the book "Monitoring is a Must", 2013.



*accessible and usable by everyone, including people with disabilities and the elderly*<sup>12</sup>. People with disabilities frequently use media tools that are suitable and accessible to them. These tools and networks facilitate communication among people with disabilities, provide information about the happenings in the world, are used for leisure and entertainment purposes and facilitate the follow-up of daily work. Access to media by persons with disabilities is one of the requirements of living independently, and access to news and information by using digital tools without the help of others is a right for persons with disabilities. Making media content accessible for everyone is not a favour but a right. For this purpose, necessary arrangements should be made and facilitating measures should be taken, such as the provision of sign language interpretation and subtitles in television broadcasts and the presence of an accessibility menu on news websites. The fact that the news media in Turkey is not accessible to persons with disabilities constitutes a violation of their right to receive news, as well as a violation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

### **By conducting media monitoring,**

- Women with disabilities can uncover media representation strategies related to their own advocacy domains and issues.
- They can create public opinion for the transformation of these representations.
- They can play an active role in policy formulation and standards development processes on regulatory organisations in the field of broadcasting.
- They can create a pressing force in the development and dissemination of media ethics and professional principles, which media professional organisations are working on, in order to differentiate the representation of women.
- Their media monitoring reports may also be newsworthy for media organisations.
- They can transform their actions into long-term platforms and establish monitoring groups/networks.
- In order for women to develop strong media strategies, they can be provided with media training and support. In this way, women can build solidarity against the mainstream media in the international arena.
- They can contribute to uniting and empowering the women working in the media and increasing the social responsibility in the field of journalism.
- They can contribute to the development of a critical media literacy with a gender equality perspective.
- They can contribute to democratisation in the media through media monitoring activities.
- They can pave the way for women's increased participation in media and gender studies.

## **MONITORING FINDINGS**

In this part of the report, both the way in which the subjects of rights are reflected to the public and which rights are violated through the media are analysed by grouping according to the topics in which women and girls with disabilities are most frequently covered in the news media.

### **Violence: Sexual abuse, violence against women, femicide, neglect**

“For example, the first issue that comes to mind when we talk about women with disabilities is harassment and violence. When a disabled woman is subjected to violence, we start talking about how to support her, but we do not take a holistic view, we do not talk about their existence in all other aspects of life. On the one hand, it is actually a good thing that violence against women with disabilities has become so visible in the media because people are now aware of these situations. However, another consequence is that it creates

Women with disabilities and girls are heavily covered in the media with news on violence. Of the 14 news items we analysed (15.9% of all news items analysed), 6 were sexual abuse, 4 were femicide, 2 were violence against women, 1 was insult and 1 was neglect. These news items appear on media platforms under headings such as agenda, daily news, news of the day and breaking news. In none of the news items are women or girls with disabilities the primary source. In other words, the information conveyed was not taken directly from the person. In two of the news items, the statements given to the child monitoring centre and the court were also included. In terms of the use of visuals in the news, the use of photographs of the crime scene, the arrested person, the courthouse, the police headquarters, the police station, the woman or the girl who was subjected to violence or murdered, which is frequently encountered in violence against women and femicides, was also present in these news items.

Since the society perceives the sexuality and gender of women with disabilities as non-existent, the reporting of sexual assault or abuse attracts a lot of attention of readers/viewers; media outlets present the incident itself and the victim-subject in the worst way for more clicks/ ratings/ views. In order to prevent this, there is a need for a media that takes into account the risk of exposure to sexual violence of every disabled and non-disabled woman, and does not reproduce violence and create double victimisation while reporting on this issue. The Visual Archive for Sexual Violence News webpage prepared by the Association for Struggle Against Sexual Violence is an important source for encouraging press and media workers to use empowering visuals that are produced with a rights-based journalism approach and that convey the right message in their reporting on sexual violence.

<https://csgorselarsiv.org/>

It is seen in the news items that mentally disabled women are exposed to violence more frequently. The rest are women and girls with hearing impairment, Down syndrome and autism. It is understood that mentally disabled children, foreign nationals and elderly women are more at risk than the others. Mentally disabled persons, who do not have sufficient strength and capacity to defend themselves, are the "first choice" of perpetrators of violence as they may not recognise the perpetrators after the incident or their statements may not be trusted.

**Man who kicked the mentally disabled woman in Antep: I thought she was a man**

In Antep, [REDACTED] was arrested for kicking mentally disabled Syrian national [REDACTED] (70) while she was sitting on a bench. In [REDACTED]'s statement, he claimed that he did not know that the person he hit was a woman and said, "I lost my temper thinking that the incident might be aimed at kidnapping my daughter. I thought the person on the bench was a man and I committed the incident in a moment of anger." 6 June 2022, Birgün<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Article 21 of Press Law No. 5187 "violation of the prohibition of disclosure of identity" does not prohibit the reporting of news, but only restricts the manner in which the news is reported. What is sanctioned by this act, which the legislator characterizes as a crime in the aforementioned article and is referred to as the "violation of the prohibition of disclosure of

### **Terrible incident in Samsun! Mentally disabled woman found dead! Her brother arrested**

A 62-year-old mentally disabled woman was found dead in her house in the city. Initial investigation revealed that the woman was hit in the head. 3 of 4 people detained in connection with the incident were released after their statements at the prosecutor's office. The brother of the deceased woman was arrested. According to the allegations, the mentally disabled ..... was killed by R T, the brother of the mentally disabled ....., who lived with her in the same house and received care allowance, who hit her on the head with a stove poker because she defecated. *14 April 2022, Habertürk*

When we analyse the content of the news items in question, we see that especially in the case of sexual abuse, the incident is described in full detail and/or the person subjected to such violence is made to describe the incident. This reproduces the pornography of violence, makes readers curious about the details of the incident, and drives them to anger and hate. In this way, it fails to open up for discussion the obligations of the state, protective legal mechanisms, child, women and disability policies and press ethics. It is also revealed that the judicial process cannot protect the person subjected to sexual abuse from being repeatedly abused by describing the trauma they have experienced, and that special regulations for persons with disabilities do not seem to function at all.

### **Father who raped and impregnated his 14-year-old daughter gets sentenced**

In Diyarbakır, when the 14-year-old R.Ş. was taken to the hospital by her mother due to nausea and vomiting, the terrifying truth was revealed. R.Ş. who was determined to be pregnant at the hospital and her mother were turned over to the Children's Division of the Police by the hospital police. R.Ş's pregnancy was terminated when it became clear that the father of the baby in her womb was her own father. The court stated that they decided to deviate from the lower limit of the sentence considering the fact that he did not show any remorse during the trial, did not fulfil his responsibilities towards his family, did not work at any job, and his social relations. *20 July 2022, Sözcü*

### **15 years imprisonment for the tenant sexually abusing the landlord's disabled daughter**

....., 50, who was on trial in Zonguldak for allegedly sexually abusing his landlord's 59-year-old daughter, who was 70 percent mentally disabled, was sentenced to 15 years in prison. .... was arrested after the verdict. *3 June 2022, Sözcü*

While the publication of these news items reinforces judgments that disabled people can be easily abused, it also causes women with disabilities to avoid social life, socialization and romantic relationships and to approach these with fear. It also violates the right to "respect for home and family" (Article 23 of the UNCRPD) and the right to "live independently and being included in the community" (Article 19 of the UNCRPD). On the other hand, since there is a widespread belief in society that women with disabilities are seen as genderless and non-sexual, news items such as the one below can also cause readers to target their reactions to the victim rather than the perpetrator.

### **Hearing-impaired ..... was murdered, and her lifeless body was dumped in the woods**

It was revealed that the deaf and mute woman whose lifeless body was discovered in a forest area in Mersin on February 9, 2022 with her throat slit was murdered by her 'lover' who was also deaf and mute. *17 February 2022, Birgün*

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identity", is the disclosure of the identity of the persons who are the subject of the news or publishing in a way that leads to their identification. Printed works such as newspapers and magazines published at regular intervals and the publications of news agencies are included in this scope. In addition, **the Decision of the Personal Data Protection Board (KVKK) Dated 23/06/2020 And Numbered 2020/481 Regarding the Requests for the Removal of the Name And Surname of the Persons from the Index of the Results of the Searches Made Through Search Engines** contains the requirements for the implementation of the right to be forgotten. Finally, there is an obligation to protect the confidentiality of personal, health and rehabilitation information **under Article 22 "respect for privacy" of the UNCRPD**. However, this news item contains the first and last names of individuals. For this reason, in order to prevent further violations, the first and last name details were specifically covered with a red line.

### **Sexual harassment of mentally disabled woman in a shuttle bus**

....., a shuttle bus driver in Mamak district of Ankara, was arrested on charges of sexually assaulting B.A. (20), a mentally disabled woman going to a rehabilitation centre. In her testimony, B.A. claimed that she got on the shuttle bus on February 2 to go home from the rehabilitation centre, ..... took her to a deserted place after dropping everyone off, sexually assaulted her in the vehicle, and then threatened her with a knife so that she would not tell anyone. *1 March 2022, Posta*

Since mentally disabled women have difficulty making sense of sexual behaviours, it is easier for sexual offenders to claim that the victim consented, and the judiciary's decision in this direction means a violation of the human rights of the disabled person. The concepts of "consent and consent construction", which are quickly brought to the agenda when it comes to sexual offences against children and women and femicides, are frequently used as an "excuse" and even "accusation" method against women with disabilities, especially those who are mentally disabled. In selected news items, in order to mitigate sexual crimes for the accused, it is suggested that the woman consented because it is thought that mentally disabled women are unable to control sexual behaviour and that a sexual attack against them cannot be proven.

### **Mentally disabled woman sexually abused, prosecutor says 'she consented'**

The prosecutor demanded the acquittal of ..... (29) who was charged with abducting and sexually abusing ..... (27), a mentally disabled woman in Ankara. The prosecutor argued that the woman visited the defendant with her own consent. *12 September 2022, Sözcü*

### **15-year-old girl with autism who was abused: He forced me to get on the truck**

In the hearing of the lawsuit filed in Kocaeli regarding the accusation of sexual abuse of E.Z.İ., a 15-year-old girl with autism, who left her home to go to Hatay from Istanbul, against M.C., a truck driver with AIDS, O.D. and Ü.M., the young girl said, "I ran away from home, while I was walking on the road, M.C. forced me to get on the truck." *7 December 2022, Sözcü*

The news items on this subject portray the neglected disabled person as powerless, dependent, victimised, in need of help, and contain compositions that may damage the dignity of the person, both in terms of the way the news is reported and the visuals used. In the selected news items, it is also observed that sexual crimes against women with disabilities are depicted as a story.

### **Mentally disabled woman and five of her relatives taken under protection in Kocaeli**

In Gölcük district of Kocaeli, teams who went to the house upon a report were shocked by the tragedy they saw. A 23-year-old mentally disabled woman and her child, mother, grandmother and 2 siblings who stayed in a dark room and never spoke were taken under protection. It was determined that the 80-year-old grandmother had Alzheimer's disease and the mentally disabled woman stayed in a dark room. *15 November 2022, Yeni Şafak*

When analysed together with our indicators on gender and news content, it is understood that although there are elements of gender inequality or discrimination/rights violations/violence in these news items, the aim is not directly to draw attention to this issue. Gender clichés, prejudices and stereotypes are present in all analysed news items. Women and girls with disabilities are portrayed in the context of their family relationships. On the other hand, these news items do not contain information and messages to empower persons with disabilities and do not provide information on human rights, laws and legislation. The opinions of non-governmental organisations working on disability or disabled women are lacking. There is no language and content that provides guidance on violence against women and persons with disabilities and encourages them to use mechanisms to

seek their rights. No information is provided on emergency helplines, centres, etc. that women with disabilities can contact in case of violations of their human rights. To sum up, turning the newsworthiness of abuse, neglect and femicides into "rating material"<sup>14</sup> reproduces social violence through transmission and does not provide any contribution to the solution of the problem.

## Gender norms: marriage, sexuality, reproduction

Among the stereotypes regarding disability, it is frequently encountered in the representation of disabled women and girls in the news media that disabled people are genderless, that they are all asexual or heterosexual, that they do not/cannot marry, that they do not have any children, and that disabled women cannot give birth to children. Leaving women behind, excluding them, restricting their freedoms in social inclusion and coexistence in the public sphere leads women and girls with disabilities to a double disadvantaged position as a result of their disabilities. Sexual and reproductive health trainings are not accessible for women with disabilities. Women with disabilities undergo gynaecological examinations in the company of family members, and patient confidentiality is disregarded. Most healthcare professionals think that women with disabilities have no sexual life and ignore their needs for information and counselling. Attitudes and expectations of women with disabilities towards marriage and romantic relationships, sexuality and having children are ignored or not wanted to be known.

"I would like to elaborate a little more on the part that sexuality is one of the human rights and therefore desexualisation is a violation of rights. When sexuality is the privilege of only a certain group of people, only that group's sexual rights are defended, only that group can access sexuality-related services. Ignoring the sexual rights of persons with disabilities also means ignoring the fact that persons with disabilities, especially women and children with disabilities, are far more likely to experience sexual violence than persons without disabilities."

**Beyza Ünal (June 2018) Love is Love! What about Sexuality! Equal, Accessible, Barrier-Free Life Journal Issue: 52**

In our monitoring study, 5 news items (5.6% of all news items analysed) were about women with disabilities organising "representative/symbolic" weddings. In these news items, which were examples of the internalisation of gender clichés, prejudices and stereotypes by women with disabilities and their families, the photographs of women with autism, Down syndrome and mental disabilities in "white wedding gowns" together with their mothers, fathers, siblings and relatives were featured. In none of these news items under the captions such as the local agenda and the news of the day, women or girls with disabilities were not the primary source of information. In other words, the information conveyed was not directly obtained from the person.

### **The henna night dream of a mentally disabled 62-year-old woman in a wedding gown comes true**

In Ordu, the henna night dream of 62-year-old [REDACTED], who is mentally disabled, was realised by her sisters. Living in Tahtabaşı Quarter of Fatsa district, [REDACTED] wished to have a henna night wearing a wedding gown, and her sisters prepared invitations and rented a wedding hall. 16 December 2022, *Habertürk*

### **The wedding gown dream of [REDACTED] with Down syndrome comes true**

[REDACTED], a 24-year-old girl with Down syndrome living in Elaziğ, told her teachers and family at school that she would like to wear a wedding gown. Her teachers and family immediately took action to

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.ntv.com.tr/saglik/siddet-ve-taciz-haberleri-nasil-verilmeli,OxGdoWFWvk24dkTYbGgHBg#>

realise this dream of ..... Entering the hall amidst the applause of the guests, .....enjoyed herself to the fullest and was happy to wear a wedding gown. *13 Eylül 2022, Cumhuriyet*

#### **Self-sacrificing father makes his disabled daughter's wedding dream come true**

The biggest dream of .....who lived in Şekerpınar Quarter and had a congenital mental disability, was to be a bride. 31-year-old congenitally disabled young girl .....wore her dream wedding gown and her happiness was reflected on .....s face at the wedding ceremony held without a groom. Everyone in the quarter, from the hairdresser to the musician, from the cameraman to the wedding dress maker, was mobilised to make .....s dream come true in the most beautiful way. *18 July 2022, Sözcü*

In these stories, which do not go beyond the wearing of a white wedding gown by the disabled person or making the disabled person in question wear a white wedding gown and performing marriage rituals because she is a woman, the disabled woman's desire for romantic relationship, sexuality or having children is not addressed. With this disregard, the reader's sense of pity and compassion is fed, and the reader's awareness of the rights of women with disabilities in this context once again remains incomplete.

### **Care: Dependent living, self-sacrifice, poverty**

The biomedical, i.e. medical model perspective, which defines a disabled person as a person with a disorder and in need of medical care or treatment, points out that the need for care is always present and that the person in charge of this caring labour is mostly family members, and not the individual himself/herself. Therefore, the sacrifice and devotion of mothers, fathers, siblings or other members of the family and relatives, or the shouldering the burden of caring labour by these persons is one of the most common reasons for media coverage of women and girls with disabilities.

In our monitoring study, we observed that the sacrifice of mothers with disabled children and the success or inclusion of disabled girls in public life thanks to the sacrifice of their mothers are always on the radar of the news media. The 12 news items analysed (13.6% of all news items analysed) are mostly about disabled girls and women who recovered, continued their treatment, received education and had a profession thanks to the sacrifice of their mothers. The stereotype that the burden of childcare is the responsibility of women and mothers, which is one of the manifestations of gender inequality, also extends to women with disabilities. Among the news items, there are also some that glorify the caring labour of a disabled mother. On media platforms, these news items appear under the headlines of life or local news. In almost all of the news items, the disabled woman or girl is not the primary source of information. The mother speaks on behalf of the child and explains her own situation and that of her child. Only in three news items, the mother's statements are featured predominantly, while the opinions of her daughter, who is the main subject of the news item, are featured to a lesser extent. In terms of the use of visuals in the news, the way mothers of disabled children or disabled mothers with children are represented corresponds with gender stereotypes. In most of them, images are used not individually, but in the same frame with their children in the home environment, while doing housework or caring for their children, carrying them, embracing them. In this type of news, photographs are always used. Disabled individuals are clearly shown as disabled. Child and adult faces are used. In the same manner, the name, age, province and district information of the individuals are also included.

#### **She devoted her life to her mentally disabled children**



In Efeler district of Aydin, 67-year-old self-sacrificing mother ..... takes care of her 4 mentally disabled children, one of whom is a cancer patient, with love and compassion. While the father ..... is engaged in farming, their mother takes care of all the needs and care of their mentally disabled children, the youngest of whom is 25 years old, such as combing their hair, dressing them, feeding them. *7 May 2022, Anadolu Agency*

**Self-sacrificing mother devoted her life to her disabled daughters**

....., who lives in Altnordu district of Ordu, cares for her mentally and physically disabled daughters with great compassion. ...., 59-year-old mother of 4 children, told AA correspondent that she has no social life because she has been taking care of her children for many years. Explaining that she spends time with her daughters at home and takes care of their personal needs as well as their nutrition, ..... said, "Seeing a smile on my children's faces is more than enough for me. First Elif, then Ceylan, this is how I take care of my children. They are my special children. I love my children very much." *8 May 2022, Anadolu Agency*

The general framework and content of the news items bear a point of view that proves the need for care of the disabled persons (physically disabled, mentally disabled, hearing impaired, visually impaired, with cerebral palsy, with autism), their dependence on their mother or parents, and the limitations of their skills and competences, freedom of expression and decision-making capacity. Thus, this legitimises the violation of many human rights of persons with disabilities in terms of Article 17 (protecting the integrity of the person), Article 19 (living independently and being included in the community), Article 21 (freedom of opinion and expression, and access to information), Article 22 (respect for privacy), Article 23 (respect for home and the family), Article 27 (work and employment), Article 28 (adequate standard of living and social protection), Article 29 (participation in political and public life), and Article 30 (participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport) of the UNCRPD. There is no content questioning the obligations and support mechanisms of public institutions and especially the status of support provided to the families that are the subject of the news.

**A self-sacrificing mother has been diligently caring for her disabled daughter for 56 years**

....., a 76-year-old woman living in Suluova district of Amasya, states that when she gets up in the morning, she first prepares breakfast for her daughter and gives her medication. .... states, "She is also a kidney patient. She cannot stand next to anyone other than me, I feed her like a baby. They ask me, "Is it hard for you? Isn't it difficult?" It is difficult, but she is my heart, my all. You cannot rip your child out of you." She says that she never leaves her daughter alone for a moment, so she is unable to leave the house. *20 June 2022, Anadolu Agency*

**Grandfather Hasan takes care of his 45-year-old disabled daughter**

In Suluova district of Amasya, 82-year-old ....., who lost his wife 5 years ago, takes care of his 45-year-old disabled daughter so that he could be a complete substitute for his mother. ...., the father who sees his disabled daughter as a bequest of his wife, meets all his daughter's needs from food to personal care with the help of his daughter-in-law ....., with whom they have lived in the same building for 5 years. .... told the AA correspondent that when his daughter is happy, all his tiredness goes away and he is the happiest person in the world. *18 April 2022, Anadolu Agency*

Another reflection of discrimination against persons with disabilities in issues related to marriage, family, parenting and intimate relationships is the news items that try to prove that mothers with disabilities are 'adequate mothers'. Two news items in our monitoring study that mention this issue use sexist stereotypes to 'glorify' women with disabilities.

**She cares for her children devotedly: My disability does not prevent me from being a mother**

....., a mother of three living in Pendik, Istanbul, devoted herself to her children after she lost her legs in an operation in 2008. Taking care of her children devotedly, ..... said, "My disability does not prevent me from being a mother". 8 May 2022, *Yeni Şafak*

#### **Disabled mother who lost her husband while pregnant holds on to life with her daughters**

In Düzce, the 35-year-old ....., who became disabled after her left hand and right arm got stuck in an agricultural machinery, copes with the difficulties she faces after the loss of her husband with the love of her daughters. ....., who makes a living with the salary of her husband and performs household chores alone despite her disability, overcomes the difficulties she faces with the love of her children. .... is also highly admired by those around her for her self-sacrifice and perseverance. 7 May 2022, *Anadolu Agency*

Emotional labour: "Caring always includes attention and affection; therefore, within patriarchal ideology, **the concept of caring is always associated with the role of "womanhood"**. Characteristics attributed to womanhood in patriarchal cultures, such as compassion, softness, tolerance and suffering, are functional in terms of increasing the quality of care, ensuring its continuity and reducing its cost. At the same time, these characteristics also reproduce gender inequality by reinforcing the subordinate position of the caring woman"

**Reyhan Atasü-Topcuoğlu, "Will Social Rights Become Marketable? Kindergartens in Turkey at the Intersection of Children's Rights and Women's Labour"**

In the other news items analysed, the news items are constructed around women's responsibility for child care and the fact that the burden of caring for children with disabilities is greater and more challenging compared to other children. In these news items, we encounter "innocent and angelic" children, "heroic" parents/mothers and "doomed" family typologies. The title "Mother's sacrifice - The self-sacrificing mother" is frequently used. Information regarding the position of men in this 'sacrifice' in the care of their children is not questioned in the news items. However, there are clues to the fact that these women, who devote themselves and their entire lives to their disabled children, do not take part in work life. Information on how and by whom their livelihood is provided, how and at what level the health and special needs of the disabled person are met are rarely covered in the news. We are unable to get information about the well-being of persons with disabilities, which is directly related to the provision of human rights such as housing, education, health and protection. The positive picture is portrayed with the search for solutions to the underlying problems gropingly and on their own by the individuals and their families and with their 'gratitude' for having a bare minimum of life. The dependence of these families struggling with poverty on pensions and disability pensions is also revealed.

#### **The university dream of ..... with cerebral palsy comes true with the self-sacrifice of her mother**

In Bursa, 22-year-old ....., who has "brain paralysis" known as cerebral palsy, enjoys the happiness of studying at the university thanks to the self-sacrifice of her mother who has accompanied her throughout her education life. The 46-year-old mother ....., who struggles to live with her daughter in a rental house with 2 rooms and a toilet in the garden in Osmangazi district, has accompanied her daughter to school since primary school and throughout her lessons so that her child can get a good education. The mother, who drives ....., who has made her dream of studying at the university a reality, to school with her battery-powered vehicle for the disabled, waits for her at school until her lessons are over. 16 March 2023, *Anadolu Agency*

#### **Self-sacrificing mother devotes her life to her daughter with Cerebral Palsy who wishes to become a teacher**

....., a mother of two living in Yozgat, has devoted her whole life to her daughter with Cerebral Palsy (CP), commonly known as brain paralysis. The devoted mother, who takes her 8-year-old daughter



..... back and forth to school every day since kindergarten so that she is not deprived of her education, greatly facilitates her daughter's life. *13 May 2023, Habertürk*

**..... with cerebral palsy wins the 5-year battle against leukaemia**

Born with cerebral palsy (CP), commonly known as "brain paralysis", 22-year-old ..... beat the leukaemia she had been fighting for 5 years with her determination to live and the support of her mother who never left his side. When my daughter was in the first grade, her primary school teacher said to me, "She will never amount to anything. Take her and teach her how to wash the dishes. But my daughter has always completed her schooling with certificates of high achievement and appreciation." *7 April 2022, Anadolu Agency*

**Disability is a development issue**, because of its bidirectional link to poverty: disability may increase the risk of poverty, and poverty may increase the risk of disability... Households with a disabled member are more likely to experience material hardship – including food insecurity, poor housing, lack of access to safe water and sanitation, and inadequate access to health care.

**World Health Organisation (2011) World Report on Disability, Page 10**

The analysed 3 news items focus on income-generating activities of the disabled women who contribute to the family income. The cycle of poverty, education and employment is a tough reality for the disabled women.

**Disabled woman contributes to the family budget by selling the ornaments she makes**

Living in Altınova town of Korkut district, the 33-year-old ..... took the art she learned in the ornaments course at the Directorate of Public Education Centre to her home. ....., who is wheelchair-bound due to the illness she suffered at a young age, both holds on to life and makes financial contribution to her family with the ornaments she makes. *18 Ocak 2022, Habertürk*

**..... with Cerebral Palsy works both as a peddler and motivational coach**

....., who earns her living as a peddler and certified motivational coach in Ankara, is now pursuing her goal of becoming a champion with her determination in sports. ....., who has been earning her living as a peddler in Kızılay for about 7 years, comes to Kızılay every day by bus and opens her stall with the help of shopkeepers. *30 Mayıs 2022, Anadolu Agency*

**The "pancake maker lady" of the local bazaar in Yalova embraces her life with one hand**

The 70-year-old ....., who opens a stall and makes pancakes in the local bazaar opened every week in Yalova, lives her life with only one hand without being dependent on anyone. "Many people look at us with pity because we have disabilities. We earn our bread even though we are disabled. I have to work because my house is a rental. I was born without an arm, but I do not give up on my struggle in life." *17 September 2022, Anadolu Agency*

In these news items, which provide evidence on how gender inequality, poverty and deprivation negatively affect the fulfilment of all rights of women and girls with disabilities, including the right to access care, there are no direct references to these manifestations of discrimination. There are no information or opinions on the points of reference, institutions, existing mechanisms or NGOs working in this field that can eliminate or prevent these situations or where the violation can be reported. Instead of drawing attention to the issue of "narrating human stories", these news items reinforce and disseminate stereotypes by repeating discriminatory and exclusionary typologies.

## Success Stories: Miracles in sports, arts, education

The findings of the 2020 Monitoring Report on Gender Equality in Sports in Turkey, conducted by the Association of Sport and Physical Activity for Women (KASFAD) in

collaboration with "Girls on the Field", reveal inequality in the level of participation in sports. While approximately 35 thousand out of four million male athletes are disabled, approximately 10 thousand out of two million female athletes are disabled. In other words, one third of total number of athletes and only one fourth of total number of disabled athletes are women. Inequality of opportunity in sports management and coaching is also very striking. People with disabilities are very rarely seen in management and among coaches, and these persons are men.

The acknowledgement that sports, arts, cultural activities and the like, i.e. actions that are physical and take place "in front of everyone - in public space" can also be performed by persons with disabilities is primarily shaped by the inner and outer motivation<sup>15</sup> of persons with disabilities and even their families, partners, social circles, and by the existence of convenient settings and conditions. The fact that these actions make women and girls with disabilities feel "free", "normal", "unlimited", create a positive body image and enhance social interaction provides motivation.

The portrayal of women and girls with disabilities in the media as success stories is mostly through the news on sports activities and the medals and championships they have won. The news items on women with hearing, speaking, visual, intellectual disabilities and cerebral palsy who are athletes in the fields of karate, taekwondo, judo, weightlifting, badminton, tennis, sailing, swimming, handball, basketball and arm-wrestling are mostly published by Anadolu Agency. Among the 40 news items we analysed (45.5% of all news items analysed), 25 of them feature achievements in sports, 5 in arts (music) and 10 in education. These news items appear on media platforms under the headings such as life, sports, current news, and education. Sports news mostly start with the direct narration by the primary source, namely the disabled woman or girl, followed by the statements of the secondary source (mother/father, coach, federation president). In these news items, both portraits of women or girls athletes on their own, in uniforms during training or competitions, and photos of them side by side with their coaches or parents are used.

#### **Karate athlete [REDACTED] becomes Turkey's first mentally disabled woman champion**

The disabled athlete [REDACTED] (19) became Turkey's first mentally disabled woman champion in karate in Izmir. [REDACTED] (48) stated that he is proud of his daughter [REDACTED]'s success in karate, which she started as a hobby, and that they aim to represent Turkey abroad. *30 December 2022, Habertürk*

#### **National judoka with hearing and visual impairment trains with the dream of becoming a Paralympic champion**

Stating that she has achieved success in various championships in Turkey and in the world, [REDACTED] has emphasized that she has made it to this day with her own efforts both in her education and in the field of sports. Those who train together with national judoka [REDACTED] states that [REDACTED] is a role model for all athletes. "Some disabled people isolate themselves from the world. [REDACTED] is not like that. The fact that she overcame her disabilities and does sports with us here is an exemplary situation." *26 September 2022, Anadolu Agency*

#### **Paralympian [REDACTED]'s goal is to become world champion in sailing**

[REDACTED], who decided to become a professional swimmer 9 years ago with the guidance of her sister, won 39 Turkish championships, 2 Turkish runner-up titles, swam 6.5 kilometres in the Samsung Bosphorus Cross-Continental Swimming Race and ranked third in the para-general classification and first in the para-women. In addition, [REDACTED] won many Turkish championships in sailing, as well as a bronze medal at the Paralympic World Championships held in Italy last year. *8 September 2022, Anadolu Agency*

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<sup>15</sup> Tekkurşun Demir, G. ve İlhan, L. (2020)

In the news items that reveal the link between disability and poverty or inequality between regions, it is seen that the support mechanisms of athletes in overcoming challenges are their families and coaches or team managers. This indicates that goal and success-oriented motivation brings a kind of recognition of the individual autonomy of the disabled person in the public sphere and social life.

**Disabled national tennis player ..... from Şırnak progresses step by step towards her goals**

The 16-year-old national athlete ..... from Şırnak, who has achieved successful results in wheelchair tennis, which she started about 3 years ago, works uninterruptedly for her Olympic dream despite being away from her family. Stating that his athlete proved herself in a short time, ..... said, "It was the story of ..... that impressed us the most. Her interest in sports in a place as Şırnak, where financial possibilities and conditions are tough, surprised us. We train intensively with ..... 5 days a week." 6 August 2022, Anadolu Agency

**Boccia National Team player SMA patient ..... 's motivational coach is her father**

....., a 60-year-old father of three living in Kocaeli, dedicated his life to his 26-year-old daughter ..... The father, a retired worker, who learned about the illness of his daughter ....., whom he calls "my angel", at the age of 1, sets an example for everyone with the love and care he shows to his child. ..... said: "I have never been a disabled person who has been confined to the house. Despite all the hardships, my father and mother have always stood behind me. I graduated from a university's business administration associate degree programme. After finishing school, I have started practising Boccia. I have been doing this sport for four years." 18 June 2022, Anadolu Agency

**The success of visually impaired .....**

The 19-year-old ....., who is visually impaired since birth and supports her father, a janitor in Diyarbakır, in his work, has succeeded in becoming a champion in judo and weightlifting in Turkey. ....., whose talent in judo and weightlifting was discovered by the Head of Kayapınar Municipality Sports Club for the Disabled when she was studying in secondary school, confined herself to her home due to the challenges she faced because of her disability after graduating from the secondary school. ....., who continued her high school education through open education, distributed bread, cleaned the building and the housing estate, and collected garbage to help her father, a janitor, and did not neglect her trainings at the sports facilities of the Provincial Directorate of Youth and Sports. 12 September 2022, Sözcü

Arts and education news mostly begin with the direct testimony of the primary source, i.e. the disabled woman or girl (visually impaired, hearing impaired, physically disabled, having cerebral palsy); from time to time, the testimony of the secondary source (mother/father, colleague, teacher) is also included. In terms of the use of visuals in these news items, there are photographs of women or girls who are musicians or teachers, mostly alone, performing their profession, at school/on stage, sometimes side by side with their parents, friends, students or audience. The language and content of the news items again create a context that heroises the subject of the news item with the expressions "overcoming obstacles/difficulties" and "perseverance knows no boundaries".

**....., who learnt 3 foreign languages with her perseverance, holds on to life despite her disorder**

....., 25-year-old Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA) type 2 patient living in Kayseri, sets an example with her perseverance to hold on to life. "I have 60 dreams. I have realised 30 of them. I have a friend in Norway. She has the same disease as me and she has 5 helpers. She goes everywhere and travels the world. I would like to live a life like that too. After I finish school, if I have the chance, I would like to do a master's degree in Germany. Then maybe I can become an academic or work as an interpreter." 19 August 2022, Anadolu Agency

**The young woman who got out of her silent world by reading lips aims to become a teacher**

....., who lost her hearing after meningitis when she was only 4 years old and could only hear at the level of 5 electrodes with cochlear implant (bionic ear) surgery, has learnt to speak by reading lips and is now studying at the university. *18 May 2022, Anadolu Agency*

#### **She enters science high school in her hospital room and ranks 1st in Adiyaman in Higher Education Institutions Exam**

....., who suffered partial paralysis after a traffic accident, continued her education in the hospital room and entered science high school in Adiyaman, completed the rest of her high school education in a wheelchair. Explaining that she did not give up after the accident, ..... said, "I embraced myself as I am and thought 'how can I do the best in this way?' I continued my education in the hospital where I received treatment and won the science high school." *22 July 2022, Anadolu Agency*

Heroisation of the women with disabilities, especially those who choose the teaching profession, is a path frequently resorted to by the news media. "Shining a light", "being hope", "working with dedication" and "perseverance" are the concepts that are frequently used in the news. This manipulative reader-guiding language, which turns into an implicit comparison with teachers without disabilities, creates discrimination by reinforcing the discourse of "despite your disability, if you want it, it can be done", which is the most commonly used discourse regarding the persons with disabilities. Such news reinforces the attitude that women with disabilities can only be the subject of news when they display a "success" or when they are sufferer/victims. While it is not newsworthy for a woman without a disability to graduate from law faculty, for example, the fact that someone who "succeeds" is a visually impaired woman causes the media to cover her as a miracle; however, inclusive education, accessibility conditions and gender-based inequalities are not mentioned at all.

#### **Visually impaired teacher, who becomes a teacher with her love of education, prepares her students for life**

....., who overcame difficulties and became a Turkish teacher despite her congenital visual disability, works devotedly to prepare students for the future at Ayrancilar Secondary School in Torbalı district of Izmir. *15 March 2022, Anadolu Agency*

#### **Visually impaired minister of religion gives hafiz education to sighted students**

In Istanbul, ....., a visually impaired Qur'an teacher, educates her students with Braille alphabet and trains new hafiz. The 30-year-old ....., who has been visually impaired since birth, became a hafiz at the age of 21 by receiving education from a visually impaired teacher like herself. *1 Eylül 2022, Anadolu Agency*

#### **Physically disabled librarian sheds light on students with her love of education**

....., who completed two undergraduate degrees and became a librarian in Bingöl despite not having two arms from the elbow and two legs from the kneecap, completed an associate degree and a master's degree programme with thesis with her determination to read. She sets an example for students with her love of education in the school library where she works. *28 February 2022, Anadolu Agency*

#### **Sheds light on hundreds of students without sight**

....., a literature teacher with congenital visual impairment, said: "Not seeing is not an obstacle, it is important to aspire. If my hands were unable to hold and my eyes could see, I would still do what I aspired." ....., a visually impaired Turkish language and literature teacher working in Çankırı, prepares her students, whom she sees with her inner eye, for the future with her determination and love of profession. *11 January 2022, Anadolu Agency*

On the other hand, arts news items focus on the achievements of disabled women and girls who play musical instruments (piano, kemenche), compose and sing. In these news items, direct reports and photographs of the disabled person alone or with friends are featured. As

in sports news, the goal and success-oriented motivation reflected in these news makes the reader feel the autonomy of the disabled person.

The arts news do not discuss the challenges faced by people with disabilities in entering conservatories, the ways of gaining access to musical notation and instruments, rights-based arts curricula, and only focus on their personal stories. It is important for gender equality that women and girls are recognised and encouraged for their artistic production. However, applauding and never criticising a disabled woman simply because she is disabled hinders women's progress in the arts and their ability to strengthen their creativity through new discoveries. On the other hand, it serves as an example of the compassion approach. Offering extra cheers and compliments to people just because they have a disability, saying that they have done very well even if what they have done is incomplete and wrong, not only discriminates against people without disabilities who demonstrate the same skills, but also causes a pitying attitude towards people with disabilities.

**Visually impaired ..... wishes to announce the victory of the Turkish nation to the world with her composition**

....., who is visually impaired and can play four instruments, wishes to announce the victory of the Turkish nation to the whole world with her piece "Victory Road", whose lyrics and music belong to her, which she performed for the Victory Day. ...., a 12th grade student at Ankara Fine Arts High School, was named "Music Artist of the Year" at the Barrier-Free Art Awards held in 2020 with her talent in qanun, piano and guitar. *28 August 2022, Anadolu Agency*

**The music of ....., the "artist with no barriers", echoes around the world**

....., who was born with achondroplasia, a type of hereditary dwarfism, and diagnosed with MS, defies obstacles with her kemenche. TRT artist ..... makes the whole world listen to her classical kemenche. *29 August 2022, Anadolu Agency*

**The visually impaired ....., the 'marvellous child of music', is discovered at BİLSEM**

....., who lost her eyesight after brain surgery, is rapidly progressing towards becoming a world-class artist with nearly 50 compositions after the education she started at BİLSEM with her ability to play the music she hears on the piano without the need for notes. *18 May 2022, Anadolu Agency*

**..... with down syndrome from Diyarbakır plays the piano and sings in the choir**

....., a 12-year-old with Down syndrome in Diyarbakır, plays the piano and sings in the choir with the support of her music teacher at the Aktfi Life Centre, where she receives special education. *12 May 2022, Anadolu Agency*

**She overcomes obstacles with the applause of her audience whom she does not see**

....., who is visually impaired since birth, works as a guidance and psychological counsellor at a school for the visually impaired in Ankara on weekdays and performs as a soloist and presenter on weekends. *15 January 2022, Anadolu Agency*

The first event of the "Music Accessible for Children" project was held at the Museum of Anatolian Civilisations with the exploration of the special museum education-experience area and a classical music concert designed for visually impaired children. Children were introduced to history, culture, classical music and ballet by touching, hearing and speaking. The event was organised with 15 children to foster one-to-one communication and participation.

**Accessible music for visually impaired children, 23 August 2022, Bianet**

There is no information or commentary on the rights of women and girls or gender equality in these success stories. There is minimal information about the regulations concerning the right of persons with disabilities "to participate in cultural life, recreation and leisure and sport" (Article 30 of the UNCRPD) and the activities of NGOs, public institutions and local

authorities. This information is mostly provided in brief remarks made by the coaches of the athletes, managers of sports clubs, teachers and administrators of educational institutions. There is no directive information on points of reference, institutions and existing mechanisms. However, this representation is inspiring and encouraging, especially for women and girls with disabilities, as well as challenging stereotypes and raising awareness. Reference to rights and current activities can be a method that enhances this awareness.

### **Life and Development: Health care, social security, autonomy**

There is a common understanding that it is necessary to shift from a needs-based or charity-oriented approach to a rights-based approach<sup>16</sup> and to build development on this basis so as to eliminate the inequalities and problems experienced by individuals and communities and their long-term effects and to prevent them from recurring in the future. The rights-based approach, which is rooted in international law and incorporates universal, holistic, accountable, participatory and egalitarian principles, governs the relationship between rights-holders and the duty-bearer state in order to prevent discriminatory attitudes and behaviours.

People with disabilities frequently come to the fore with news items concerning healthcare services in connection with their right to life and development, and violations of the right to life. In our monitoring study, 4 of the 7 news items (7.9% of all news items analysed) in this context are related to the right to health and 3 of them are about missing persons cases. These news items appear on media platforms under the headings such as agenda, health, life, breaking news. The news items start with the testimonies of the secondary source (mother/father, caregiver), followed by the testimonies of the primary source, i.e. the disabled woman or girl. Regarding the use of visuals in the news, similar to violence against women and success stories, there is the use of the photographs of crime scenes, women or girls.

The general framework and content of the news on access to healthcare services once again emphasises the caring labour and reveals the interconnection between health and social security practices. Furthermore, Article 25 of the UNCRPD indicates that there are gaps in taking all appropriate measures to ensure "the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health". The costs of medication, medical equipment, examinations, follow-up, treatment, habilitation and rehabilitation services are regular expenses for the caregivers of persons with disabilities and items of using social security systems. The effort and obligation to meet these endless needs impoverishes, exhausts and worries families. This is reflected in the news in the form of stories about the drama of "destitute" families "waiting for help". These pity-inducing news items overshadow the problems and priorities of persons with disabilities who are unable to benefit equally from the right to health and whose rights are violated through institutions/laws/practices, and weaken the advocacy reflex regarding the obligations of the social state. Media outlets that narrate rights violations with this approach, thus, negate their responsibility to act as a pressure force and cause the victim to be further victimised.

#### **Time is running out for 1.5-year-old [REDACTED] with SMA**

The campaign launched nearly a year ago for the treatment of SMA patient [REDACTED] came to an end. Only one third of the 1 million 800 thousand million dollars needed for the expenses could be collected. 21 April 2022, Cumhuriyet

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<sup>16</sup> <https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values/human-rights-based-approach>



#### **Father of ..... with SMA who lives as dependent on 4 devices: Even 1 lira is our hope**

..... (3.5), a SMA Type 1 patient in Tekirdağ, is battling for her life at her home as dependent on 4 devices. ....., whose heart has stopped 3 times so far and held on to life, has reached 37 per cent in the aid campaign launched with the permission of the governor's office ..... 's father ..... (26) said, "We are experiencing very unfortunate events in this tough process. ....'s 4 aid moneyboxes have been stolen so far. Do not steal moneyboxes, even 1 lira is our hope". 28 November 2022, Cumhuriyet

#### **..... with cerebral palsy, who had difficulty walking for years, took her first steps**

..... a 12-year-old girl with Cerebral Palsy (CP), started to walk by taking her first steps after years of physiotherapy and rehabilitation. Stating that ..... continued her schooling on the one hand and received physiotherapy and rehabilitation on the other, her mother ..... stated that they went through a very tough and exhausting process. 8 October 2022, Habertürk

Cases of missing persons with mental disabilities, Down syndrome and autism come to the spotlight as the news related to the search and rescue efforts of law enforcement authorities are covered in the press. These news also show us the extent to which the skills and experiences of persons with disabilities and especially women and girls in terms of living independently, using public spaces, accessing information and protection are limited, disempowered and neglected. Statements indicating that the found persons are "handed over to their families" reinforce in the minds of readers the stereotype of "a person in need of care and protection, lacking autonomy and freedom" that is emphasised by the medical model. Cases of disappearances of mentally disabled women are mostly reported as cases in which they leave their homes and wander away; journalists do not question the possibility of domestic violence and abuse in cases of disappearances, and that women may have been abducted for sexual exploitation. Guiding information on which screening tests the missing person with mental disability should undergo when found, how his/her statement should be taken, and what the family/caregivers should do are not included in the news items.

#### **Mentally disabled woman who went missing in Antalya found**

District Gendarmerie Command teams launched a search for ..... (50), a mentally disabled woman who was not heard from after leaving her home in Abdurrahmanlar Quarter 2 days ago. The teams analysed the records of the security cameras on the route and found the missing woman sitting alone behind the school in Pınarlı Quarter of Aksu district. ...., who was in good health, was handed over to her family. 22 December 2022, Habertürk

#### **Missing ..... with Down syndrome found after 5 hours**

..... (6) with down syndrome, who went missing in Karakoçan district of Elazığ, was found 9 kilometres away from her home by gendarmerie teams within 5 hours. ...., who was apparently fatigued from walking, was taken to a health check in the arms of the gendarmerie. ...., who was in good health, was then handed over to her family. 1 April 2022, Habertürk

#### **The mentally disabled woman who went missing was found on the beach, the person with her was detained**

....., who is an 80 per cent mentally disabled woman in İzmit, was not heard from again after leaving her home last Saturday night. Upon the report, the police launched a city-wide search for the missing young girl. The police team patrolling the İzmit coast in the morning hours today saw ..... walking on the beach with a person. The detained person ..... said "We met on the beach. I was going to buy her a meal since she said she was hungry". 30 August 2022, Posta

Although the analysed news items contain elements related to several rights of the disabled persons and women such as health, social protection, personal freedom and security, personal mobility, living independently and participation in social life, they do not contain awareness-raising or empowering messages. There is no information about institutions, NGOs or local governments etc. that women with disabilities or their relatives can resort to

on these issues. In brief, there is no content that provides guidance and encourages the use of the mechanisms for seeking rights.

## **Accessibility: Disasters, emergencies, public life**

The UNCRPD defines the universal design as the design of products, environments, programmes and services in such a way that they can be used by everyone as far as possible, without the need for special additional design or regulation.<sup>17</sup> The Ministry of Family and Social Services similarly recognises accessibility as "the safe and independent accessibility and usability of buildings, open spaces, transport and information services, and information and communication technologies by persons with disabilities"<sup>18</sup> and highlights that it is legally obligatory to organise urban life in accordance with the provisions of the Law No. 5378 on Persons with Disabilities in order to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities. The National Action Plan on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2023-2025) also points out that accessibility is both a principle and a right under the heading of inclusive and accessible society.

However, legislation and policies are not sufficient. The perceptions, attitudes and behaviours of the whole society and the individuals constituting the society must change and transform so that the motto of the Everything Accessible team, "If there is accessibility, there is no disability", can be realised. Thus, accessible environment, transport, information and communication and services, which are one of the prerequisites for inclusion in society and living an independent life as mentioned in Article 19 of UNCRPD, should be easily and constantly accessible and available to all persons with disabilities. In the monitoring study, 7 news items (7.9% of all news items analysed) indicate that the rights of women and girls with disabilities are disregarded in inaccessible buildings and cities. When we analyse the content of the news items using the statements of secondary sources and crime scene visuals, we come across a structure that appeals to the reader's feelings of pity and compassion, in a similar vein to the other analysed news items.

### **Disabled girl dies in flooded house in Burdur due to heavy rain, her mother hospitalised**

The physically and mentally disabled ..... (53) and her mother ..... (75), who were living in the basement of a building on Umut Street in Aydınlikevler Quarter, were trapped in their house due to flooding after a heavy rain. The mother and daughter, who were taken out of the house after a while by the teams dispatched to the scene upon notification, were taken to Burdur State Hospital. .... could not be saved despite the interventions. Her mother ..... was discharged after treatment. *4 June 2022, Anadolu Agency*

### **She barely managed to get herself out of the building with her electric wheelchair during the earthquake**

During the earthquake in Düzce, a woman with special needs living alone told about the terrifying moments she experienced. After the earthquake, the woman, who barely managed to get out of the building with her electric wheelchair and went to the booth set up by Düzce Municipality and explained that she had no place to stay; and she will be temporarily accommodated in a nursing home. *23 November 2022, Yeni Şafak*

### **The police rescues the person trapped in the flooded house: I will carry you on my back if necessary**

The police rescued a disabled woman and her elderly mother who were trapped in a flooded house after heavy rain in Antalya. Seeing the disabled woman and her mother sitting on the sofa in the house

<sup>17</sup> <https://universaldesign.ie/What-is-Universal-Design/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.aile.gov.tr/sss/engelli-ve-yasli-hizmetleri-genel-mudurlugu/erisilebilirlik/>



with the floor full of water, the police said, "Sister, I cannot let you get cold, I will carry you on my back if necessary." *12 December 2022, Yeni Şafak*

Evacuation and care of persons with disabilities in disasters, continuity of ongoing treatments and accessibility measures related to disaster protection are almost never covered in the media. Only disabled people who "survived" or "lost their lives" in disasters are covered in the news. The lack of disaster management inclusive of persons with disabilities is not mentioned. In addition, the specific needs and problems of women with disabilities during and after disasters are not brought to the agenda.

On the other hand, in three news items, there are examples of the realisation of the right to "living independently and being included in the community" (Article 19 of the UNCRPD), "personal mobility" (Article 20), "liberty of movement" (Article 18), "access to justice" (Article 13), "education" (Article 24), sometimes through solutions devised by individuals on their own, sometimes through their advocacy and sometimes through the initiatives of local institutions.

**They learn the historical and cultural richness of the country through sign language with 'barrier-free tour'**

Within the scope of the programme, 80 women who are members of the women's council established 6 years ago within the Turkish Hearing Impaired Association went on a cultural tour of 3 regions. Mardin was the 5th stop of the women who travelled for kilometres and visited the historical and cultural sites of Antakya, Adıyaman, Diyarbakır and Batman accompanied by 3 guides and 2 sign language interpreters. *30 September 2022, Anadolu Agency*

**The best school report card gift for the visually impaired pianist İrem**

Yalova Municipality made a Visually Impaired Tracking System Road as a report card gift to ..... who is visually impaired and also diagnosed with autism, studying at Yalova Fine Arts High School. .... who was greeted by her classmate ..... every time she came to school and met her needs with the help of her classmate, expressed that she was happy that she could now enter the school and meet her needs comfortably in the school. *21 January 2022, Anadolu Agency*

**Visually impaired lawyer awaits decision for the cancellation of the regulation on the requirement of witnesses at notary public**

..... a lawyer who applied to the Council of State for the cancellation of the "obligation for visually impaired people to have two witnesses in notary procedures", seeks the Human Rights And Equality Institution Of Türkiye's decision on "violation of the prohibition of discrimination" regarding the regulation in order to set a precedent. *21 August 2022, Anadolu Agency*

Although they are few in number, these news items, which bring to the fore the problems of accessibility in urban life, provide guidance on the human rights of women with disabilities and encourage the use of the mechanisms for seeking rights. The dissemination of positive examples through the media has a crucial role in the defence and promotion of the human rights of persons with disabilities. The media should promote disability inclusive policies and contribute to the development of civic awareness.

## News Bulletins

In the media monitoring study, news from newspapers, agencies and websites were coded and analysed in accordance with the indicators developed. The monitoring of TV channels was designed in accordance with the monitoring guide of the Global Media Monitoring

Project<sup>19</sup> and only the main news bulletins were monitored. The main news bulletins of the three selected television channels, in which the issues of disability were covered most frequently in the Turkish media, were monitored:

- a) Main news bulletins broadcast on 3 December International Day of Persons with Disabilities
- b) Main news bulletins broadcast on randomly selected days during 10-16 May Disability Week.

In addition, in order to better understand the diversity of representations of women with disabilities on TV, randomly selected programmes<sup>20</sup> were also analysed and evaluated for a discourse analysis.

These programmes, which were broadcast in the daytime, mostly focused on and discussed allegations such as women's elopement, abduction, abuse, domestic/marital violence, child abduction by a parent, child abandonment, and the sale of children. In these stories, all kinds of neglect, abuse and violence against women and children were narrated by the victims in person, and in some cases these narratives were accompanied by witness statements. The way these stories were presented, which were also the subject of the main news bulletins of the TV channels where the programmes were broadcast, reproduced gender stereotypes. The findings of the discourse analysis of these programmes are as follows:

- The stories are broadcast for days like a TV series. People are made to tell their experiences over and over again.
- The general tendency of the presenters of the programmes is to pass judgement through the incident: (the story of a child abandoned in the park) **"Your child is both mentally and physically disabled. If she were normal, she could at least tell you her name. How could you leave him, how could you live with this guilty conscience? I cannot comprehend it. You dressed her up nicely, did you do that so that she would be noticed?"**
- Victim blaming is frequently seen, comments and evaluations are made using sexist expressions. **"What made you abandon the child? How did you make the decision to abandon the child? Did the father know about the decision?..."**
- Crimes against women are described with dramatic sounds and images, tabloidised, tragedies are presented in an agitating manner throughout the broadcast with repeated images: **"Bone-chilling incident!"; "Shocking allegations!"**
- Although there are multiple criminal elements in the cases subject to the broadcast and these broadcasts should be considered as open-source intelligence by law enforcement officers, information regarding legal rights is not provided: **"Attempted to sell his disabled daughter... He was beating and starving his disabled wife..."**
- Even though the stories also express the obligations of the social state and citizens'

<sup>199</sup> <https://whomakesthenews.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/GMMP-2020-Methodology-Guide.pdf>

<https://slideplayer.com/slide/6849026/>

<sup>200</sup> The story of the disappearance of the mentally disabled woman who was the topic of the programme called "Müge Anlı ile Tatlı Sert".

Access: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fQ2AobTmzpw>

The story of a mentally disabled woman allegedly tortured in a private care centre.

Access: <https://www.cnnturk.com/video/turkiye/son-dakika-engelli-kadina-iskence-iddiasi-video>

The story of a woman looking for her disabled daughter whom she abandoned in the park when she was six years old. The programme called "Esra Erol'da".

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pUzRkc-aKZ8>

The story of a physically disabled pregnant woman abandoned by her husband. The programme called "Fulya ile Umudun Olsun".

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=98iuiC-HqyM>

criticisms of service provision, no information is provided regarding the relevant institutions: "(narrated by a woman who had to abandon her disabled daughter in a park) I went to the institutions, they refused to take my child, I could not give my child through legal means."

- Each of the incidents described in these programmes in all their 'blatantly obvious' form involves a violation of privacy; the names of the individuals, the city and quarter they live in, their spouses and relatives, the names and ages of their children, etc. are explicitly disclosed: "(reporter announcement) Elnare Kızmaz, an Azerbaijani national, 44 years old, mother of two, lives in the house you see behind me.";

- Subjects are turned into the object of the news while telling their own stories; they are watched, looked at, shamed, judged, found odd, blamed, pitied, raged against, empathised with, identified with, but in any case they turn into a 'spectacle' material, become ordinary and become the pornography of violence: "I heard that there were people who used my (mentally disabled) sister in the village. My sister is mentally unstable and her husband was also taking advantage of her. My sister would go insane when they touched her, she would lose control and fall. They had her examined by a doctor. She became an unwanted person in the village."

- The questions and comments of the presenters are usually in a questioning tone. The presenter actually gives voice to the potential reactions of the target audience on the screen and directs the questions that are likely to pass through their minds to the people in the studio: for example; "(to the disabled woman) Did you get married out of pity?"; "How can a mother leave her disabled child on the street? How can she abandon him?" ...

- In the stories, forms of violations such as economic abuse and gaining benefits are also revealed: "He married a disabled woman and received coal aid and financial aid through her."

- In the stories, examples of neglect and abuse due to gender inequality also appear: "I was divorced, I was alone, and my husband did not look after us. I got married when I was 16, against my will."

- In the incidents reported on the screen, comments summarising the social pressures on women and girls are also noteworthy: "She is a child, I have to work, I cannot protect her, she is disabled, and someone will abuse her on the street... I left her. If she was a boy, I might not have done it."

Although rarely, we come across disabled characters in TV series as well as daytime programmes. Mental retardation, dwarfism, stuttering, blindness, etc... In the sports news of TV bulletins, disabled sports and athletes are generally not featured, a success story is always sought.

Although the date of monitoring was chosen to coincide with advocacy days for disability, there were an extremely limited number of "news on women with disabilities" in the TV content monitored during the monitoring study. On special days, the general tendency of journalists in the mainstream media is to cover the success or victimisation story of a disabled person... The selected examples rarely draw attention to the specific needs of people with disabilities. Since TVs are commercial organisations, main news bulletins frequently use social media images and tabloid content to keep the audience tuned in. The lives of people with disabilities are not newsworthy if there are no stories involving violence or success!

### **Fox TV, 3 December 2022, Saturday<sup>21</sup>**

Anchor-woman: Gülbin Tosun. Sign language interpretation is provided in the bulletin. The main news bulletin, which lasts 45 minutes on average, includes 16 video news items. Following the speeches of the President of the Republic and the main opposition leader in different places, current political news, economic news (minimum wage negotiations, demand for free school meals, cost of living, etc.), physician recommendations for the post-pandemic period, the last news item mentions the International Day of Persons with Disabilities as "We are all candidates for disability" (53 seconds).

### **Fox TV, 10 May 2022, main news bulletin<sup>22</sup>**

Anchor-man: Selçuk Tepeli. Sign language interpretation is provided in the bulletin. The bulletin contains a total of 12 video news. The bulletin starts with news on house prices, rent hikes, workers' expectations for a raise and unemployment. After news on irregular migrants, press censorship, music ban, justice vigil of the families of Gezi detainees, and there is no information, opinion, news, etc. about the disabled in this bulletin dated 10 May, which marks the beginning of 10-16 May Disability Week.

### **Star TV, 3 December 2022, main news bulletin<sup>23</sup>**

Anchor-woman: Melis Sander. Sign language interpretation is provided. At the beginning of the bulletin, there are 5 news items with video footage that seem to be taken from social media. The anchor-woman is seen with the 6th news item and a total of 25 video news items are broadcast. Following the statements of the ruling and opposition leaders, election and candidacy debates, third page news from Turkey and other countries, the plan to convert some minibuses into taxis in İstanbul is featured in the 11th news item. In this two-minute news item, disabled people are mentioned in one sentence: The head of the chamber of artisans says that all taxis (2125 taxis) are accessible for the people with disabilities.

The news in 21st place is reported with the title "3 December Day of Persons with Disabilities was celebrated". Disabled people exhibiting their talents at the art workshop... (Firstly, a visually impaired girl playing the piano is the subject of the news item: "Mini concert by Çağla Kırıcı". An orthopedically handicapped girl from Tokat is interviewed about her goals and dreams, stating that she practises taekwondo, and that she looks up to Paralympic swimmer Sümeyye Boyacı: "Nisanur's goal is championship". Thirdly, a physically disabled young woman living in Mersin appears. "She has learnt to read, now her goal is to go to university" (approximately 2 minutes). Although 3 December International Day of Persons with Disabilities is not a rights-based approach, it is positive that the subjects of the news are girls.

After the news of a conman's luxurious life and a businessman who pets a lion in his house, there is again news of a disability: "Their love is big and so is their house". It is about a couple with achondroplasia. It is stated that their height is 108 centimetres. It is stated that shelves, electrical switches, taps, countertops, etc. in their house are not suitable for their height. They got married 4 months ago. It is stated that they are happy but there is a problem with their house. Since their house is a rental, they are unable to make it

<sup>211</sup> <https://www.fox.com.tr/Gulbin-Tosun-ile-FOX-Ana-Haber-Hafta-Sonu/bulten/442>

<sup>222</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLQX-OLy55k>

<sup>233</sup> <https://www.startv.com.tr/program/star-haber/bolumler/3-aralik-2022-ana-haber>

convenient for them. Their dream is a house that will not hinder by itself and its furniture. "They want a house that suits their height" (1 minute 7 seconds). It can be considered as a relatively decent example because they emphasise that the flat they live in is not suitable for them. This is a news item that emphasises the accessibility of the house and the challenges stemming from this.

#### **Star TV, 12 May 2022, main news bulletin<sup>24</sup>**

Anchor-woman: Nazlı Çelik. Sign language interpretation is provided.

At the beginning of the 75-minute news bulletin, 5 news items with video footage taken from social media are broadcast. The anchor-woman makes an appearance with the 12th news item. In total, 39 video news items are broadcast. After news items such as summer fashion and hike in the price of dairy products, the 13th news item is as follows: "President met with disabled athletes. He explained what was done for the disabled during his term in power and shared his messages for the future" (2 minutes 53 seconds). All of the athletes featured in this news item are men.

Although the selected day is within the Disability Week, any content related to disability, any message drawing attention to problems, achievements and demands is not included in the main news bulletin.

#### **CNN Türk, 3 December 2022 main news bulletin<sup>25</sup>**

Anchor-woman: Meltem Bozbeyoğlu. Sign language interpretation is not provided.

The 78-minute news bulletin begins with the president's speech in Urfa (2 minutes 50 seconds). After domestic and foreign political news, agenda highlights, the cost of living and accidents, etc., prepared with images from social media, it finally comes to the disabled in the 38th news item: A video clip prepared by the Football Association is broadcast (1 minute 13 seconds) on the occasion of the Day of Disabled Persons on 3 December. In the 39th news item (1 minute 28 seconds), the Minister of Sports visits Para table tennis players and plays a match with medallist Abdullah Öztürk. There is also no mention of disabled women and girls in this news item. Although there are content such as the effects of the climate crisis, poverty, pension rights, social violence, epidemics, etc. among the 63 video news items, the impact of these issues on the lives of people with disabilities is not mentioned even on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

CNN Türk's main news bulletins monitored on the chosen dates do not offer sign language interpretation. This means that hearing-impaired viewers cannot exercise their right to access the news and demonstrates that this media organisation does not create accessible content. Security cameras and images taken by citizens with their mobile phones can become a source of news for mainstream media outlets, and these are mostly third page news.

#### **CNN Türk, 15 May 2022 main news bulletin<sup>26</sup>**

Anchor-man: Kaan Temeltaş. Sign language interpretation is not provided. In the main news bulletin, news on foreign policy and national politics, politicians' statements and economic news take the first place.

23rd place tells a human story from the Russia-Ukraine conflict: A 23-year-old nurse lost both legs and four fingers on her hand in a mine blast. Her 27-year-old boyfriend pulled her

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<sup>244</sup> <https://www.startv.com.tr/program/star-haber/bolumler/12-mayis-2022-ana-haber>

<sup>255</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_IDXlbTm-TM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_IDXlbTm-TM)

<sup>266</sup> <https://www.cnnurk.com/tv-cnn-turk/programlar/ana-haber-hafta-sonu/15-mayis-2022-pazar>

out of the minefield. He then proposed marriage. The hospital administration prepared a surprise for their wedding ceremony. In the footage, the man takes the woman in his arms and they dance. The woman is now disabled and will be treated for a prosthetic leg for a while. She wants to continue working in the health sector. The news ends with messages of love (4 minutes 32 seconds). It is an example where disabled people are also the subject of the media with romantic relationships and the cliché "love knows no barriers" is used. Although the chosen day is within the Disability Week, no attention is drawn to the rights of the disabled.

It is seen that around 60 video news items are broadcast in the main news bulletin, and from the 48th news item onwards, the news items in the top positions are repeated. The news items mostly focus on domestic and foreign policy issues and women are generally absent among the people whose opinions are consulted. In the domestic news, we frequently see news items created with "images taken by citizens with their mobile phones". This shows that citizens in the public sphere are more sensitive to "page three" news, and have a reflex to shoot them and send them to the media or post them on social media. However, news on disability captured by citizens' cameras are not encountered in the selected bulletins.

## Epilogue

We grouped the analysed news within the scope of the monitoring study under the following headings;

- Violence: Sexual abuse, violence against women, femicide, neglect
- Gender norms: marriage, sexuality, reproduction
- Care: Dependent living, self-sacrifice, poverty
- Success Stories: Miracles in sports, arts, education
- Life and Development: Health care, social security, autonomy
- Accessibility: Natural disasters, emergencies, public life

This grouping also indicates the topics in which women and girls with disabilities are most frequently reported. This is the result of the lack of knowledge and the prejudices in society about disability, as well as the reflection of the discrimination caused by the gender inequality in the language and thinking.

Our motivation for conducting this monitoring study is to demonstrate how the media has been presenting women and disabled people to the public for years in Turkey and even in many other countries, and how this portrayal reinforces discrimination, exclusion and rights violations, and fuels stereotypes. As Flying Broom Women's Communication and Research Association, this time we have utilised our efforts regarding rights-based media literacy for the egalitarian and fair use of mass media, which we have been experiencing for years, in the context of the intersectionality of women and girls with disabilities. Unfortunately, our assumptions have been confirmed. The results of the monitoring study have not surprised us at all. We have once again witnessed that the news media follows women and girls with disabilities mostly in cases of violence, caring labour and success stories (mostly in sports). Furthermore, as detailed in this report, this agenda-setting demonstrates that the first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" is not reflected in life for women and girls with disabilities. The headlines, spots, visuals, language and content of the news present women and girls with disabilities to



readers as dependent, victimised, in need of help, in need of protection and lacking autonomy rather than as individuals.

At this point, the Guide for Journalists, TV Broadcasters, Podcasters and Non-Governmental Organisations on What to Know When Reporting and Interviewing Women with Disabilities, which is an annex to this report, contains tips for an inclusive media that does not leave the disabled persons behind, looks out for gender equality and is outlined with a human rights perspective.

Because **a non-sexist, non-ableist, accessible and inclusive media is possible!**

This monitoring study has also revealed that the functioning of national legislation (regulations, action plans, etc.) on how the state fulfils its obligations after the adoption of international conventions is not sufficient for the actual implementation of rights for all persons with disabilities and especially for women persons with disabilities. The intersectional violation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, especially in terms of living independently, personal mobility, participation in public life and having adequate living standards, by women with disabilities due to gender-based discrimination has been portrayed once again. The direct and indirect discrimination faced by women and girls with disabilities emphasised in the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, General Comment No. 3 on Women and Girls with Disabilities, and the discrimination by association "faced by persons based on their connection with a person with a disability" (such as domestic labour if the caregiver is a woman (mostly mother) and the burden of caring for her disabled child, thus reflecting on her employment rights) coincide with the findings of the monitoring study. On the other hand, we have also seen that the role of the public administration in taking measures, protecting women and girls against all forms of violence, maltreatment and neglect, and punishing the perpetrators, within the scope of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), is not adequately and effectively carried out, which is also lacking and even more severe for women with disabilities.

Finally, women's access to communication tools, information and news sources is not as easy as that of men members of the society. Both access challenges arising from disability and restricted access to resources and opportunities due to gender roles have caused women to become acquainted with information and communication technologies at a later stage in life, and women are able to obtain tools to facilitate their daily lives at a later stage or they are unable to obtain these tools at all. Women have the right to be informed, to obtain information, to disseminate information, to be acculturated, to develop themselves, to follow the current developments, to create an agenda, to make news and to use the media for all these purposes. Women and girls with disabilities must be able to enjoy this right equally. Access to media by persons with disabilities is one of the requirements of independent living; access to news and information by using digital tools without the need for the help of others is a right for persons with disabilities. In Turkey, the lack of accessibility of the news media for persons with disabilities is a violation of their right to be informed, and also a violation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The legal and administrative measures and empowerment practices committed by the Law No. 5378 on Persons with Disabilities and the National Action Plan on the Rights of Persons

with Disabilities (2023-2025), which are the reflection of these international standards at the national level, must be urgently reviewed by in particular the Ministry of Family and Social Services, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Environment, Urbanisation and Climate Change, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, the Social Security Institution, Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations, governorships, district governorships and municipalities through participatory methods with non-governmental organizations, professional experts, academicians, and an environment of coordination and dialogue must be created for more effective, inclusive, realistic and sustainable implementation. There is a need for measures and interventions that do not ignore the multiple disadvantages faced by women with disabilities due to gender inequality, poverty, discrimination based on ethnic, religious and citizenship status, and that provide specific solutions to these issues at the local level. In addition, in order to change the masculine, discriminatory and exclusionary language and perspective of the media, the Supreme Council of Radio and Television, the Office of the Ombudsman and the Human Rights and Equality Institution of Turkey must urgently include the representation of women with disabilities in the news media and the access of women with disabilities to communication tools, information and news sources in their efforts to identify and prevent discrimination.

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## **ANNEX 1: Advisory Board**

Aslıhan Volkan Ulu, Bilecik Barrier-Free Tomorrows Association

Ayşe Sarı, Ankara, expert on disability rights

Burcu Ünlü Türkcan, Mersin, ZİÇEV (The Foundation for the Education and Protection of Mentally Handicapped Children)

Cansın Kuvvet, Network for the Rights of the Child with Disabilities

Deniz Atakay, İstanbul, Network for Rare Diseases

Dudu Karaman, Denizli Autism Association  
 Ece Soyer Demir, Eskişehir, SMA Foundation  
 İdil Seda Ak, Gaziantep, expert on disability rights  
 Ruşen Seydaoğlu, Diyarbakır, legal expert  
 Sevda Bozbey Yılmaz, İstanbul, Association of Barrier-Free Access  
 Şenay Keçeci, Ankara, Association of Mothers of the Persons with Disabilities and Volunteers

## ANNEX 2: Monitoring Indicators

**“How are Women with Disabilities Covered in the Media?”**

**“How Does the Media Violate the Rights of Women with Disabilities?”**

**“Does the Media Fulfil its Human Rights Responsibility in News on Women with Disabilities?”**

The following indicators were used to seek answers to these questions:

### A. Information about the medium

1. The media organ in which the news item selected for monitoring was featured
2. The newspaper page where the news was published

First page	Third page	Magazine	Sport	Economy	Life	Culture & Arts	Other
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3. Headline/menu of the website news

Home page	Life	Agenda	Sport	Women	Health	Culture & Arts	Other
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4. Subject of the news

Caring labour	Poverty	Discrimination	Violence	Right to education	Right to health	Gender roles	Other
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5. Which city or region is the story and the people involved in the news from?

### B. Gender-related indicators

1. In the news item subject to monitoring;
  - i. Is the source/ subject of the news a primary source?<sup>27</sup>
  - ii. Is the news item based on someone else's narration of the event? Is the woman / are the women a secondary source?<sup>28</sup>
2. Does the news item feature any woman/women as an expert or commentator?
  - i. Is the woman who is an expert and/or expresses an opinion a disabled person? Is a statement about whether she is disabled or not included in the news item?
  - ii. Is the expert and/or the woman expressing opinion a person working on the rights of persons with disabilities and/or providing services to persons with disabilities?
3. Are there any visuals in the news item?
  - i. Is the visual a photograph of the woman who is the subject of the news item?
  - ii. Is she alone in the visual?
  - iii. Is the woman seen in the visual in a home/family environment?
  - iv. Is the woman shown in the visual with an action or tool that reveals her disability (wheelchair, white cane, etc.)?
  - v. Is the woman portrayed as weak, dependent, victimised, in need of help?

<sup>27</sup> What is meant by primary source is that the information (incident/situation) conveyed is obtained directly from the person, and her own statements are quoted. For example, when a woman who cannot go where she wishes on her own because public transport is not accessible in the city explains her own experience to the reporter.

<sup>28</sup> What is meant by a secondary source is that someone else speaks on behalf of a rights group, for example a paediatrician giving information about sexual abuse against children with disabilities or speaking about a case.

- vi. Are the children's faces -if any- visible in the visual?
  - vii. Are there any compositions in the visual that may damage personal dignity? (Describe)
  - viii. Other: (Describe)
4. Does the news item draw attention to gender equality or discrimination/rights violations/violence?
- i. Are there gender clichés, prejudices and stereotypes in the news item? (Explain)
  - ii. Is the woman/women covered in the news item within the framework of family relations (wife, mother, child, etc.)?
  - iii. Does the news item mention the age of the woman? (Write down if age is mentioned)
  - iv. Is the woman's occupation/job mentioned?
  - v. Is the marital status of the woman mentioned?
  - vi. Is the woman's disability associated with her education and vocational skills? (Explain)

### C. Indicators of news contents

1. News item subject to monitoring;
- ii. Does the language and approach of the news item contain information and messages that empower persons with disabilities? (Explain)
  - iii. Is information provided regarding human rights, laws and legislation?
  - iv. Is it about issues such as gender-based violence, femicide, sexual violence, abuse?
  - v. Is it about issues such as mobbing, wage inequality, inequality of opportunity in working life?
  - vi. Does it bring up accessibility problems in urban life? In which context?
  - vii. Is it about a success story?
- viii. Is the opinion of non-governmental organisations working in the field of disability mentioned?
- ix. Does it provide guidance on the issue in question and encourage the use of the mechanisms for seeking rights?
  - x. Does it draw attention to the prominent qualities, efforts and achievements of women with disabilities who can be role models in a particular area?
  - xi. Are there any expressions in the headline that embody the compassion approach? (Explain)
  - xii. Does it discriminate on class/cultural grounds?
- xiii. Is there any information in the news item about emergency helplines, centres, etc. that women with disabilities can contact in case of violation of their human rights?
2. Which of the followings are the dominant element in the news item?

Compassion	Pity	Charity	Struggle for rights	Victimisation	Discrimination
Request for help	Organisation	Good practice	Public service	Other	

### ANNEX 3: Workshop Participants List

Ayşe Sarı, Health Services Union's Commission for Persons with Disabilities  
Ayşegül Domaniç Yelçe, Hürriyet newspaper, İstanbul

Ayten Gürsoy, Civil Society Dialogue Association  
Banu Bozdemir, Civil Society Dialogue Association  
Cansın Kuvvet, Network for the Rights of Children with Disabilities  
Cenay Gürhan, Barrier-Free and Happy Life Association  
Ceren Pekođlu, brittle bone disease patient  
Deniz Yılmaz Atakay, Network for Rare Diseases  
Ece Soyer Demir, Turkey SMA Foundation, Eskişehir  
Emine Güngör Şenol, Association of Anatolian Silent Hopes, Ankara  
Filiz Yörükođlu, Van Hearing-Impaired and Families Association, Van  
Füsün Emecan Özcan, Bulancak TV, Giresun  
Hatice Aktay, journalist  
İrem Coşansu Yalazan, Confederation of the Persons with Disabilities  
Mediha Mavi, school counsellor  
Melike Tombak, Turkey SMA Foundation, Eskişehir  
Nimet Sarıkaya, I am Happy with My Face Association  
Niroz Dalbudak, Federation of Associations for Barrier Free Living, Diyarbakır  
Nurten Aktaş, Turkey Disabled Association  
Onur Cantimur, Association of the Hearing Impaired Persons and Their Families  
Selen Kara, Confederation of the Persons with Disabilities  
Sevgi Mart Göcen, Equal, Accessible, Barrier-Free Life Journal and Turkish Federation of the  
Blind, Denizli  
Samet Ünal, Turkish Sign Language Interpreter  
Selen Dođan, Flying Broom Association  
Selma Kara, journalist  
Sema Tekin, Association of Anatolian Silent Hopes  
Serap Dikmen Ahmetođlu, KEDİ Autism Association, İzmir  
Serhat Gökpınar, World Federation without Disabilities, Hatay  
Sinem Hun, Genderscope, London  
Sinem Sefa Akay, Education Reform Initiative  
Şenay Keçeci, Association of Mothers of the Persons with Disabilities and Volunteers, Ankara  
Şule Sepin İçli, Women of Hope Journal  
Umut İlkey Kavlak, EU Delegation to Turkey  
Ülgen Alan Güllü, physician  
Yasemin Duť, Flying Broom Association  
Yasemin Karakaya, Minus 25 Association, Eskişehir  
Zehra Karayel, Confederation of the Persons with Disabilities