

Editor-in-chief of Hospodárske noviny
ECOPRESS, a.s
Bratislava

Dear Mr Томбљ Kurtanskэ,

Your publication sacrificed professional rigour and ethics to publish "Non-existing children" by Jozef T. Schupp. The article is egregious for its sensationalist and dehumanizing portrayal of sex workers and drug users and for its outright flouting of any standards of journalistic practice.

I have worked previously as a journalist and now work as a human rights researcher and consultant. I have written an upcoming report for the Open Society Institute of the Geoge Soros Foundation that outlines the situation of sex workers in 9 countries. One section is devoted to the situation of sex workers in Bratislava and the internationally-recognized work of Odysseus Foundation in supporting these men and women to achieve full health and human rights.

As part of my research, I interviewed sex workers working on the street and on the highway in Bratislava, social workers, a representative of government medical personnel and a police representative in Bratislava.

My interviews do not substantiate any of the claims made in the article. In fact, I am inclined to believe, not least of all because of the lack of named sources, that the article contains numerous out-right fabrications.

Among the sex workers I met, some used drugs, others did not. In either case, those who were parents spoke with great dedication of the ways in which they cared for their children and provided for them despite countless obstacles, not least of which were the hate and discrimination they and their families faced on a daily basis.

All children deserve the right to schooling, shelter and medical care --- as do all adults. Unfortunately, the stigma this article may foster could prove a substantial barrier to sex workers and their children being able to access such basic services.

Finally, criminologists like Dr. John Lowman have documented through academic research the link that exists between media portrayals of sex workers as unhuman and monstrous and corresponding rises in violence and murders of sex workers. Bratislava carries the international shame of having witnessed the atrocious murders of over 9 sex workers in recent years. Rather than have your publication investigate this human rights emergency, you may have, sir, unwittingly contributed to it.

Sincerely,

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