

CIVIC IDENTITY IN THE DISCOURSE OF SLOVAK SOCIETY: AN ANALYSIS OF MEDIA CONTRIBUTIONS IN 2025 ¹

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ABSTRACT

The article examines how citizenship and civic identity are constructed in the Slovak media discourse in 2025, within the context of increasing societal polarization. It assumes that civic identity cannot be reduced solely to a legal status but represents a concept encompassing value-based, socio-cultural, and psychological dimensions. The article is based on thematic analysis, which makes it possible to identify recurring patterns of meaning in textual data and interpret them within a broader socio-political context.

Keywords: Civic identity, Identity, Identity dimensions, Media, Media discourse

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INTRODUCTION

The issue of citizenship remains highly relevant in contemporary discourse. The concept of civic identity represents a key framework for examining the relationship between the individual and the political community. But what does it mean to be a citizen and to possess a civic identity?

In the Slovak context, this concept has appeared more prominently after 1989 (Lášticová, 2009), during the period of societal transformation and the formation of democratic institutions. The issue of civic identity in contemporary Slovak

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society is becoming increasingly pressing. Civic identity cannot be reduced merely to the legal status of citizenship; rather, it represents a complex phenomenon that normatively encompasses cultural and social dimensions and demonstrably connects individuals through a sense of belonging and loyalty.

In an environment characterized by societal polarization and growing social tensions, space is opening to seek answers to the question of what it means to be a citizen of the Slovak Republic today. Slovak society is currently facing significant political and social polarization, manifested in conflicts between government and opposition actors, as well as in the media environment (DEKK Institute, 2025). Polarization leads to increasing distrust in institutions and more frequent public protests aimed at protecting democracy or raising awareness about proposed legislative changes. In the media space, topics are often framed in a confrontational manner, which reinforces the “us vs. them” dynamic (Krivý, Danglová, 2006).

This situation has a direct impact on the formation of civic identity, however, instead of an inclusive understanding of citizenship, identity becomes a tool of political mobilization. Civic identity is not static but is shaped through discourse created by political elites, the media, educational institutions, as well as everyday interpersonal interactions. One of the risks of polarization is the reduction of civic identity, which weakens its democratic and integrative character.

The presented article examines how civic identity is formed within Slovak media discourse, what factors influence it, and why understanding it is crucial for the stability and development of a democratic society and for the future of democratic governance.

1 FOUNDATIONS OF CIVIC IDENTITY

Civic identity represents one of the key pillars of a democratic society. It defines the ways in which individuals perceive their belonging to the state, as well as which values and norms are considered binding for participation in public life.

According to Rogers Smith (Smith, 1997), civic identity is shaped by conflicts over access to citizenship. This constitutes a central element in defining civic identity, as it demonstrates that the identity of the citizen is historically conditioned by power inequalities. Smith emphasizes that civic identity is a product of political struggles and social hierarchies.

In her article *Psychological Model of Civic Identity Formation* (Petrovska, 2021), Inha Petrovska conceptualizes civic identity as a specific form of organizational identity, involving self-awareness within the state as a citizen and an active process of self-identification with this role.

In this context, civic identity functions as a psychological regulator of civic behavior. Its formation proceeds through several stages, each bringing about transformations that lead to an increased awareness of the individual's role within the system of interactions with the state. A strong civic identity is crucial for national security, as it enhances resilience to external threats (Petrovska, 2019).

Building on the aforementioned factors, it is necessary to develop a framework that enables a comprehensive understanding of the formation of civic identity within the Slovak social and political context. The formation of civic identity is conditioned by historical experiences, political institutions, and cultural patterns.

More specifically, civic identity formation is determined by three key, interrelated dimensions: the legal, political, and socio-cultural dimensions. The legal dimension, defined by formal citizenship status, encompasses rights and obligations. The political dimension relates to active participation and the construction of a political community (Surová, 2020). The socio-cultural dimension is characterized by the sharing of common values, linguistic and cultural traditions, and mutual recognition among individuals.

These three dimensions are mutually constitutive. Legal status alone does not guarantee a sense of civic identity, nor does civic identity necessarily lead to

active citizenship. However, the interconnection of these dimensions is essential for the development of a sustainable and cohesive civic identity.

In addition to normative and constructivist approaches, it is necessary to consider psychological factors that influence individual behaviour in the context of civic identity. Wang and Eldemerdash (2022), in their study *National Identity, Willingness to Fight and Collective Action*, argue that individuals' willingness to risk their lives for the state or a group is not determined solely by the strength of national identity, but also by their perception of collective action. Their findings indicate that individuals with weaker national identity may be more willing to engage in conflict if they believe that other group members will act in a similar manner. This suggests that loyalty and participation are conditioned not only by value-based convictions but also by a rational calculus grounded in expectations about group behaviour.

This perspective is particularly relevant for the discourse on civic identity, as it highlights the interaction between individual identity and perceived social norms. In a polarized society, the willingness to participate in civic activities or to defend democratic values may be significantly influenced by whether individuals perceive collective action as effective.

2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The article is based on a qualitative research approach, which allows for a deeper understanding of the meanings and values associated with civic identity in Slovak society. The data are analysed through thematic analysis, which identifies recurring patterns of meaning in textual data, including political documents, media discourse, and educational materials, and enables their interpretation within a broader socio-political context. The analysed data cover the time frame of the year 2025.

The research focuses on the following questions:

1. What meanings and concepts are associated with the notion of "citizen" in Slovak discourse?

2. What values and norms emerge in the construction of “civic identity”

The main objective of this research is to map and analyze how civic identity and citizenship are discursively constructed in the Slovak mainstream media in year 2025. By identifying dominant thematic framework, this article focuses on how these media representations reflect or challenge the socio-political polarization within Slovak society.

For the purposes of the analysis, a review of media contributions in selected relevant newspapers was conducted using a specific search strategy. The selected outlets included Nový Čas, SME, Pravda, Plus jeden deň, Hospodárske noviny, and Denník N. Their relevance is based on national survey data from MML-TGI (Market & Media & Lifestyle – Target Group Index) (MedianSK, 2025), covering the second and third quarters of 2025 (up to the first half of November 2025).

The identification of articles was carried out using selected keywords: (1) civic identity and (2) civil society. These keywords were applied through specific search operators that enabled the targeting of content within particular media outlets and thematic areas.

Example of the search query: “civic identity” site:“name of the media outlet”.

This search mechanism made it possible to identify articles containing the exact target phrases while ensuring that they originated from the selected media sources. The approach thus represents a systematic mapping of media discourse across individual outlets.

The resulting corpus consisted of a dataset in which the concepts of civic identity, civil society, and related notions were present, reflecting the most frequent and salient constructions of citizenship in 2025.

2.1 Research Limitations

The present article is grounded in a qualitative research design and employs thematic analysis of textual data, enabling the identification of meanings, values, and normative frameworks associated with the concept of the “citizen” and the construct of civic identity within Slovak discourse in 2025. However, the chosen approach entails several limitations that should be explicitly acknowledged to ensure that the findings are interpreted appropriately and in accordance with the scope of the applied methodology.

The first limitation concerns the scope and nature of the analysed sources. Although the research draws on media sources, it does not encompass all communication channels through which society constructs the meaning of citizenship. The analysis excludes social media, local media, podcasts, and public speeches, which may convey alternative, less dominant, or competing interpretations of civic identity. Consequently, the discourse captured in this study reflects data characterized by higher media visibility.

The second limitation relates to the specific nature of media discourse as the primary analytical material. Media outputs are inherently framed and shaped by institutional norms, such as editorial policies and journalistic conventions. As a result, media representations tend to reproduce dominant narratives rather than offering a comprehensive spectrum of perspectives.

The third limitation concerns the selection of media outlets. While the sample is based on relevance criteria derived from readership data (MML-TGI) for the second and third quarters of 2025, it primarily focuses on mainstream, high-circulation newspapers. Such a focus may privilege certain linguistic codes and value frameworks that differ from those present in regional, minority, or alternative media. At the same time, incorporating all aspects of media communication would constitute an extensive research undertaking requiring a multidimensional analytical approach, exceeding the scope of the present study.

The fourth limitation is the temporal delimitation of the data to the year 2025. The research captures discourse within a specific time frame that reflects events and dominant themes. Therefore, the identified norms represent a

situational snapshot rather than a long-term trend. The findings thus provide insight into discursive priorities and interpretations that are bound to the analysed period.

The fifth and final limitation lies in the interpretative nature of thematic analysis and its contextual embeddedness. The analysis is conducted within the Slovak context, and its findings cannot be readily generalized to other national or cultural settings.

It is important to emphasize that these limitations do not diminish the relevance of the presented research; rather, they help to refine its interpretative framework. The findings offer an analysis of how citizenship and civic identity are constructed in dominant media texts in 2025. At the same time, these limitations point to potential directions for future research.

3 OVERVIEWS OF THE ANALYSED ARTICLES

The following chapter presents an overview of media contributions identified through a systematic search of selected daily newspapers and subsequently included in the thematic analysis. The search was conducted using the keywords “civic identity” and “civil society,” employing specific search operators to refine the results.

The resulting corpus of articles, presented in Tables 1 and 2, includes texts published in 2025. The articles are organized by the name of the newspaper and the date of publication.

Table 1: Search query: občianska identita site: “NázovMédia” / “civic identity” site: “Name of the media outlet”.

Tittle of the Article	Newspaper	Date of publication
Občiansky sektor v otvorenom liste Ficovej vláde kritizuje fungovanie Slovenska a jeho odklon od demokracie ENG: The civic sector, in an open letter to Fico’s government, criticizes the functioning of Slovakia and its shift away from democracy.	Denník N	29.1.2025
Iveta Radičová: Prechádzame z demokracie do populistokracie ENG: Iveta Radičová: We Are Transitioning from Democracy to Populistocracy	Denník N	11.2.2025
Pellegrini podpísal zákon o mimovládach, argumenty od organizátorov protestov v ňom nevidel ENG: Pellegrini signed the law on non-governmental organizations, stating that he did not find the arguments of protest organizers convincing.	Denník N	7.5.2025
Misia europarlamentu má obavy o nezávislosť justície a občiansku spoločnosť na Slovensku. ENG: European Parliament mission expresses concerns about the independence of the judiciary and civil society in Slovakia.	Denník N	15.7.2025

Mimovládky sa ohrádzajú voči krokom vlády, takmer 500 predstaviteľov občianskej spoločnosti prišlo s výzvou ENG: NGOs oppose the government's actions, nearly 500 representatives of civil society have issued a joint appeal.	Pravda	29.1.2025
Občiansky i vodičský preukaz v telefóne. Rezort vnútra spustil mobilné aplikácie eDoklady a eIdentita. ENG: Citizen and driver's licence on a mobile phone: the Ministry of the Interior has launched the mobile applications eDocuments and eIdentity.	Pravda	15.4.2025
Petíciu proti zmene Ústavy podpísalo viac ako 4 000 ľudí vrátane známych osobností ENG: More than 4,000 people, including well-known public figures, have signed a petition against the amendment of the Constitution.	Pravda	12.6.2025
Sme pobúrení nad správou vecí verejných (výzva organizácií občianskej spoločnosti) ENG: We Are Outraged by the Governance of Public Affairs (Appeal by Civil Society Organizations)	SME	29.1.2025
Novela ústavy by porušovala práva aj medzinárodné záväzky, tvrdí tretí sektor	SME	26.5.2025

ENG: The Constitutional Amendment Would Violate Rights and International Commitments, the Third Sector Claims		
Slovensko sa zmenilo na krajinu bez vlastností (píše Michal Havran) ENG: Slovakia Has Become a Country Without Qualities (by Michal Havran)	SME	28.5.2025
Občianska spoločnosť žiada prezidenta o vetovanie novely z dielne ministra Tomáša ENG: Civil Society Calls on the President to Veto the Amendment Proposed by Minister Tomáš	SME	9.6.2025
Psychologička: Cestovanie do prepĺnených destinácií nie je len o zážitkoch, vypovedá aj o našej sociálnej identite ENG: Psychologist: Traveling to Overcrowded Destinations Is Not Only About Experiences but Also Reflects Our Social Identity	SME	1.8.2025
Ocenením Biela vrana sa opäť oslávi občianska odvaha, tentokrát s podtitulom Nebojím sa pána ENG: The White Crow Award Will Once Again Celebrate Civic Courage, This Time Under the Subtitle "I Am Not Afraid of Authority"	SME	14.11.2025
Budúcnosť sme my, odkázali z Bratislavy. Podľa Šimečku prišlo 50-tisíc ľudí (SME Minúta)	SME	16.11.2025

ENG: “The Future Is Us,” They Declared in Bratislava; According to Šimečka, 50,000 People Attended (SME Minute)		
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Source: Own elaboration, 2025.

Table 1 includes contributions that contain a direct reference to the concept of civic identity (including its semantic variants corresponding to the search prompt). The contributions primarily address the position of the civic sector, the functioning of democracy, and the technical aspects of civic representation, i.e., how citizens identify themselves in relation to the state.

Table 2: Search query: Občianska spoločnosť site:“NázovMédia” / “civil society” site:“Name of the media outlet”.

Titlle of the Article	Newspaper	Date of publication
Ficove predstavy sa rozchádzajú nielen s realitou, ale aj so zákonmi ENG: Fico’s Ideas Diverge Not Only from Reality but Also from the Law	Sme	23.1.2025
Na protest v Bratislave prišlo 60-tisíc ľudí, odhadujú organizátori (minúta po minúte) ENG: 60,000 People Attended the Protest in Bratislava, Organizers Estimate (Minute by Minute)	Sme	24.1.2025
Sme pobúrení nad správou vecí verejných (výzva organizácií občianskej spoločnosti)	Sme	29.1.2025

ENG: We Are Outraged by the Governance of Public Affairs (Appeal by Civil Society Organizations)		
Občianska spoločnosť vyzýva na moratórium na nové spaľovne odpadu v celej EÚ ENG: Civil Society Calls for a Moratorium on New Waste Incinerators Across the EU	Sme	1.10.2025
Dva dni podujatí a zatvorené inštitúcie. Ako bude vyzeráť 17. november na Slovensku? ENG: Two Days of Events and Closed Institutions: What Will 17 November Look Like in Slovakia?	Sme	14.11.2025
Spoluzakladateľ VPN Peter Tatár: November 1989 nedokáže zrušiť nikto, Fico ho naopak urobil populárnejším ENG: VPN Co-founder Peter Tatár: No One Can Undo November 1989; Fico Has, on the Contrary, Made It More Popular	Sme	15.11.2025
Nežná revolúcia nevyrástla na zelenej lúke. Občiansky vzdor kulminoval už celé mesiace pred ňou ENG: The Velvet Revolution Did Not Emerge Overnight: Civic Resistance Had Been Escalating for Months Before	Sme	16.11.2025

Ranný brífing: Plné námestia žiadali koniec vlády, Fico kontroval demagógiou v Nitre ENG: Morning Briefing: Crowded Squares Called for the Government's Resignation; Fico Responded with Demagoguery in Nitra	Sme	17.11.2025
SaS volá po predčasných voľbách. Krúpa: Táto vláda je v koncoch, správa sa podľa príručky KGB ENG: SaS Calls for Early Elections. Krúpa: This Government Is at Its End and Acts According to a KGB Manual	Pravda	27.1.2025
'Puč bez dôkazov, z prevratu sa stalo fiasco': aktivisti chcú hlavu ministra a šéfa SIS ENG: "A Coup Without Evidence, the Plot Turned into a Fiasco": Activists Demand the Resignation of the Minister and the Head of SIS	Pravda	11.08.2025
Slovensko má momentálne v zahraničí najhoršie meno v histórii, tvrdí exminister zahraničia Káčer ENG: Slovakia Currently Has the Worst Reputation Abroad in Its History, Says Former Foreign Minister Káčer	Pravda	18.09.2025
Situácia kvír ľudí sa podľa aktivistov zhoršuje, štát diskrimináciu odmieta	Pravda	10.10.2025

ENG: According to Activists, the Situation of Queer People Is Worsening, While the State Rejects Claims of Discrimination		
Žiadna krajina si v rebríčku WJP nepohoršila viac. Slovensko je menej právny štát a na chvoste EÚ ENG: No Country Has Declined More in the WJP Ranking: Slovakia Is Less Governed by the Rule of Law and Near the Bottom of the EU	Pravda	28.10.2025
Slovensko si pripomenulo Nežnú revolúciu. Zhromaždenia napriek dažďu prilákali desaťtisíce ľudí (online) ENG: Slovakia Commemorated the Velvet Revolution: Gatherings Attracted Tens of Thousands Despite the Rain (Online)	Pravda	17.11.2025
Veľvyslanec USA G. Rana ocenil obhajcov ľudských práv na Slovensku, odovzdal aj Cenu Jána Kuciaka ENG: U.S. Ambassador G. Rana Praised Human Rights Defenders in Slovakia and Presented the Ján Kuciak Award	Hospodárske noviny	15.1.2025
Robert Fico nemusí snívať o zmene systému, má najmä dobre vládnuť ENG: Robert Fico Need Not Dream of System Change; He Should Primarily Govern Effectively	Hospodárske noviny	12.6.2025

Slovensko je na ceste stať sa ďalším Maďarskom, niektoré vzorce sú nápadne zhodné, varuje misia europarlamentu ENG: Slovakia Is on the Path to Becoming Another Hungary; Some Patterns Are Strikingly Similar, Warns a European Parliament Mission	Hospodárske noviny	15.7.2025
Slovensko kleslo v indexe právneho štátu najviac zo všetkých krajín Únie ENG: Slovakia Recorded the Largest Decline in the Rule of Law Index Among EU Countries	Hospodárske noviny	28.10.2025
Vo viacerých mestách sa budú konať zhromaždenia k výročiu Nežnej revolúcie ENG: Commemorative Gatherings for the Velvet Revolution Anniversary Will Take Place in Several Cities	Hospodárske noviny	16.11.2025
Historik: Československo zostávalo posledným pevným režimom na západne sovietskeho impéria. Kedy nastal zlom? ENG: Historian: Czechoslovakia Remained the Last Rigid Regime in the Western Soviet Sphere—When Did the Turning Point Occur?	Hospodárske noviny	17.11.2025
Pellegrini: Žiadna ideológia nemôže svojvoľne zasahovať do práv a životov občanov ENG: Pellegrini: No Ideology May Arbitrarily Interfere with Citizens' Rights and Lives	Hospodárske noviny	17.11.2025

Source: Own elaboration, 2025.

Table 2 presents contributions containing the keyword “civil society.” In this context, civil society is primarily portrayed in relation to the state and in terms of citizens’ willingness to engage in civic participation.

3.1 Research Findings

The presented thematic analysis demonstrates that citizenship and civic identity in Slovak mainstream newspapers are constructed through multiple frameworks that shape the meaning of the concept of the citizen. The analysed corpus of articles was categorized into seven thematic groups.

The first category, Civic Identity and Self-Awareness, includes articles addressing individual and collective self-perception of citizens, their values, social roles, and the identity of society as a whole. The dominant themes within this category revolve around identity, social self-awareness, values, and society. The most frequent terms include identity, self-awareness, social status, and values. This category conceptualizes civic identity as a topic that can be articulated beyond explicitly political contexts.

The second category, Civil Society and Activism, encompasses articles primarily focused on non-governmental organizations, civic initiatives, and protest movements. Media coverage in this category centres on civil society appeals directed at the government, as well as campaigns aimed at protecting rights and democracy. The most frequently occurring terms include civil society, protest, activists, petition, assembly, NGOs, and courage. Within this category, citizenship is closely associated with collective action, reinforcing the interpretation of civic identity in relation to public engagement.

The third category, Political and Legislative Changes, consists of articles addressing legal regulations, legislative amendments, and political decisions related to the civic sector. The most frequent terms include civil rights, constitution, amendment, law, democracy, government, and rule of law. In this

category, civic identity is linked to political processes and issues of institutional trust and distrust regarding the legitimacy of power.

The fourth category, Digital Civic Identity and Related Technologies, examines how technological developments shape citizenship and citizens' interaction with the state. The most frequently used terms include e-Identity, e-Documents, mobile application, identity card, and digital identity.

The fifth category, History and Cultural Formation of Civic Identity, includes media contributions reflecting on historical events that have shaped civic identity and society. The most frequent terms include Velvet Revolution, VPN, the legacy of November, and civic resistance.

The sixth category, Human Rights and Inclusive Approaches, focuses on the protection of minority rights, equality, and efforts to combat discrimination. The most frequent terms include human rights, discrimination, equality, inclusion, and freedom.

The seventh and final category, Other, includes articles that could not be clearly assigned to one of the previous categories but nonetheless reflect on the state of civil society and consider its future development.

Table 3: Data Set Categorization

Civic Identity and Self-Awareness	1. Psychologička: Cestovanie do preplnených destinácií nie je len o zážitkoch, vypovedá aj o našej sociálnej identite (SME, 1.8.2025)
Civil Society and Activism	1. Ocenením Biela vrana sa opäť oslávi občianska odvaha, tentokrát s podtitulom Nebojím sa pána (SME, 14.11.2025) 2. Sme pobúrení nad správou vecí verejných (SME, 29.1.2025)

	3. Občiansky sektor v otvorenom liste Ficovej vláde kritizuje odklon od demokracie (Denník N, 29.1.2025) 4. Pellegrini podpísal zákon o mimovládach (Denník N, 7.5.2025) 5. Mimovládky sa ohrádzajú voči krokom vlády (Pravda, 29.1.2025) 6. Občianska spoločnosť žiada prezidenta o vetovanie novely (SME, 9.6.2025) 7. Občianska spoločnosť vyzýva na moratórium na nové spalovne odpadu (SME, 1.10.2025) 8. Občianska spoločnosť na výročie Nežnej revolúcie protestovala proti Ficovej vláde (SME, 17.11.2025) 9. Na protest v Bratislave prišlo 60-tisíc ľudí (SME, 24.1.2025) 10. Petíciu proti zmene Ústavy podpísalo viac ako 4 000 ľudí (Pravda, 12.6.2025)
Political and Legislative Changes	1. Misia europarlamentu má obavy o nezávislosť justície a občiansku spoločnosť (Denník N, 15.7.2025) 2. Novela ústavy by porušovala práva aj medzinárodné záväzky (SME, 26.5.2025) 3. Iveta Radičová: Prechádzame z demokracie do populistkracie (Denník N, 11.2.2025) 4. Ficove predstavy sa rozchádzajú nielen s realitou, ale aj so zákonmi (SME, 23.1.2025) 5. SaS volá po predčasných voľbách (Pravda, 27.1.2025) 6. Slovensko kleslo v indexe právneho štátu (Hospodárske noviny, 28.10.2025)

	7. Slovensko je na ceste stať sa ďalším Maďarskom (Hospodárske noviny, 15.7.2025) 8. Robert Fico nemusí snívať o zmene systému (Hospodárske noviny, 12.6.2025)
Digital Identity and Technologies	1. Občiansky i vodičský preukaz v telefóne. Rezort vnútra spustil mobilné aplikácie eDoklady a eIdentita (Pravda, 15.4.2025)
Historical and Cultural Contexts	1. Nežná revolúcia nevyrástla na zelenej lúke (SME, 16.11.2025) 2. Spoluzakladateľ VPN Peter Tatár: November 1989 nedokáže zrušiť nikto (SME, 15.11.2025) 3. Slovensko si pripomenulo Nežnú revolúciu (Pravda, 17.11.2025) 4. Historik: Československo zostávalo posledným pevným režimom (Hospodárske noviny, 17.11.2025) 5. Vo viacerých mestách sa budú konať zhromaždenia k výročiu Nežnej revolúcie (Hospodárske noviny, 16.11.2025)
Human Rights and Inclusion	1. Situácia kvír ľudí sa podľa aktivistov zhoršuje, štát diskrimináciu odmieta (Pravda, 10.10.2025) 2. Veľvyslanec USA G. Rana ocenil obhajcov ľudských práv na Slovensku (Hospodárske noviny, 15.1.2025)
Other	1. Budúcnosť sme my, odkázali z Bratislavy (SME, 16.11.2025) 2. Slovensko sa zmenilo na krajinu bez vlastností (SME, 28.5.2025) 5. Brusel dvíha štít: Eurokomisia chce bojovať proti zasahovaniu do volieb (Pravda, 12.11.2025)

	6. Slovensko má momentálne v zahraničí najhoršie meno v histórii (Pravda, 18.09.2025) 7. 'Puč bez dôkazov, z prevratu sa stalo fiasko': aktivisti chcú hlavu ministra (Pravda, 11.08.2025)
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Source: Own elaboration, 2025.

The presented table demonstrates that, in 2025, civic identity in Slovak media is constructed through two primary frameworks: (A) civic engagement and activism, and (B) political and legislative changes. From these two lines, it can be inferred that the citizen is portrayed in media discourse both as an active participant and as a subject influenced by political decision-making.

Based on the presented dataset, the media corpus confirms that civic identity is structured around seven distinct thematic frameworks (see more in Table 3). Presented data shows that the discourse is dominated by a dualism between active civic resistance and structural political-legislative changes. Nevertheless, issues of digital identity or petitions for minority rights are also found in the common discourse, which proves that the concept of citizenship in Slovak media is not purely abstract, but is related to institutional and technological developments.

CONCLUSION

In relation to the objective of the study, the presented thematic analysis mapped the Slovak media discourse and revealed that civic identity in 2025 is not constructed as a homogenous concept, but is fragmented and divided into seven thematic framework. The findings present a distinct creation of two lines represented by civic engagement and political presentation. This division shows that media do not just report on polarization but actively works on socio-political aspect of the topic. In doing so, they transform understanding of civic identity from a democratic tool of connection to a polarized tool of political mobilization.

The formation of civic identity in Slovakia and within Slovak society is a dynamic process shaped by three main components: political, socio-cultural, and psychological factors.

The analysis of the presented findings is based on a qualitative approach, specifically thematic analysis of media discourse. The results demonstrate that civic identity is constructed through political, media, and educational discourse, while its stability depends on the relationship between legal, political, socio-cultural, and psychological dimensions. Willingness to engage in the defense of democratic values and to actively participate in civic activities is conditioned by value-based convictions.

In the context of increasing polarization, civic identity emerges as a key factor in sustaining the democratic system. Understanding the mechanisms underlying its formation is therefore essential not only for the advancement of political science but also for the development of public policies, educational programs, and the activation of civil society.

Civic identity in Slovakia undoubtedly exists; however, its form is complex and dynamic. Theoretical approaches (Smith, Petrovska, Habermas) suggest that civic identity extends beyond the legal status of citizenship to include political, socio-cultural, and psychological dimensions. In the Slovak context, this concept began to develop more intensively after 1989, during the country's transition to a democratic system. Since then, civic identity has evolved within a framework shaped by historical experiences, political turbulence, and the contemporary challenges of globalization.

The analysis of media discourse confirms that civic identity is present, yet not homogeneous. In the media, it appears across seven thematic frameworks, ranging from self-awareness and values to civic activism, legislative changes, digital identity, historical contexts, and human rights. These frameworks illustrate that civic identity is constructed through political, media, and educational environments. However, the current polarization of society weakens

its inclusive character and transforms it into a tool of political mobilization, thereby undermining its democratic function.

This indicates that while civic identity in Slovakia exists, its stability is contingent upon value orientations, social interactions, and trust in institutions.

In conclusion, civic identity in Slovakia can be characterized as real but fragmented and challenged by polarization. Its strengthening requires the integration of legal, political, and socio-cultural dimensions with inclusive policies, education, and the promotion of civic participation. Without such measures, there is a risk that civic identity will be further reduced to an instrument of political conflict, which may ultimately weaken the democratic system.

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