

Concerns mount over media freedoms in Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, and Slovakia

[Warsaw] - On Monday, April 24th, the Committee for Editorial Independence, supported by Reporters Without Borders and the Bakala Foundation, will present the most extensive public opinion survey on media freedom ever conducted across Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, and Hungary.

The survey comes at a critical time, as the European Commission builds political consensus around a new European Media Freedom Act that seeks to address many of the issues reflected in public concerns.

4 023 people were polled across Poland, Czechia, Slovakia, and Hungary, between 6th – 21st March, using both phone and online interviews to ensure a representative measure of opinion. The study reveals that concerns about media freedom have significantly risen in Slovakia and Poland, with 71% of respondents in Poland expressing concern, an 8% increase compared to last year.

The vast majority of people acknowledge the importance of independent media. The negative impacts of media owners and governments influencing journalistic content have become more apparent to the public.

In Poland and Hungary, the government is perceived as the biggest threat to media freedom. In contrast, media owners and business interests are seen as the primary threat in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Independence from owners or business interests is highly valued, with 87% of respondents in Poland emphasising its importance.

Strong support exists for media independence from the government, unlinking media from political parties, and ensuring truthful, factually accurate content. The public also highly supports transparency in media ownership and disclosing conflicts of interest between owners and content.

The survey indicates that people are in favour of the state strengthening legislation to safeguard media freedom and independence. They also support the European Union *imposing* penalties or sanctions on governments that interfere with media freedom.

The need for digital platforms to prioritise trustworthy sources over less reliable news sources and to prevent the spread of hate speech and disinformation is widely agreed upon. Media diversity is perceived as relatively higher in the Czech Republic and Poland, while it is lower in Hungary.

Dr. Tessa Szyszkowitz, Chair of the Committee for Editorial Independence said: *“As the European Commission works towards gaining EU-wide consensus on the need for a European Media Freedom Act, these findings show the public are ahead of the politicians in demanding action to protect journalistic values and independence.”*

Committee for Editorial Independence

The Committee for Editorial Independence is an industry-driven initiative designed to ensure journalists and editors can carry out their work free from any interference, without fear or favour from both internal and external pressures. It seeks to promote free media and positively influence journalistic culture, not only in Central and Eastern Europe. More at <https://free.economia.cz>

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