



Attitudes to media freedom and independence in Central Europe

Selected outcomes from a 4-country survey

25th April 2024



Committee
for Editorial Independence

Methodology

Sample size

4 127 respondents aged 18+

Sample size per country:

CZ = 1 011

SK = 1 001

PL = 1 025

HU = 1 090

Dates of interviewing

13th – 26th March 2024

Method of data collection

Online panel questionnaire (CAWI, 85%) and telephone interviews (CATI, 15%)

Method of sampling

Quota sampling method (gender, age, education, region and size of place of residence)

Research design & supervision

Dr Václav Štětka, Loughborough University & Committee for Editorial Independence

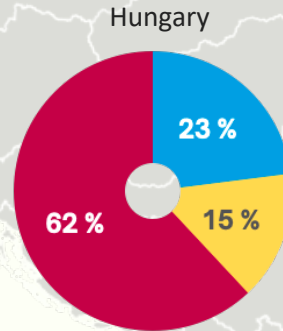
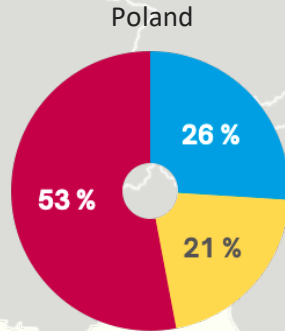
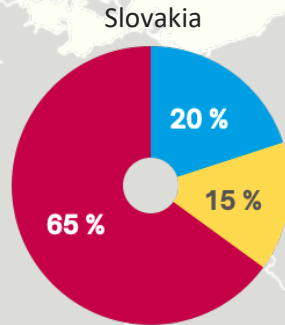
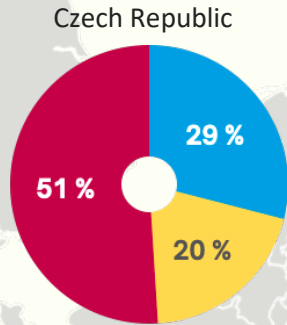
Implementer and client

The research was carried out by MEDIAN, s.r.o. (member of SIMAR) exclusively for the Committee for Editorial Independence



How concerned are people about
the state of media freedom?

Concerns about media freedom



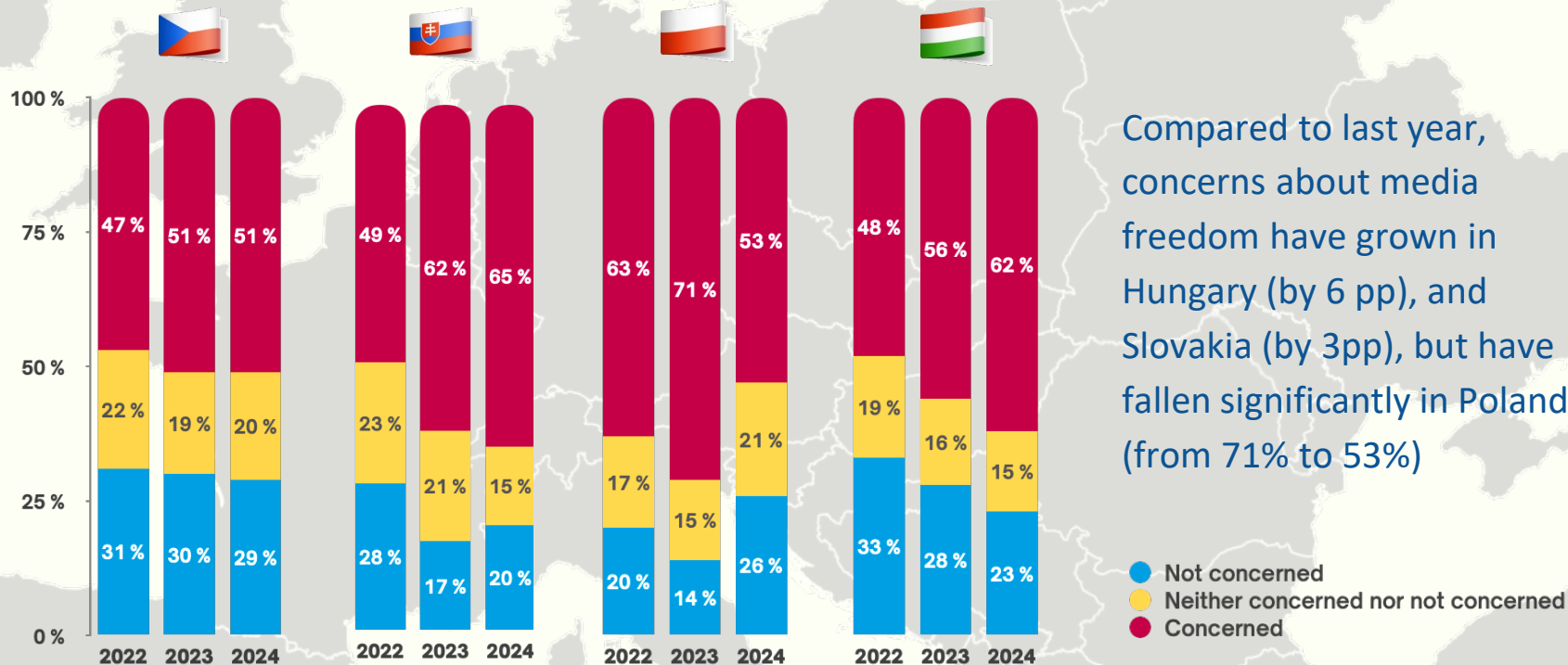
Majority of people in all V4 express concern about the current state of media freedom.

Slovaks display the highest concerns (65%), followed by Hungary (62%).

- Not concerned
- Neither concerned nor not concerned
- Concerned

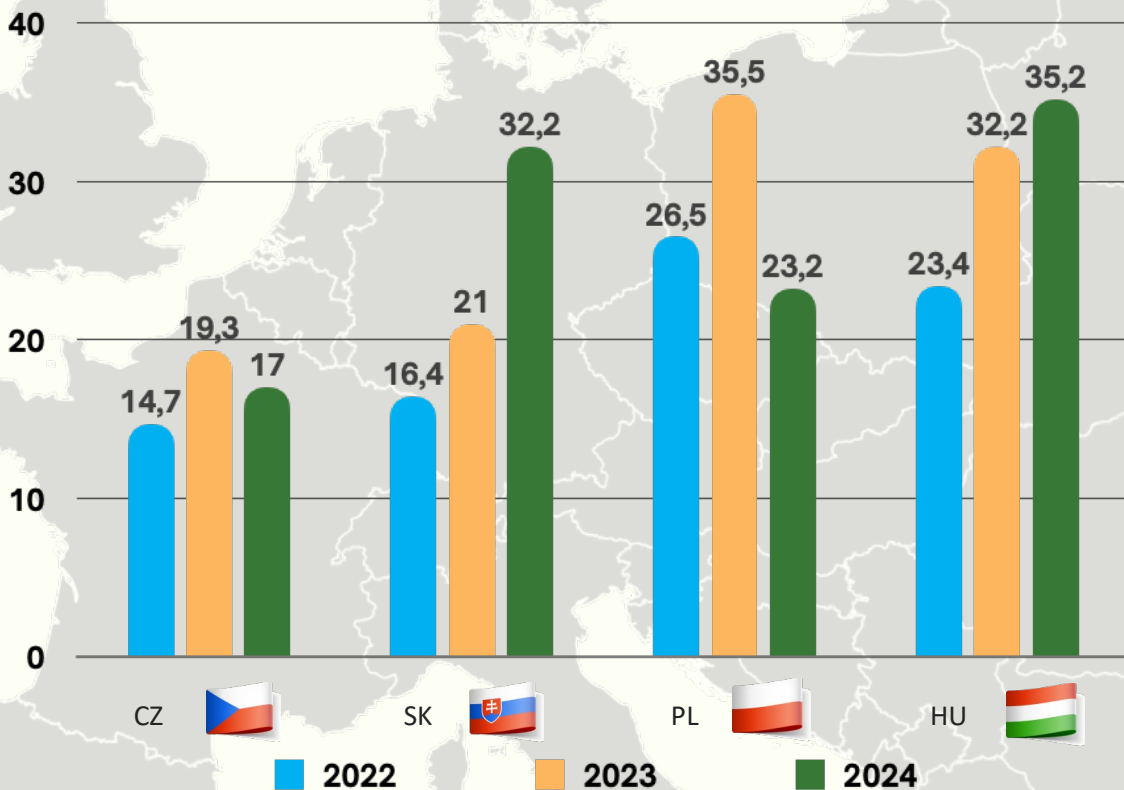
Q. Can you tell us how concerned are you right now about the current state of media freedom in your country?

Concerns about media freedom: comparison with 2022 and 2023 data



Q. Can you tell us how concerned are you right now about the current state of media freedom in your country?

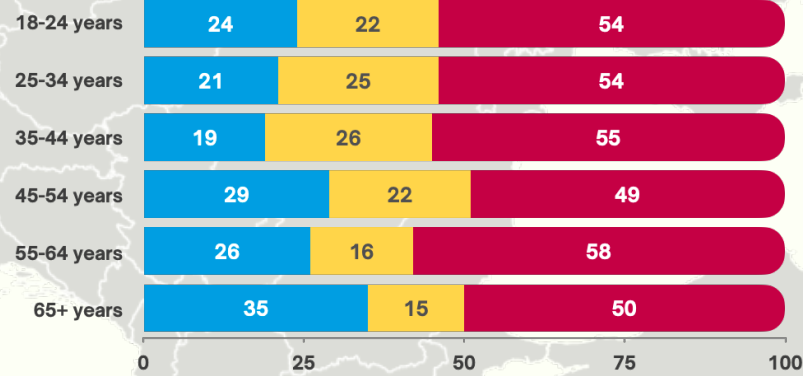
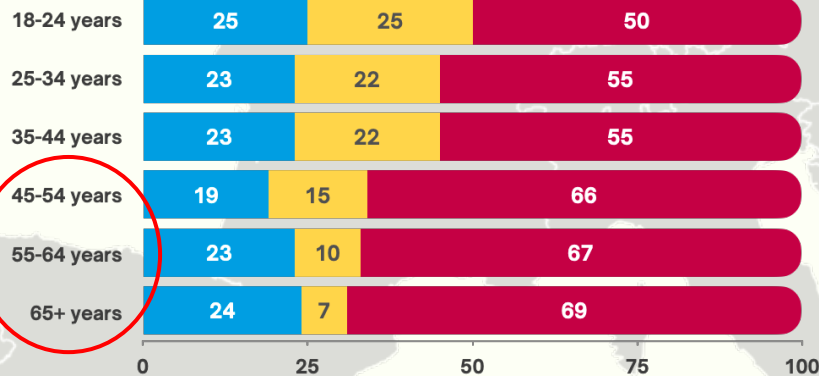
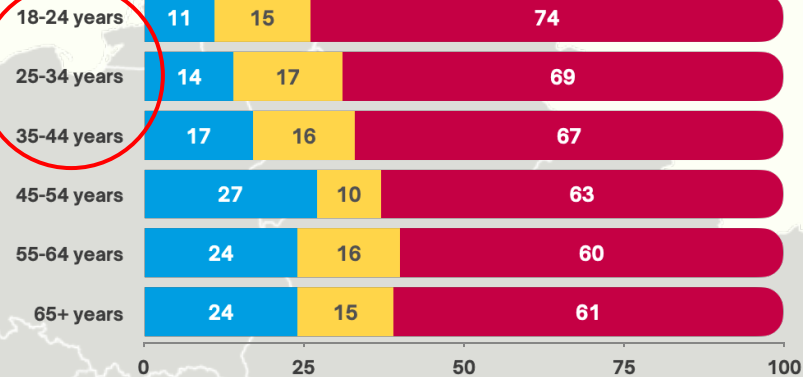
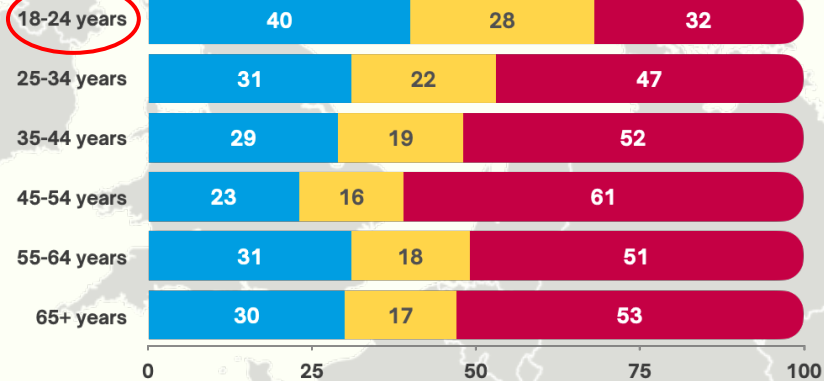
% of people who are „very concerned“ about media freedom in their country



The share of people expressing the highest concern about media freedom (point 7 on the 1-7 scale of concern) has grown significantly in Slovakia (+11pp) but declined in Poland (-12pp)

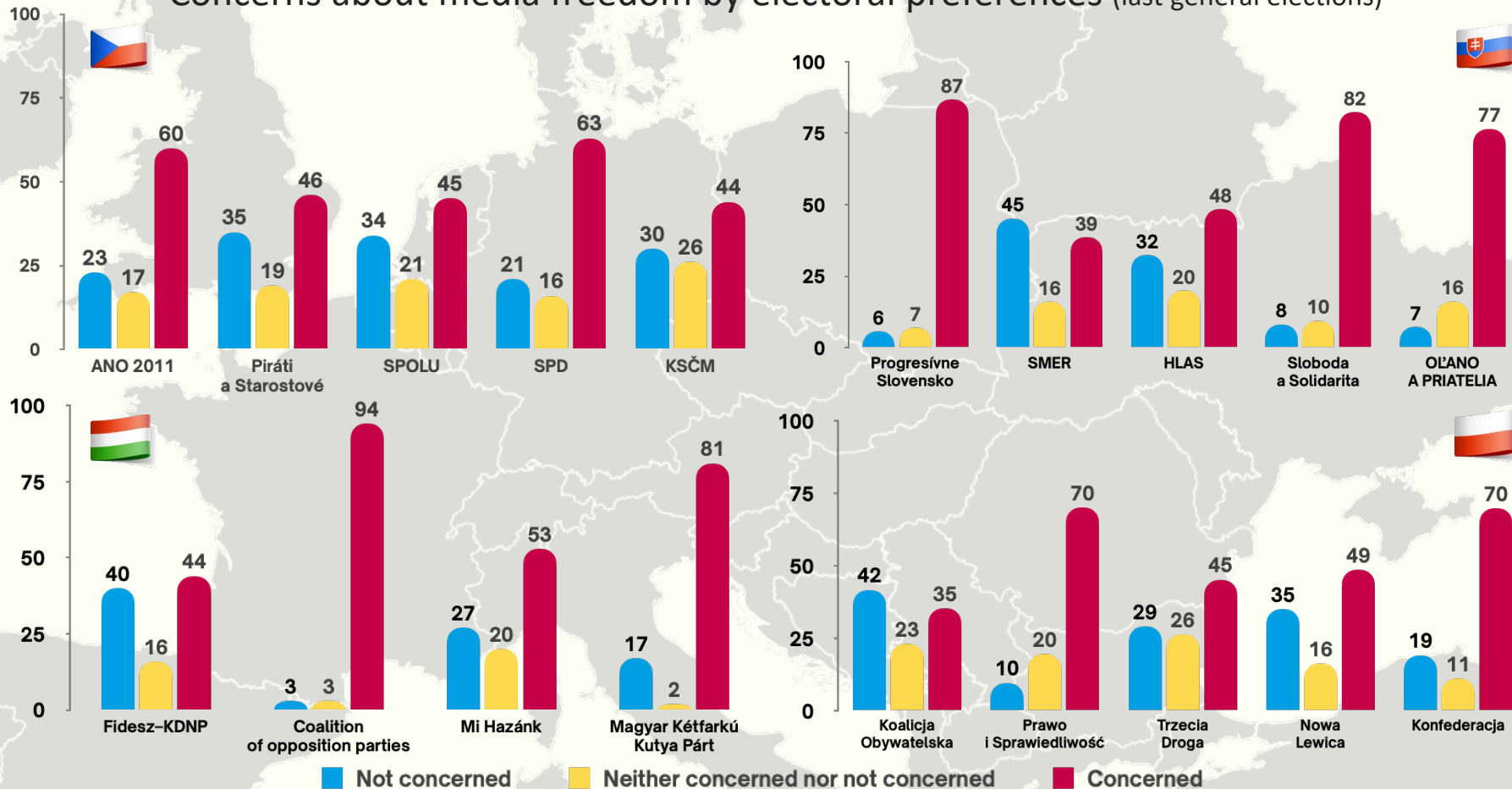
Q. Can you tell us how concerned are you right now about the current state of media freedom in your country?

Concerns about media freedom by age categories

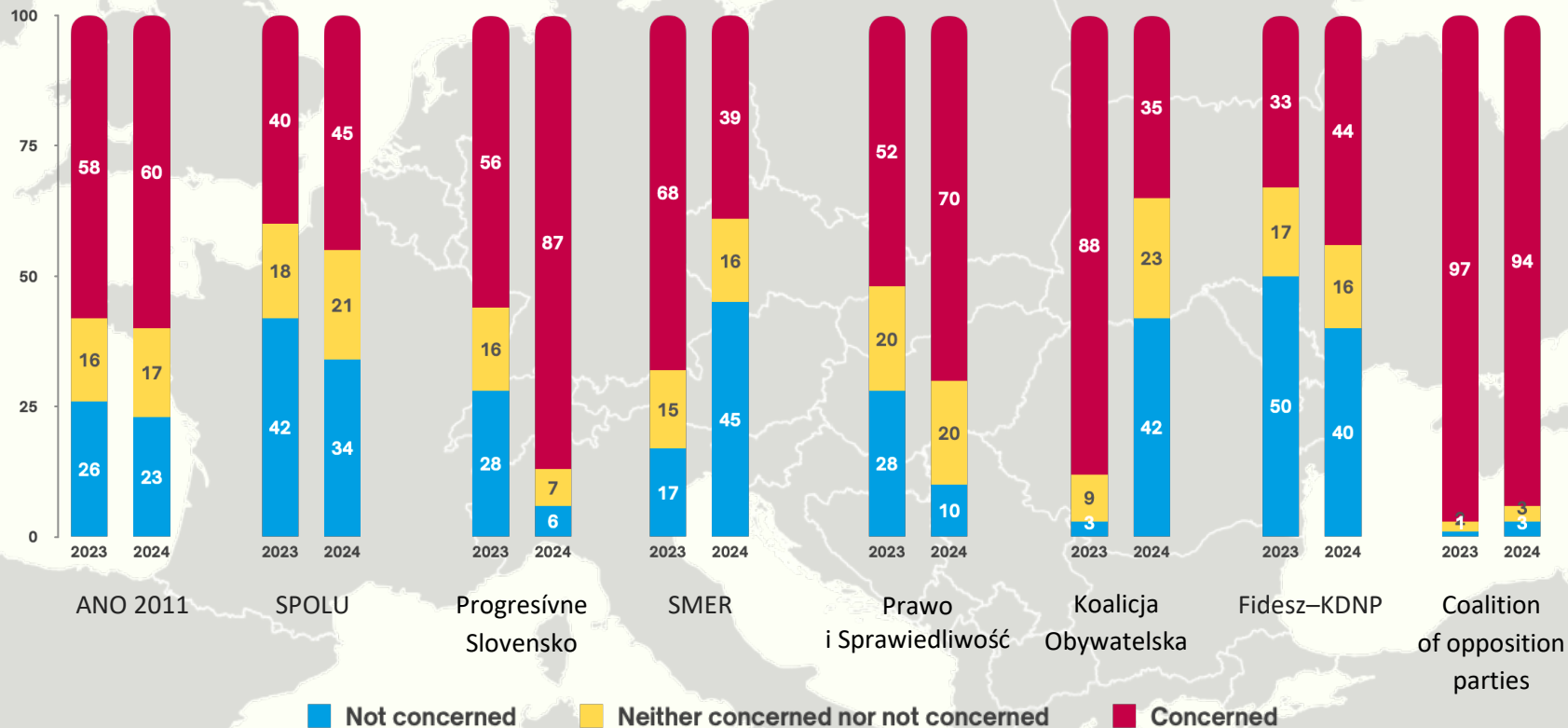


■ Not concerned
 ■ Neither concerned nor not concerned
 ■ Concerned

Concerns about media freedom by electoral preferences (last general elections)



Concerns about media freedom by electoral preferences (2023, 2024)



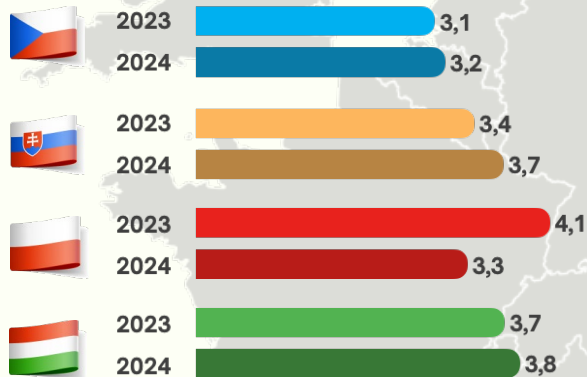
A grayscale map of Europe, showing the outlines of countries and major geographical features. The map is centered on the continent, with the text 'Threats to media freedom' overlaid in the middle. The text is in a dark blue, sans-serif font.

Threats to media freedom

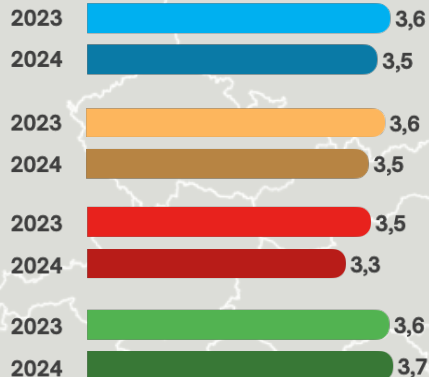
Perceived threats to media freedom

(average scores, 1-5 scale)

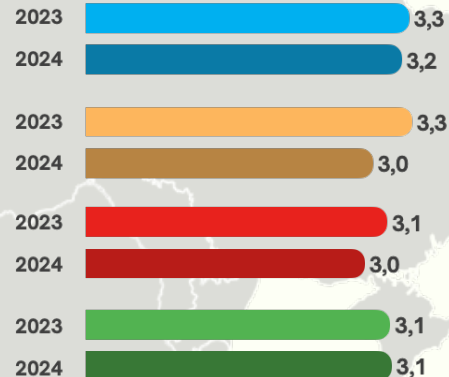
The government



Media owners, advertisers or other business interests



Digital platforms (Google, Facebook, Twitter etc.)



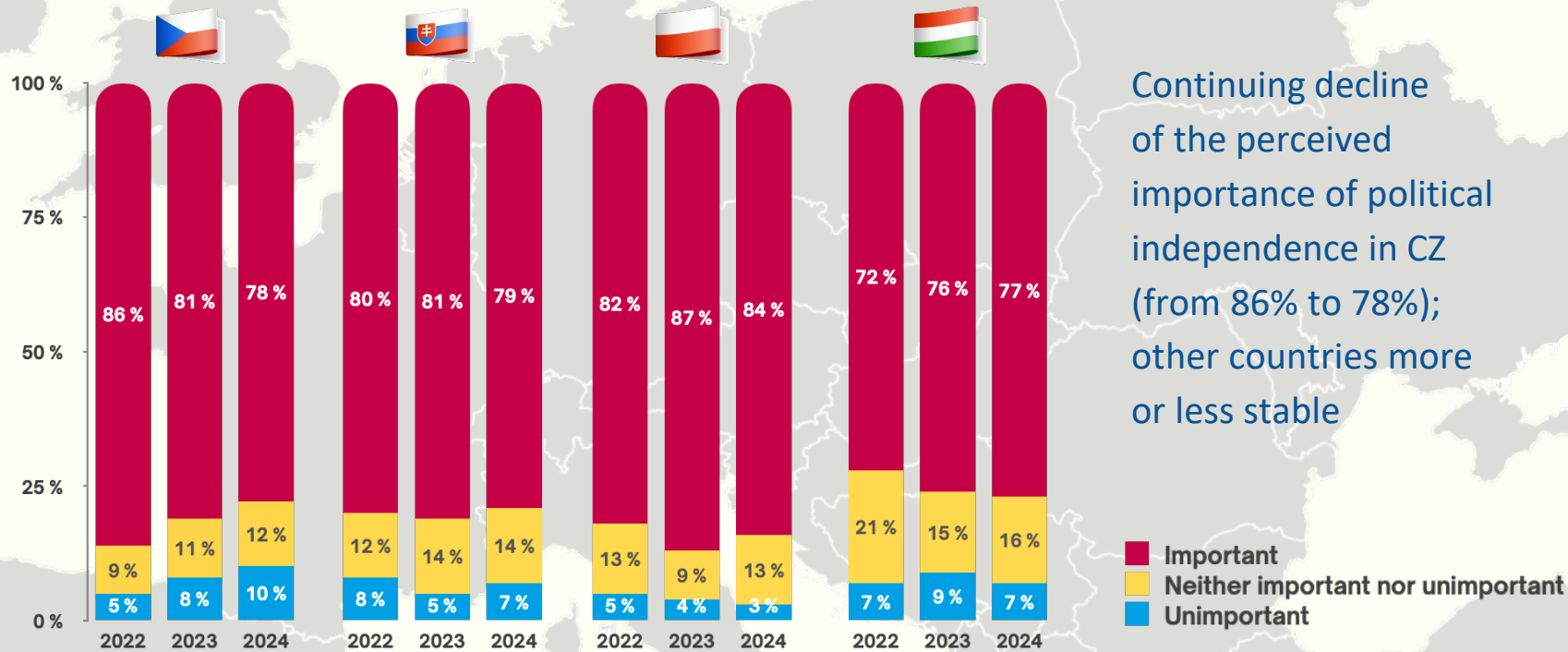
No major changes in CZ and HU, but an increase in the number of Slovaks who think the government is the biggest threat to media freedom, and a reverse change in Poland on the same issue (sharp decline)

Q. Thinking about the state of media in [COUNTRY], can you tell us to what extent it is currently being threatened by...



How do people assess the importance
of independent media?

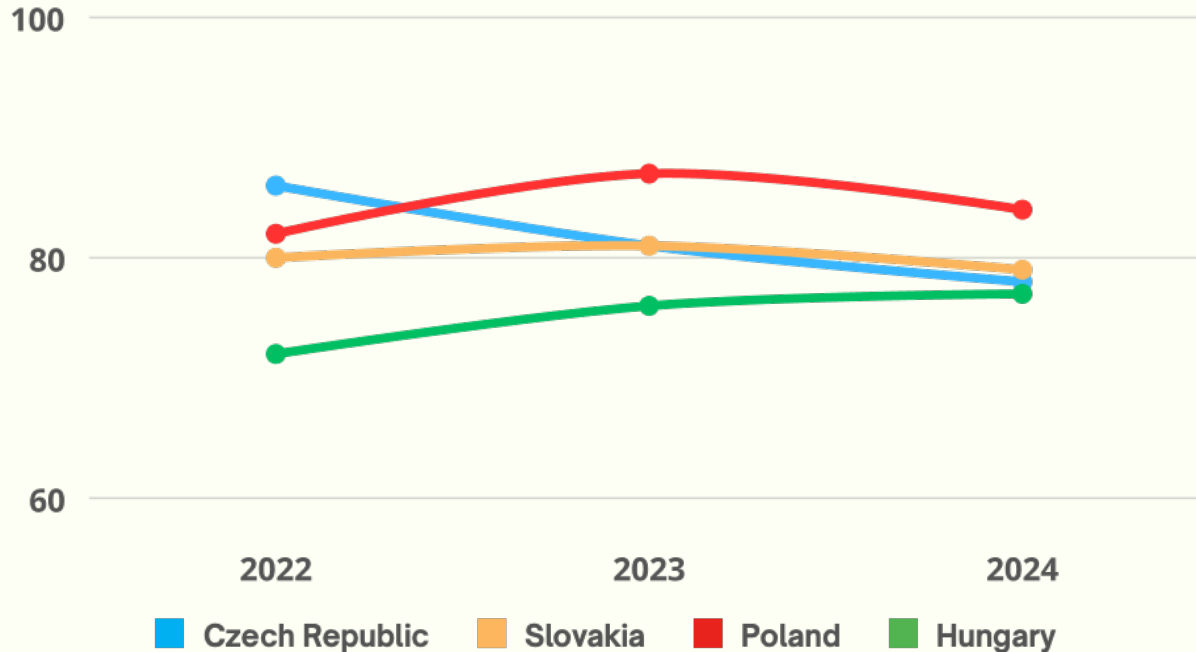
Importance of political independence of media: comparison with 2022 and 2023 data



Continuing decline of the perceived importance of political independence in CZ (from 86% to 78%); other countries more or less stable

Q. How important it is for a society to have news media that can operate without any interferences or censorship by the state or government?

% of people for whom it is important to have politically independent media



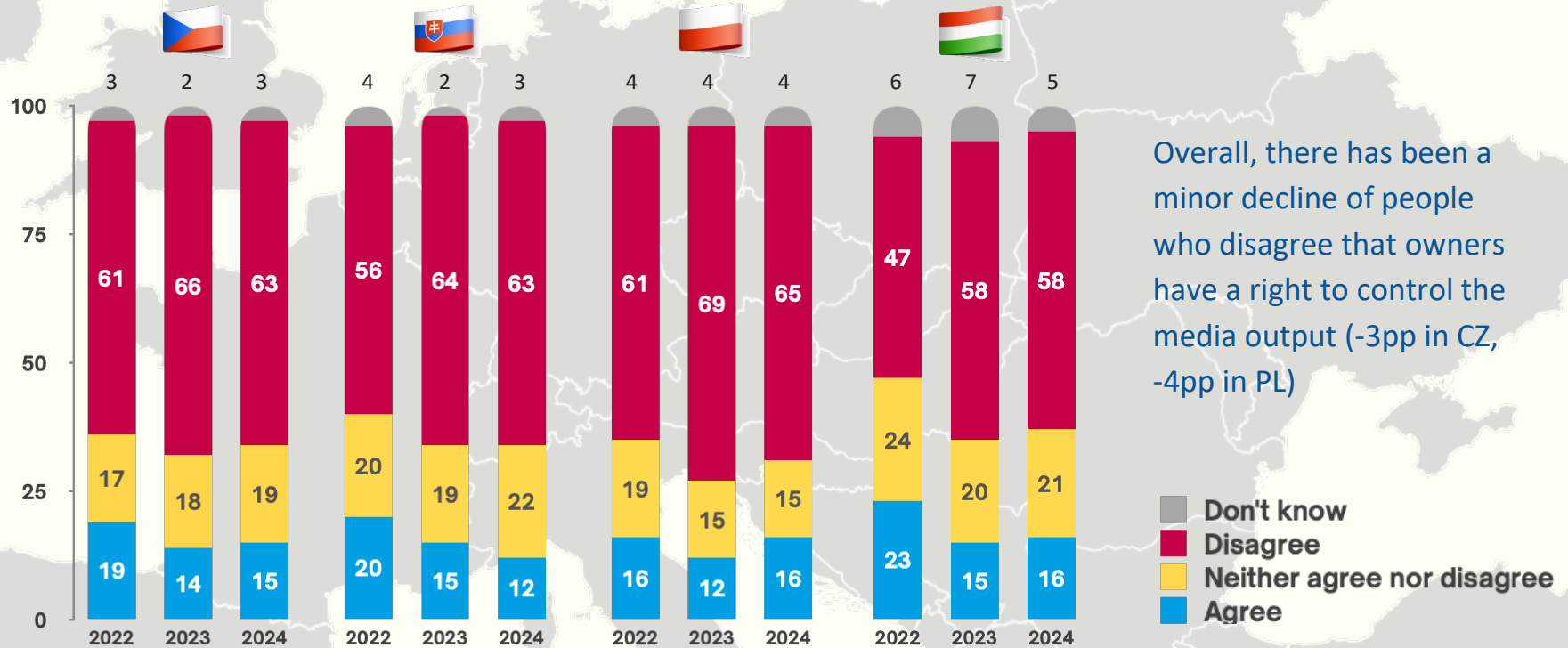
Q. How important it is for a society to have news media that can operate without any interferences or censorship by the state or government?



Editorial autonomy of media

Opinions on the role of media owners:

“media owners have a right to tell their journalists what to write or say”

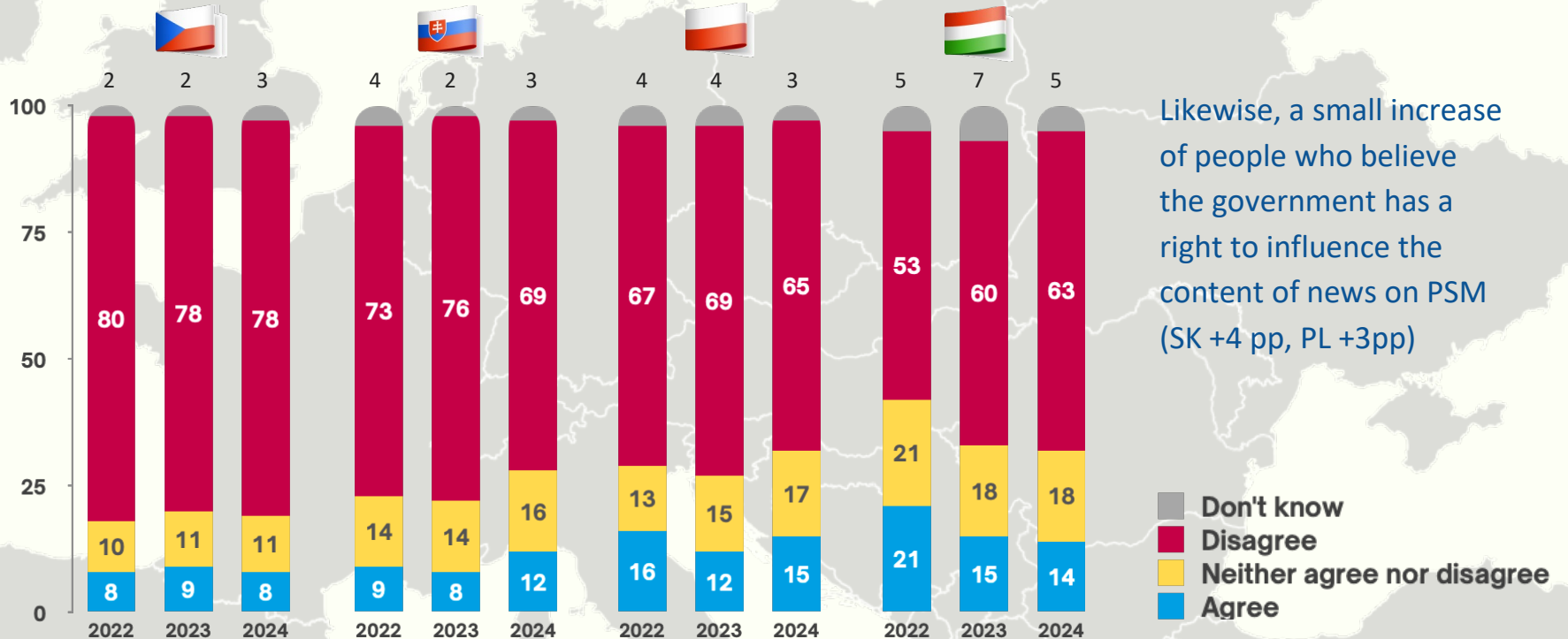


Overall, there has been a minor decline of people who disagree that owners have a right to control the media output (-3pp in CZ, -4pp in PL)

Q. Please tell us to what extent you agree or disagree with following statements:
 "Media owners have a right to tell their journalists what to write or say."

Opinions on the role of the government:

“The government has a right to influence the content of the news that is broadcasted by public service media”



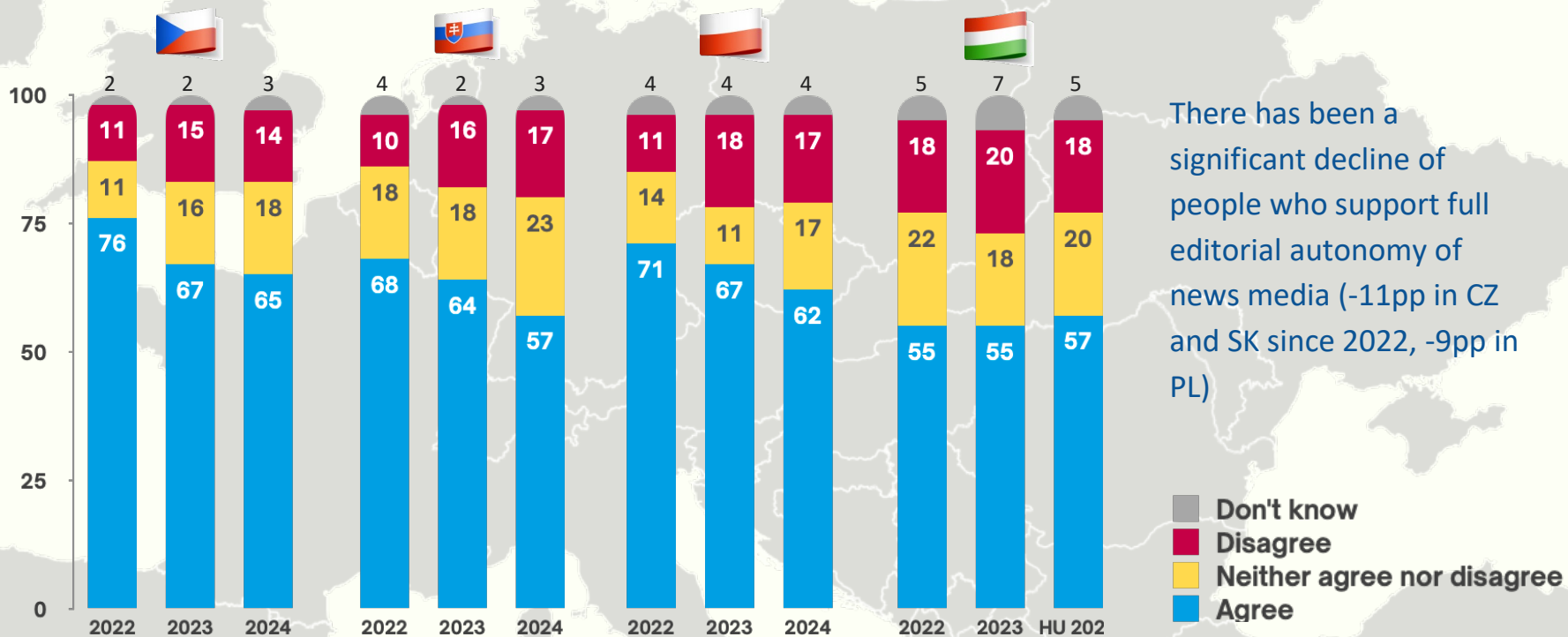
Likewise, a small increase of people who believe the government has a right to influence the content of news on PSM (SK +4 pp, PL +3pp)

Q. Please tell us to what extent you agree or disagree with following statements:

“The government has a right to influence the content of the news that is broadcasted by public service media.”

Opinions on the editorial autonomy of newsrooms:

"Newsroom should always be able to decide what to write about without any external interference"



There has been a significant decline of people who support full editorial autonomy of news media (-11pp in CZ and SK since 2022, -9pp in PL)

Q. Please tell us to what extent you agree or disagree with following statements:

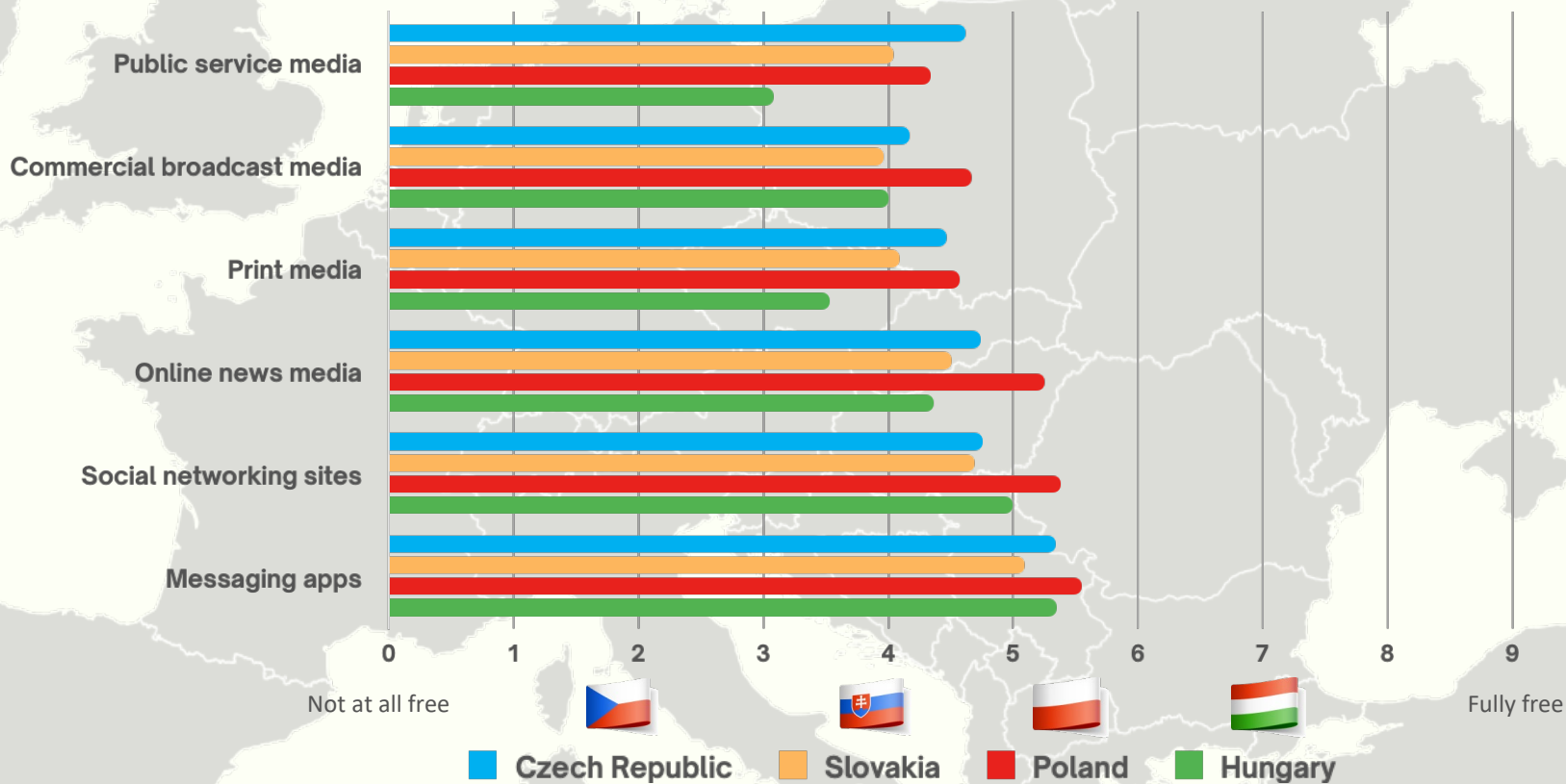
"Newsroom should always be able to decide what to write about without any external interference."



Perceived media freedom and trustworthiness
by different media types

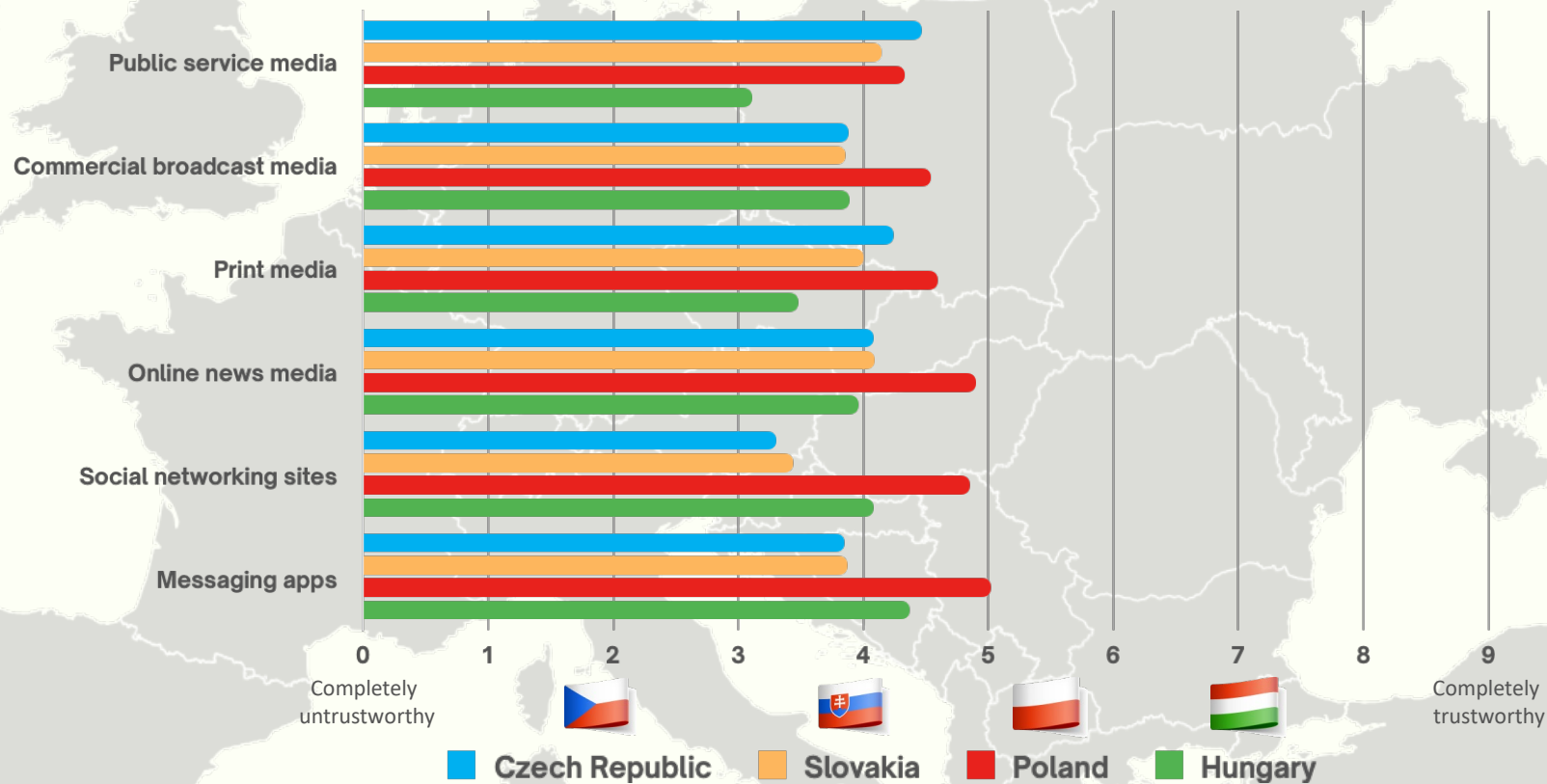
Q. How free are following types of media in your country?

(Avg score on 0-9 scale)



Q. How trustworthy are following types of media in your country?

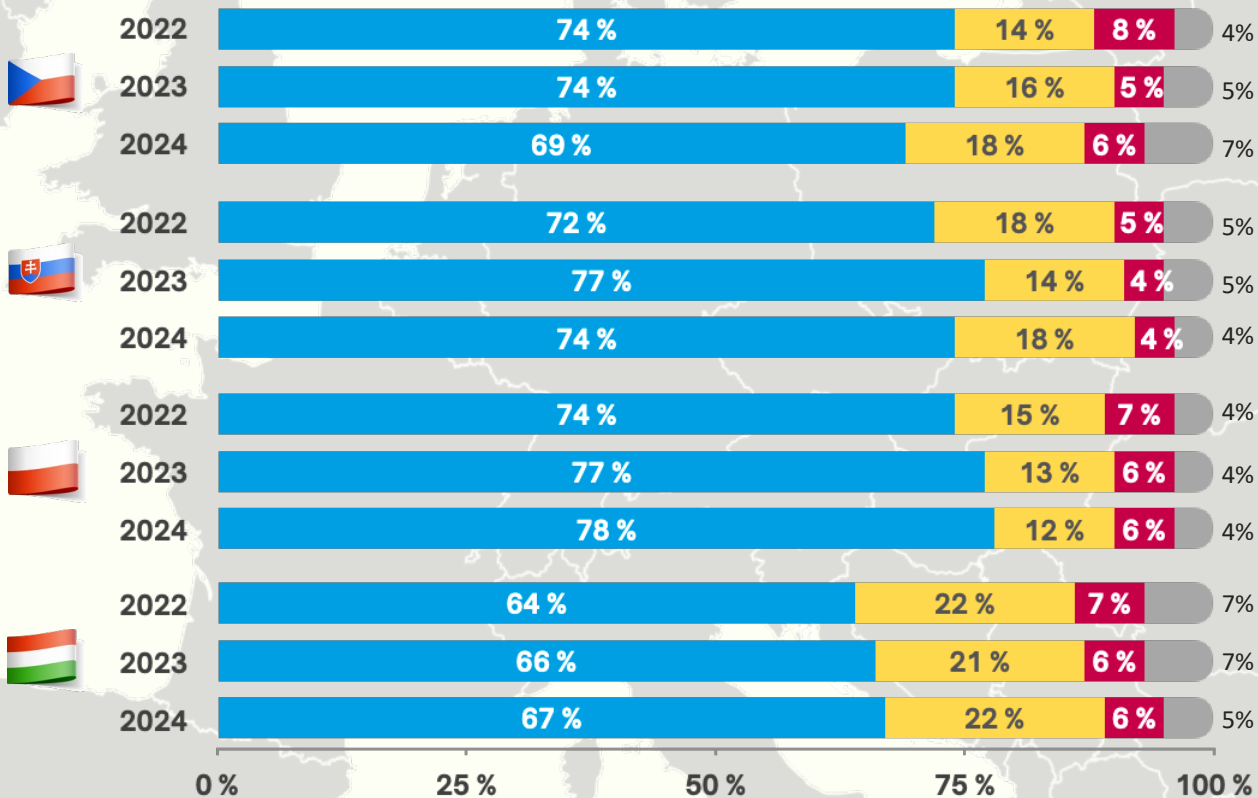
(Avg score on 0-9 scale)



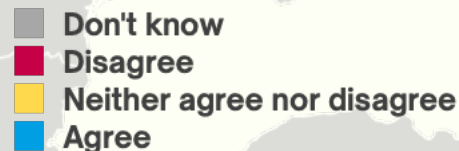


What should be done to safeguard
media freedom?

Strengthening of national legislation to protect media freedom

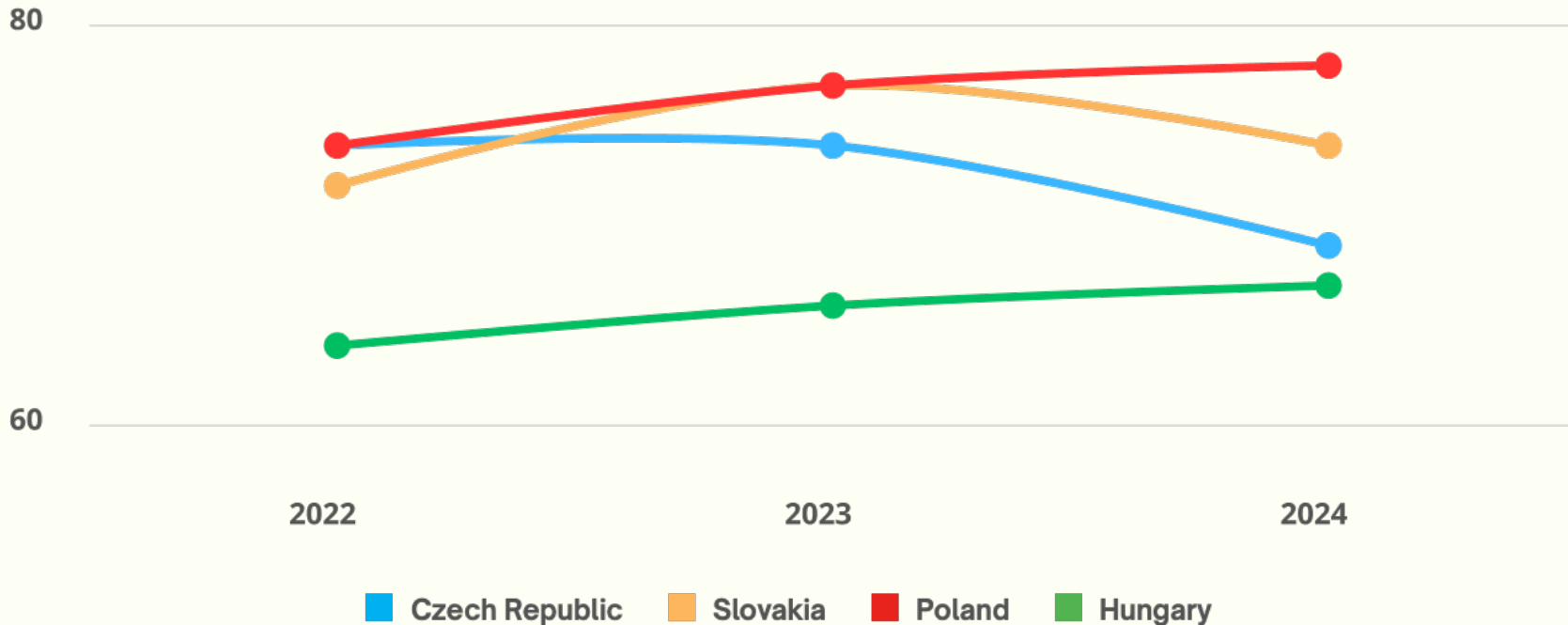


We observe a gradual decline of support for strengthening legislation in CZ and SK, but an increase in PL and HU



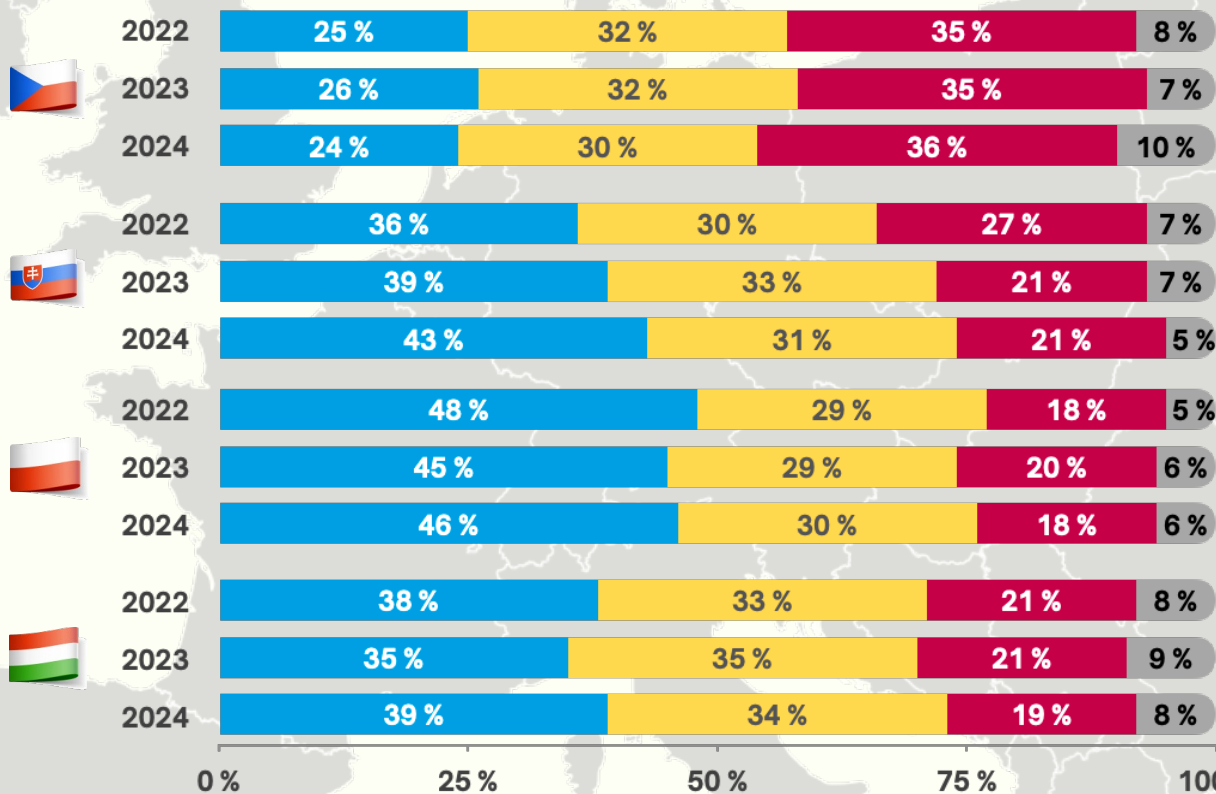
Q. "The state should strengthen legislation to safeguard media freedom and independence."

Strengthening of national legislation to protect media freedom (% of those who agree)



Q. "The state should strengthen legislation to safeguard media freedom and independence."

Economic support by the state to protect media freedom

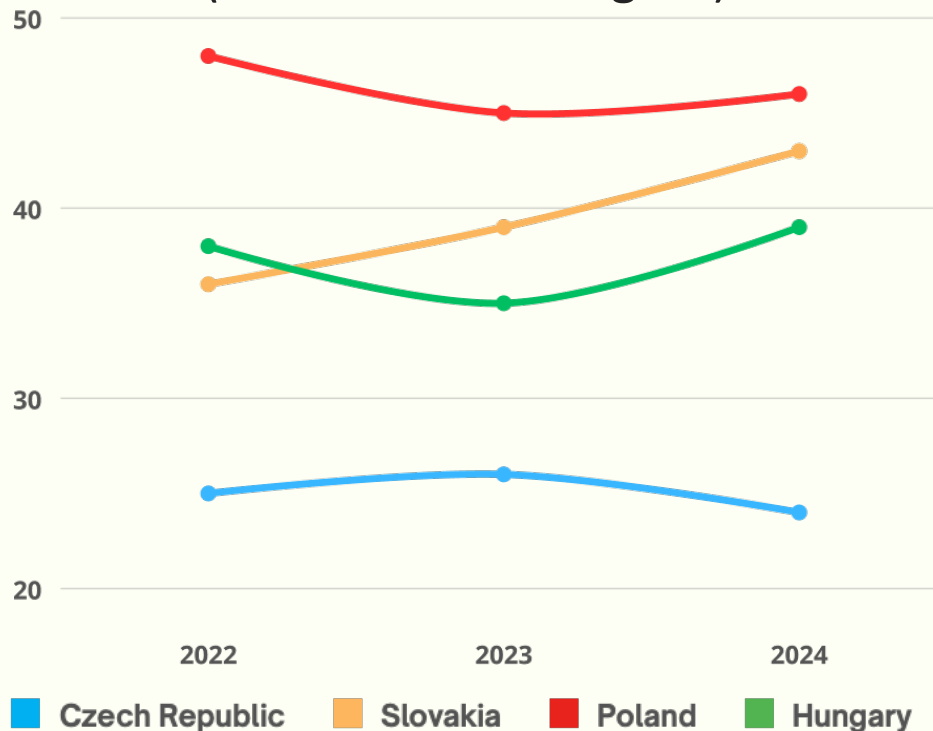


An increase of agreement with economic support for independent media in SK and HU; Czech Republic remains by far the most skeptical

Don't know
 Disagree
 Neither agree nor disagree
 Agree

Q. "The state should provide media with more economic support, for example by subsidies or tax reliefs."

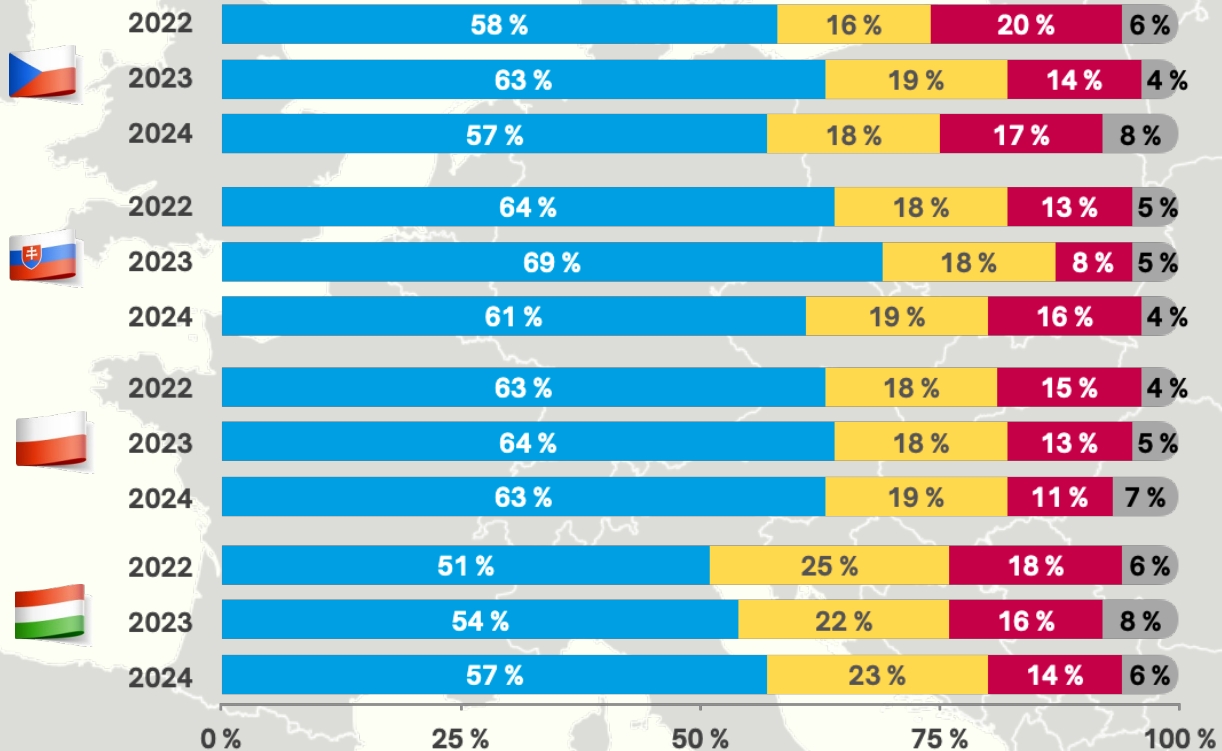
Economic support by the state to protect media freedom (% of those who agree)



Q. "The state should provide media with more economic support, for example by subsidies or tax reliefs."

The role of the EU in protecting media freedom

(% of those who agree)

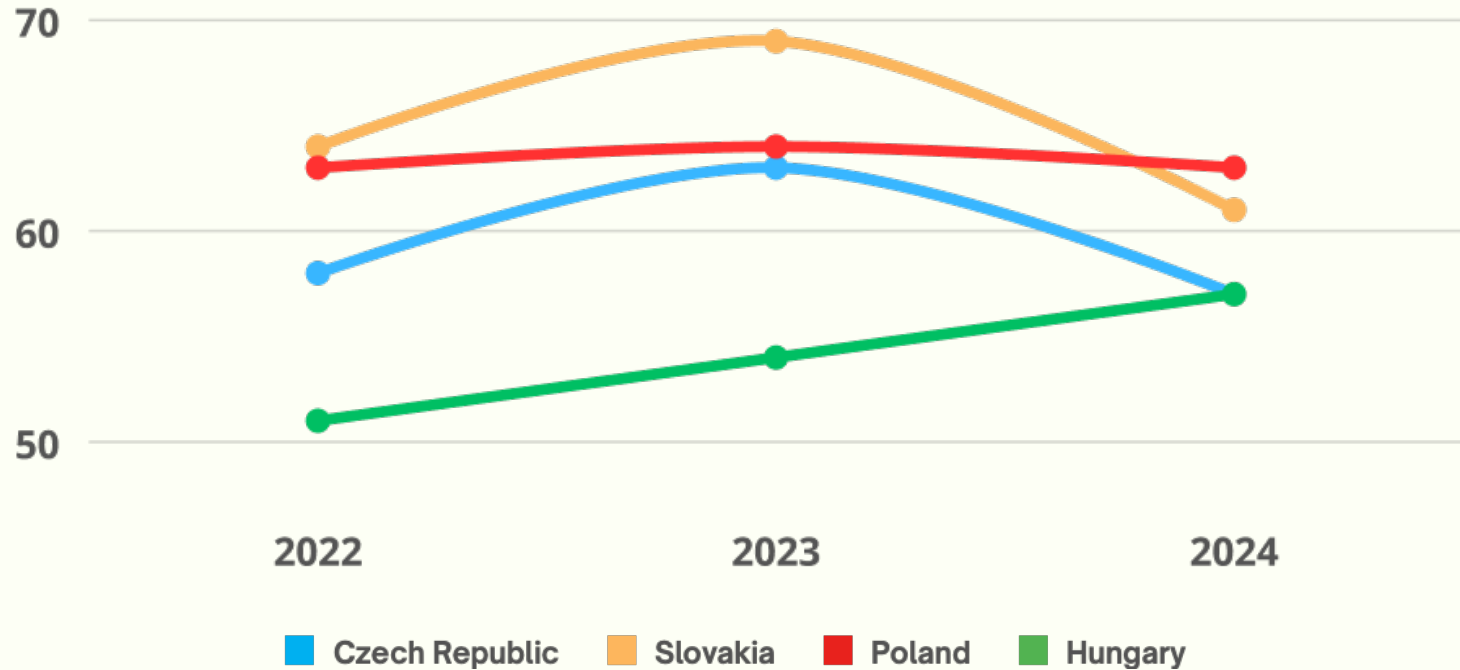


Majority of people in all V4 countries agree with EU sanctions for interfering with media freedom. The % has slightly dropped in the Czech Republic and Slovakia compared to last year, but increased in Hungary.

Don't know
 disagree
 Neither agree nor disagree
 Agree

Q. "The EU should impose penalties or sanctions on countries whose governments interfere with media freedom."

The role of the EU in protecting media freedom (% of those who agree)

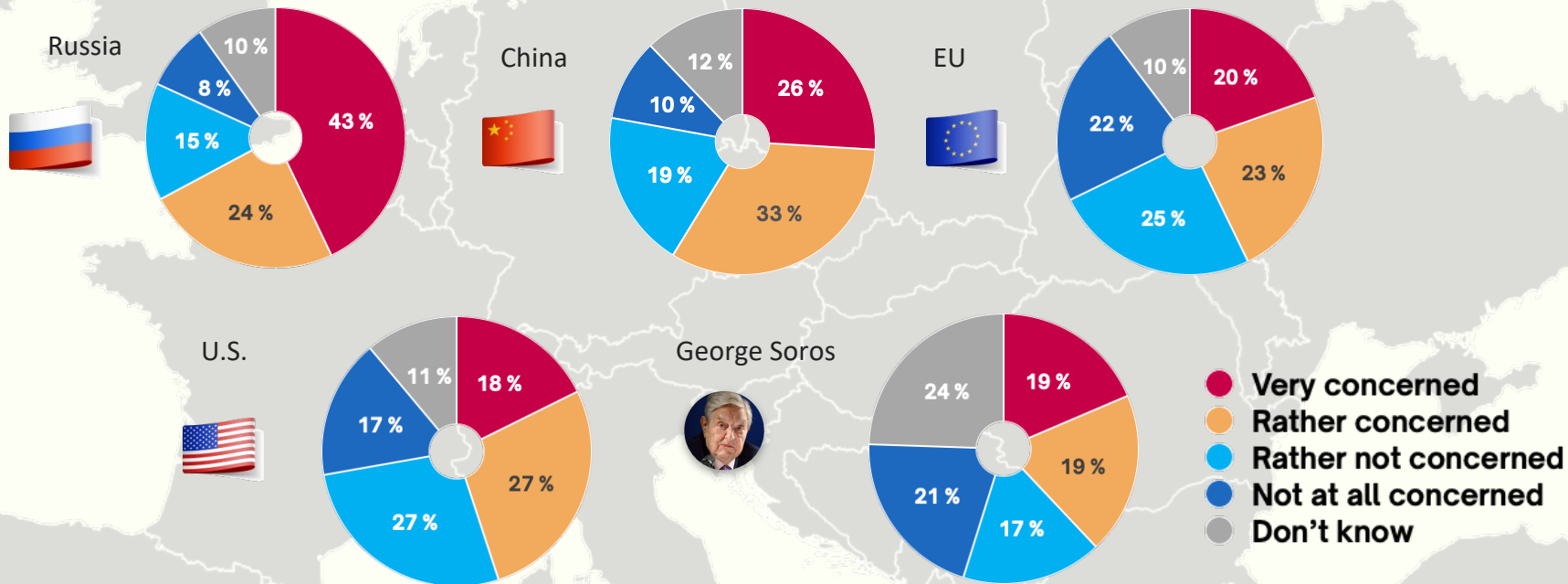


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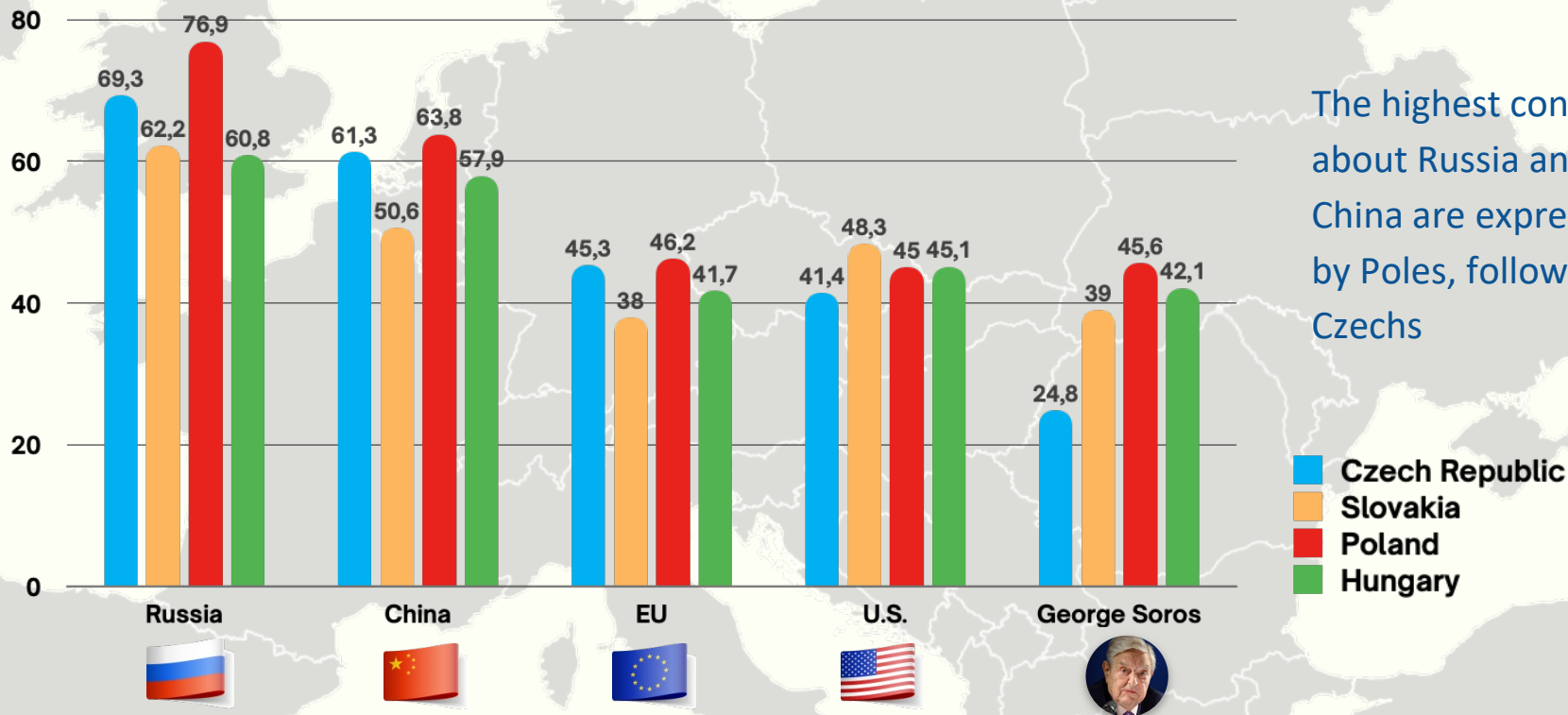
Concerns about specific threats
to information environment

Concerns about influence of specific countries or actors on domestic media and public opinion (V4)



Q. "How concerned are you, if concerned at all, about the influence of following countries?"

% of people concerned about influence of specific countries or actors on domestic information environment and public opinion („very concerned“ + „rather concerned“)



The highest concerns about Russia and China are expressed by Poles, followed by Czechs

Q. "How concerned are you, if concerned at all, about the influence of following countries?"



Thank you!

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