

## Central Europeans reject US narrative on free speech, poll shows

### ***New findings undercut claims of 'censorship' in EU digital policy – clear support for smart regulation of social media to protect media freedom and public debate***

**Prague/Bratislava** – A major new poll of Central European nations sharply rebuts claims from parts of the US political and tech establishment about supposed EU "institutional censorship." Instead, findings show widespread public support for transparent and effective regulation of social media to protect freedom of expression and democratic integrity.

The 2025 edition of the V4 Media Freedom Poll, commissioned by the Committee for Editorial Independence and the Bakala Foundation, surveyed respondents in Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, and Slovakia. It demonstrates overwhelming public backing for accountability measures against social media platforms, particularly in response to hate speech, cyberbullying, disinformation, and harmful content.

*"Central Europeans aren't rejecting free speech - they want safeguards to ensure it remains free,"* said Tessa Szyszkowitz, Chair of the Committee for Editorial Independence. *"Today's digital landscape requires protections against manipulation by algorithms, extremism, and profit-driven disinformation. Citizens increasingly view EU intervention not as overreach, but as essential democratic protection."*

#### **Key findings include:**

- Almost 90% across the region demand platforms act decisively against hate speech, cyberbullying, and content promoting self-harm
- 67% support actions against the spreading of disinformation
- 66% believe that digital platforms should give preference to trustworthy sources of information
- 61% agree that digital platforms should be transparent about their decisions regarding promotion or suppression of content

The most preferred intervention is the removal of harmful content, followed by reducing its visibility and adding contextual labels - reflecting strong support for clear, decisive action.

#### **Support for EU action on governments that undermine media freedom:**

- Poland: 65%
- Hungary: 60%
- Slovakia: 57%
- Czech Republic: 55%

#### **Support for EU oversight of global digital platforms:**

- Poland: 66% support, only 10% opposed
- Hungary: 63% support, only 8% opposed
- Slovakia: 56% support, 15% opposed
- Czech Republic: 55% support, 17% opposed

## Shifting perceptions: US influence viewed as greater threat than China

Perhaps most notably, the survey identifies a major shift: respondents now view US influence on digital discourse as a greater threat than China's, with concerns about the US rising sharply to 59%, compared to 58% for China. This shift is especially pronounced among young people (Gen Z, aged 18-24), whose concern about the US jumped dramatically from 32% in 2024 to 58% this year.

*"These findings represent a stark challenge to narratives emerging from Washington and Silicon Valley," Szyszkowitz said. "The data is clear: Central Europeans are deeply concerned about misinformation, hate speech, and digital manipulation - not regulation. They expect EU institutions to act decisively to protect democratic freedoms in the digital age."*

### Press conference and debate:

A press conference with leading media figures in the region will take place at 11 AM CET, Monday, 12th May 2025, at FACH, Ventúrska 10, Bratislava, Slovakia. The event will be streamed live at [mediafreedompoll.com](https://mediafreedompoll.com).

### Notes to Editors:

#### Press conference

- Date & Time: Monday, 12th May 2025, 11 AM CET
- Location: FACH, Ventúrska 10, Bratislava, Slovakia
- Live Stream: [mediafreedompoll.com](https://mediafreedompoll.com)

#### Speakers include:

- Tessa Szyszkowitz, Chair, **Committee for Editorial Independence**
- Dr Václav Štětka, **Loughborough University**
- Pavol Szalai, **Reporters Without Borders**
- Misha Glenny, Rector, **Institute for Human Sciences** in Vienna
- Alexander Dworzak, **Reporters Without Borders**
- Beáta Balogová, **SME**, Slovakia
- Veronika Munk, **Denník N**, Slovakia
- Márton Gergely, **HVG**, Hungary
- Michał Olszewski, **Gazeta Wyborcza**, Poland
- Martin Ehl, **Hospodářské noviny**, Czech Republic
- Alexandra Borchardt, media researcher and journalist

This is the fourth survey commissioned by the Committee for Editorial Independence (CEI) and conducted between 31 March and 22 April 2025 by Median through online panel questioning and telephone interviews, with a total sample size of 4,112 respondents aged 18 and above. The survey is supported by the Bakala Foundation.

The CEI, established by the Economia media house, safeguards editorial freedom and supports professional journalism free from interference.

The Bakala Foundation promotes free, independent media through education and training opportunities, strengthening journalistic integrity in Central Europe.

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