



Report on disinformation in Slovakia in 2025



#STOPFAKENEWS

STATISTICAL OVERVIEW – SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS OF HOAXY A PODVODY

Disinformation Narratives: **96**

Online Scams: **30**

Facebook

Published Posts: **604**

Number of Followers: **40,141 (+9,500)**

Total Content Views: **14.4M**

Total Interactions: **421.8k**

Total Video Views: **4.97M**

Instagram

Published Posts: **604**

Number of Followers: **29,895 (+ 7,500)**

Total Content Views: **5.2M**

Total Interactions: **142.2k**

Total Reach: **1.1M**

YouTube

Number of Subscribers: **1,610**

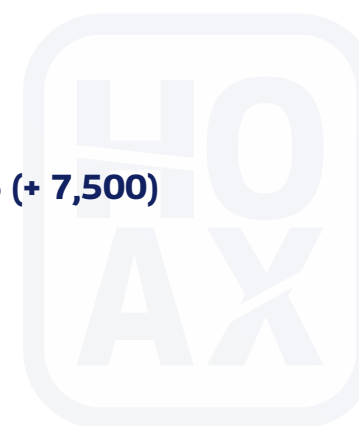
Number of Views: **38,293**

Podcasts (Spotify and Apple podcasts)

Number of Streams: **30,704**

LinkedIn

Number of Followers: **1,809**



CONTENTS

1 Introduction 4

2 The State as a Creator of Hoaxes and Hybrid Threats 8

2.1 The End of the Centre for Countering Hybrid Threats 17

3 Russian War in Ukraine 20

3.1 Parallel Reality 22

3.2 Forms of Spreading Propaganda 23

3.3 Other Russian Disinformation Narratives Observed in Slovakia 27

3.4 Prominent Representatives of Russian Propaganda in Slovakia..... 29

3.5 Termination of the Activities of the Disinformation Account Slovakinfo..... 31

3.6 Pro-Russian Activities in the Real World 32

3.7 Slovak Youth in Russia..... 33

3.8 BRAT ZA BRATA..... 42

3.9 TV OTV..... 45

4 Other Disinformation Topics.....49

4.1 The European Union..... 49

4.2 Moldova 51

4.3 USA..... 52

4.4 Foot-and-Mouth Disease..... 54

4.5 The COVID-19 Pandemic and Public Health 55

4.6 Other Medical Disinformation..... 58

4.7 Attack at a Slovak School..... 60

4.8 Selection of Various Disinformation Narratives 61

5 Hatred as a Persistent Problem 65

5.1 Elimination of a Hateful Account..... 65

5.2 Štefánik Legion..... 66

6 Stratcom for the Professional Public.....72

7 International Forum STRATCOM UNDER PRESSURE 2025.....74

8 Trip to Ukraine 77

9 Lecturing Activities 79

9.1 Disinformation Campaign..... 79

10 Podcast.....82

11 Frauds and Scams 84

11.1 The Misuse of Institutions and Private Corporations..... 84

11.2 The Scam is in the Details..... 86

11.3 The Proliferation of Fraudulent Phone Calls 86

11.4 Scammers Kept Up with the Times 87

11.5 Other Scam Tactics in the Online Space 88

11.6 How to Avoid Falling for Scams 89

12 Other Activities 91

13 Transparency.....95

14 Conclusion 96

15 Thank You for Your Support and Cooperation 99

1 INTRODUCTION

The civic association *Hoaxy a podvody* has published the fifth edition of the Report on Disinformation in Slovakia. A brief preliminary version was produced as part of the Slovak Police Force's activities in 2022, focusing primarily on documenting pandemic-related disinformation. The first comprehensive report was published in 2023; together with the publication 'Cemetery in Lodomirová – AN INFORMATION OPERATION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC', these represent unique documents offering insight into the Police Force's strategic communication activities prior to 2023 (both are also available online in English). Following the cessation of the respective police department's activities, the civic association *Hoaxy a podvody* took up the mantle, significantly expanding its efforts beyond mere publishing.

In addition to analysing specific disinformation narratives and hoaxes, the Report on Disinformation in Slovakia in 2025 maps the operation and presence of hybrid threats within the Slovak information space across various forms. These range from the environment of individual social media accounts, through systematic, established communication channels and so-called proxy sites, to the public statements of certain representatives of the Slovak Republic and actions tied to specific state institutions.

This Report does not claim to provide an entirely comprehensive picture of the state's resistance against hybrid threats, nor the overall effectiveness of its chosen strategic communication. Rather, it examines the gathered findings strictly through the lens of the work, activities, and operations conducted by the civic association *Hoaxy a podvody*. Consequently, its second part is dedicated to a detailed summary of the association's activities carried out throughout 2025.

The civic association *Hoaxy a podvody* is a strictly non-partisan project, uninvolved in any form of political competition. Nevertheless, it became impossible to avoid identifying specific politically exposed figures in relation to their decisions and public rhetoric, which had a fundamental impact on the quality of the state's activities in countering hybrid threats. Unlike in the past—when the convention of anonymising politicians was strictly observed—the events of 2025 in Slovakia necessitated a deliberate departure from this rule. This was done, however, while retaining a strong emphasis on maintaining the association's fundamentally apolitical operational stance.

The primary finding of the Report—largely driven by the impact of significant political events in Slovakia—is the emergence of a phenomenon that could best be described as the **'state-directed production of hoaxes against specific individuals and non-governmental organisations'**. From this perspective, the security landscape regarding hybrid threats became exceptionally complex. This complexity fuelled society-wide frustration, contributed to the marked deterioration of international relations, and—compounded by other significant political decisions—fostered a highly polarised

and profoundly negative societal atmosphere. These prevailing moods are directly reflected in several sections of the Report, where certain events are repeatedly highlighted to emphasise the severe consequences they provoked.

According to a survey conducted by the NMS agency as part of the Journalism Award campaign, as many as 47% of Slovaks held a clear view on who should bear primary responsibility for the fight against disinformation: the state. This opinion was most prevalent among seniors and individuals with higher education. In addition to the state, respondents identified responsibility among other actors: nearly 40% believed that the individuals consuming and sharing information should be personally responsible for fact-checking. A third of respondents believed that the media should actively combat the spread of disinformation, while approximately 10% envisioned a distinct role for non-governmental organisations in this fight.

The survey also highlighted how Slovaks obtained their information. Television news remained the most important source for 56% of respondents, particularly among older generations. Close behind were social media platforms, which were rapidly gaining popularity, especially among younger demographics up to the age of 44. Other significant sources of information included online news portals (cited by a third of respondents), radio, podcasts, and print media.

Standing in stark contrast to these findings were the results of the Globsec Trends 2025 survey. Among the nations studied, Slovaks were the least likely to believe that the state should exert more effort in countering hybrid threats and disinformation.

The contradictory results of these two studies were likely driven by state-induced societal chaos. A profound confusion of terms appears to have taken root among the public: active purveyors of disinformation were elevated to the status of state-recognised journalists, while legitimate analysts and professionals faced a barrage of derogatory insults and were perversely labelled as 'disinformers' themselves. The realms of fact and fiction began to blur and intertwine; this resulting chaos directly contributed to the spread of hatred and a markedly increased distrust towards both traditional media and state authorities.

A broader analysis of the Slovak information space was provided by the international REDACT project, based on extensive research into six million social media posts spanning from 2019 to 2024. The results decisively confirmed the long-term practical findings of *Hoaxy a podvody*.

According to the author of the analysis, Pavol Hardoš—an assistant professor at the Institute of European Studies and International Relations at the Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences, Comenius University in Bratislava—disinformation and conspiracies in Slovakia spread predominantly on Facebook and YouTube. Telegram functioned

as a highly resilient secondary space that not only maintained its core audience but actively further radicalised it.

Legitimate interventions by tech platforms or the state against dangerous content were routinely labelled as ‚censorship‘. Conspiracy and disinformation topics shifted dynamically over time and space, adapting to current events. Evidence demonstrated that underlying frustration was frequently a primary source of susceptibility to conspiratorial thinking. Furthermore, one of the most significant overarching problems remained the steadily declining trust in traditional media.

The analysis indicated that the Slovak disinformation and conspiracy ecosystem consisted primarily of social networks and alternative media, although the political scene itself played a highly significant role. Toxic online behaviour frequently spilled over into real, offline life. According to the findings, certain politicians maintained a deeply symbiotic relationship with disinformation influencers—mutually reinforcing one another’s narratives and actively sharing their respective audiences.

Conspiracy rhetoric united disparate entities and exacerbated societal polarisation. **According to the analysis, these groups found common ground in opposing ‚progressive‘ elites, ‚gender ideology‘, non-governmental organisations, and international actors allegedly intent on destroying the ‚natural‘ family, erasing gender differences, and undermining national or religious sovereignty. Antisemitic, anti-globalist, ‚Soros-related‘, or pro-Russian Pan-Slavic topics played a significant role, alongside a growing hatred towards ‚progressivism‘—a term whose true meaning was systematically devalued.**

YouTube boasted the highest user base in Slovakia (4.3 million users), followed by Facebook (3.2 million), Instagram (2.3 million), and TikTok (0.9 million). Telegram primarily attracted ‚hardcore‘ supporters who faced a significantly higher risk of isolating themselves within deeply extremist echo chambers.

According to the REDACT project’s analysis, Slovak content on Telegram was heavily dominated by pro-Russian disinformation channels. This included the accounts of prominent alternative media outlets such as *Zem & Vek*, *InfoVojna*, and *Slovanské Noviny*, as well as the personal profiles of extremist politicians.

The virtual world posed a severe risk to minors through the incitement to perform various dangerous challenges that could lead to grievous bodily harm or death. Online predators and criminals increasingly began to exploit minors, recruiting them directly via online multiplayer games. According to statements by Europol Executive Director Catherine De Bolle, this extended to the horrific exploitation of children to commit acts of violence—ranging from theft to torture and even murder.¹

¹ <https://www.politico.eu/article/children-groomed-for-murder-through-video-games-europol-warns/>

For younger generations, a widespread trend involving extremist rhetoric—such as overtly misogynistic content—posed a highly significant risk. In Slovakia, several accounts began systematically spreading such material, with some successfully building a substantial fan base. The primary characteristic of their content was the incitement of visceral hatred directed toward ideological opponents and women. The core motives behind creating such content typically included financial gain or planned involvement in active politics.

The *Hoaxy a podvody* project observed a shift in the Facebook algorithm, which began actively amplifying posts and pages featuring deceptive narratives, including political extremism. This shift may have been directly linked to the platform’s suspension of paid political advertising options. This limitation significantly hindered nascent political parties from cultivating a new follower base, forcing them to seek alternative methods to artificially inflate user interaction and the virality of their content. In certain instances, they resorted to traditional extremist tactics—producing content heavily reliant on vulgarity, fearmongering, and societal polarisation.

The aforementioned findings—compiled by the project alongside other entities—serve as a gateway to a much deeper analysis of the Slovak information space concerning hybrid threats and strategic communication, as detailed in the subsequent pages of the Report on Disinformation in Slovakia in 2025.

The unprecedented scope of this year’s Report serves as tangible evidence of the ongoing, highly complex situation within the Slovak Republic and the rapid proliferation of negative elements. The trajectory the state takes in 2026 will largely depend upon its political representatives, who remain the most significant influencers within these critical security domains.

Based on their past decisions, actions taken, and public statements, a general scepticism prevailed within society. This underscored the vital importance of civil society and of those individuals who have not yet been ground down by the ever-present polarisation and hatred directed at them.

2 THE STATE AS A CREATOR OF HOAXES AND HYBRID THREATS

Previous editions of the Report on Disinformation in Slovakia for 2023 and 2024 detailed the transformation of the state administration's strategy—from its original to its new objectives—in response to the shift in political orientation following the 2023 elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic.

Initially, these goals included the gradual establishment of strategic communication units across the state administration, expanding personnel capacities, and fostering a more comprehensive, systematic, and efficient environment for civil servants and management. This process—whose foundations date back prior to 2020 and which continued steadily through the 2020–2023 period—was abruptly halted by the outcome of the aforementioned elections.

As both of the aforementioned editions of the Report stated, the subsequent months witnessed the gradual destruction of these units and personnel capacities. Where similar departments, sections, or informal groups managed to persist, it was more of a forced 'Potemkin village' survival: their existence 'on paper' was merely maintained to facilitate the drawdown of EU funds.

The severity of the situation was underscored by an exceptional circumstance in which a former member of the Slovak Information Service (SIS), Juraj Kulík, decided to speak publicly about the state of the secret service during an interview with Infosecurity.sk.² The long-time career intelligence officer not only faced intense bullying following the arrival of the new director, Pavol Gašpar, but also witnessed the pro-Russian transformation of the agency first-hand. In the past, among other roles, he had held the position of Director of the National Security Analytical Centre within the SIS; however, following his forced departure, the Centre's activities regarding the analysis and monitoring of hybrid threats were rendered highly dysfunctional. Such public testimony from within the inner workings of the secret service was entirely unique in the history of the Slovak Republic.

The reputation of the state and its security apparatus regarding hybrid threats was further compromised by highly publicised meetings between representatives of Slovakia and the Russian Federation. This was compounded by official statements relativising mutual relations, alongside reports in independent media indicating a deliberate shift of Slovak intelligence services away from the West—a pivot that resulted in an increasing degree of distrust from partner agencies abroad.

² <https://infosecurity.sk/podcast/plukovnik-sis-vo-vysluzbe-pod-gasparom-vladne-sikana-cistky-a-nezakonne-odpocuvanie/>

In the history of modern Slovakia, an unprecedented conflict occurred regarding an international operation in Dnipro, Ukraine, in July 2025. An international investigative team—which included representatives of both the Czech and Slovak Police Forces—detained a Ukrainian citizen suspected of sending threatening emails to schools in Slovakia and elsewhere. The Slovak police proactively announced this operation while the international team was still present at the site of the intervention in Dnipro, dangerously close to the Russian frontline. This premature disclosure triggered negative reactions from Czech authorities, who had originally localised the suspect. A Czech police spokesperson directed unusually harsh language at his Slovak counterparts; however, it later emerged that this specific statement had been published without his knowledge, prompting a formal apology from the relevant editor.

The Slovak police reacted chaotically. Initially, they admitted via their official Facebook account that they had made a mistake by prematurely disclosing information without the explicit permission of the Czech side. Within minutes, this status was deleted and replaced with a shorter, noticeably less apologetic version. Police President Jana Maškarová later stated that the publication of the initial status had occurred by mistake, claiming it was merely intended as a draft. **According to intelligence obtained by Hoaxy a podvody, the status was actually deleted on direct instructions from the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic.** The Ministry consistently promoted a narrative in which the Slovak side refused to admit any failure regarding the timing of its communication.

From the Czech perspective, the problem lay not only in the premature communication by the Slovak police, but also in the specific content it began to adopt. Certain details regarding the intervention were publicly presented by the Minister of the Interior, Matúš Šutaj Eštok. In his statements, he discussed the detained Ukrainian national without providing adequate context. This approach to communication likely compelled the Czech Security Information Service (BIS) to issue a specific and highly unusual response, which it subsequently published on its official X account: 'According to initial information, the Czech Republic was not his only target, and he attacked in a number of European countries. The activities of the detainee were most likely financed by an actor from Russia.'³

The Slovak Minister of the Interior denied any connection to Russia. This reflected a long-term trend in the state's newly established strategic communication: **if Russia or its citizens were culpable of malign activities, state representatives strictly refrained from commenting.** Any negative communication regarding Russia was effectively barred. Consequently, since the aforementioned elections, **no state body has conducted any preventive or educational activities for the general public concerning the pervasive influence of Russian propaganda.** The topic of Russian propaganda has completely vanished from state discourse.

³ <https://x.com/biscz/status/1945427864628666458>

The sending of bomb threats to schools and institutions constituted a significant security crisis. Through its professionalism and intensity, the campaign exhibited clear signs of a hybrid activity aimed at causing societal chaos and a systemic security collapse. At the time, the theory of a Russian influence operation was not ruled out; it was highly plausible that responsibility for the attacks could have been intentionally shifted onto the Ukrainian side as a false-flag tactic. The detained individual was eventually released due to his young age and reportedly fled to Belarus shortly thereafter.

By early 2026, any further developments in the investigation remained publicly unknown. According to the findings of *Hoaxy a podvody*, the initial communication chaos may have been triggered by an error on the Czech side, which allegedly failed to provide comprehensive instructions regarding an absolute ban on publishing information. Nevertheless, this did not justify the substantive failures in the Slovak partner's subsequent messaging, which inherently exhibited the hallmarks of pro-Russian hybrid activity.

The stark divergence in approaches between the two neighbouring states was also evident in another case, wherein Czech authorities proactively addressed a network of fake TikTok accounts prior to their parliamentary elections. An analysis by the Centre for Online Risk Research (CVOR) identified 286 linked profiles systematically disseminating pro-Kremlin narratives and supporting anti-system parties. Their cumulative weekly reach ranged from five to nine million views. The accounts followed and reshared one another, frequently deploying AI-generated videos and publishing content across Czech, Slovak, and Russian. The published material included the outright glorification of Vladimir Putin, widespread disinformation, and narratives explicitly legitimising Russian aggression in Ukraine while exaggerating the strength of the Russian military.

A cyberattack on the cadastral database of the Geodesy, Cartography and Cadastre Authority of the Slovak Republic—which paralysed the system for several days—could have harboured a goal similar to that of the bomb threats. **Both critical situations clearly demonstrated that the state had failed to prepare any coherent form of strategic communication for such incidents.** Public messaging was chaotic, particularly in the case of the cadastre: the Ministry of the Interior proactively and publicly shirked all responsibility, abandoning the cadastre's leadership to handle crisis communication entirely alone during the crucial early days of the incident. Such cases underscored the severe negative consequences of previous government actions that had systematically paralysed effective state strategic communication.

The Slovak police—which prior to 2023 had been the primary communicator on this topic, boasting the most-followed Facebook page in Slovakia, numerous awards, and specific operational successes (including the neutralisation of Information Operation Ladomirová)—also failed to act in the fight against hybrid threats. The fight against hoaxes within the police force effectively ended in 2023 following the departure of David Púchovský. In October 2025, during a public hearing regarding her permanent appointment, then-Acting Police President J. Maškarová was asked on behalf of the

public how she envisioned the police combating hoaxes, given that the political orientation of the Ministry of the Interior was actively opposed to such activities. She responded as follows: 'The Police Force will exclusively dedicate itself to the fight against hoaxes, mainly regarding our own topics. If you have noticed, we try to address this on Facebook—whether we have "police hits" [*policajné hitovečky* – a campaign about scams, ed. note], or all those scams, investment-related, or scams targeting seniors [...]. So we respond to all of this appropriately; we pass information to the public so they know that a given advertisement is fraudulent, or that there is a new fraudulent email pretending to be from the police. Therefore, we deny all these things that directly concern the Police Force.'

It was glaringly evident from the response of the Police President—who was ultimately confirmed in her position—that the police had chosen to prioritise solely financial scams and simple frauds, effectively abandoning the broader fight against hoaxes and disinformation.

Following the decimation of state units dedicated to countering hybrid threats, compounded by chaotic public messaging, Slovakia's political leadership drastically escalated its offensive against civil society: by 2025, the state itself had become a primary generator of disinformation.

In the spring of 2025, its highest representatives—including the Director of the Slovak Information Service (SIS)—warned of a potential coup or putsch allegedly coordinated from abroad, specifically by the so-called Georgian Legion under the leadership of Mamuka Mamulashvili. The organisers of the massive civic protests occurring at the time were alleged to be the proxy, or 'extended arm', of this conspiracy, particularly individuals from the organisation *Mier Ukrajine* (Peace for Ukraine). To bolster this disinformation narrative, government officials presented an older photograph featuring M. Mamulashvili alongside a member of the aforementioned organisation as 'proof'. In reality, it was a genuinely innocuous photograph taken during a previous visit he had made to Slovakia for an official event.

The state leadership even convened a meeting of the Security Council of the Slovak Republic at the time, ostensibly due to this alleged coup. The presence of top political and security officials at subsequent press conferences lent a false atmosphere of factuality and severe importance to the entire fabricated situation. Although the police were ostensibly investigating the 'coup', they had not interrogated a single individual by early 2026. On the contrary, war reporter and writer Tomáš Forró recorded an interview with M. Mamulashvili in August 2025 directly in front of the Government Office of the Slovak Republic. Mamulashvili had entered Slovak territory without any issues whatsoever, entirely debunking the false claims propagated by the Prime Minister and other government officials that he had been banned from the Schengen area.

The glaring 'inaction' of the police and Mamulashvili's highly symbolic visit to Bratislava served as undeniable evidence that the narrative regarding a planned coup was nothing more than a state-sponsored conspiracy theory. However, even this incontrovertible evidence failed to sway the disinformation scene, which predictably resorted to a tactic of deliberate ignorance, actively withholding factual information about these events from its audience.

Although this state-generated conspiracy theory was proven false, it sowed seeds of uncertainty among a significant portion of society. This subsequently led to vulgar attacks against protest organisers and participants, particularly online, often culminating in death threats. Disinformation narratives spread in connection with any anti-government rallies, claiming they were funded and organized from abroad to harm Slovakia. Specific hoaxes alleged that protest participants received financial compensation ranging from 50 to 200 euros for their attendance.

Hoaxy a podvody approached these disinformation narratives proactively. Within its strategic communication, it warned protest participants against looming provocations that could trigger the state's 'expected' coup scenarios and also advised them on how to behave at public gatherings. The project recommended recording the faces of provocateurs and sending reports of specific incidents to its specialized email address or – despite growing distrust – to the SIS.

State conspiracy theories continued to include the narrative about the conspiracy of Slovak officials from April 2023, when they allegedly arranged an intervention at NATO against the then-opposition leader Robert Fico. This narrative appeared regularly in the political space. Related to this was a newly fabricated **conspiracy theory alleging British interference in the 2023 parliamentary elections.**

British investigative journalist Martin Williams from the portal Declassified UK reported on a pre-election campaign in Slovakia supported by Great Britain, the aim of which was to **promote voter turnout**. His findings were misused by the Slovak disinformation scene and political representatives to create a disinformation narrative about election interference and support for a specific political party. Williams objected to the weaponisation of his article. In his text, he analysed a campaign funded by the British Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office through the Zinc Network. **Its goal, according to the author, was to increase youth voter turnout – not to manipulate the results. The campaign took place in several European countries – not just in Slovakia – and was part of a broader fight against the influence of authoritarian regimes.**

The Election Calculator (*Volebná kalkulačka*) project, backed by the British agency, was an open and verifiable tool – not a clandestine plot for 'election interference'. Despite the statement of the original article's author, the distorted information took

on a life of its own in Slovakia and became a strong disinformation pillar of the political spectrum for several years to come.

Manipulations by Slovak representatives escalated to such a degree that, towards the end of his tenure, British Ambassador Nigel Baker was summoned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs over the issue. For comparison, the Russian ambassador had not been summoned in a similar manner even once since 2023.

Another prominent conspiracy theory was the so-called Stratcom Leaks, propagated by the Marker.sk portal, which was close not only to government views but also to pro-Russian geopolitics. The portal obtained a list of internet links that were reported to Meta between 2022 and 2023 by officials across the state administration. These were links to specific Facebook statuses that Meta was supposed to evaluate to determine whether or not it would take action against them in accordance with its rules.

The state established this reporting system in response to the beginning of the Russian war in Ukraine. A diverse range of content, some of it relatively benign, found its way onto the list. The reporting system was not perfect, but it corresponded to the chaotic situation at the time, which was the result of long-term inaction and the slowness of processes regarding the building of state strategic communication.

The Marker.sk portal presented the database as evidence of state censorship aimed at freedom of speech. However, this was not new information. Social media expert and former employee of the Office of the President of the Slovak Republic Zuzana Čaputová, Jakub Goda, had already spoken in 2022 about this reporting system, which was based on the development of mutual relations between state institutions and Meta. Information about the existence of the escalation reporting channel was also known from institutional sources; it was not a state secret.

The state reported suspicious statuses, but it was up to Meta employees to evaluate what steps to take regarding them. The acquired knowledge was supposed to lead to a more effective grasp of the entire process, which, due to the results of the 2023 elections, was maintained only in its initial phase.

The aforementioned database was electronically stored at the Government Office of the Slovak Republic and at the Council for Media Services, which was supposed to be the collection point for similar state reports and the single point of contact for Meta. *Marker.sk* could only have obtained this database from these two sources, which again served as evidence of the peculiar setup of state strategic communication.

In connection with the Council for Media Services, the appointment of Rebeka Riabová as its member was particularly interesting. She had publicly opposed efforts to counter disinformation, orchestrated the removal of the makeshift memorial to Ján Kuciak and Martina Kušnírová in Košice, defended the extremist Daniel Bombic, and

fuelled the conspiracy theory of a Slovak 'Maidan'. Further parts of this Report discuss her activities as well as the actions of her husband within state institutions.

Shortly after the coalition parties took office at the end of 2023, the main motto of their strategic communication became 'I respect a different opinion' (*Rešpektujem iný názor*), which was displayed on billboards or in trains. This activity included several irregular discussion forums between ideological opponents in front of a predominantly school audience. **The campaign lacked a system and failed to gain the trust of a significant part of the general public, as it was a product of political power that itself produced disinformation under the guise of the 'right to an opinion', thereby causing harm to others, or suppressing or disparaging other opinions.** For example, while coalition MP Pavel Lupták spoke seriously on the parliament floor about a conspiracy theory concerning adrenochrome, the essence of which involved the kidnapping and murder of children to consume their blood, Prime Minister R. Fico acted confrontationally during a lecture for high school students and urged those who disagreed with him to go fight in Ukraine.

Who did the state power consider so important from the perspective of strategic communication that it took their side with its decisions or public statements? **Top politicians, including the Minister of Defence, repeatedly defended Bombic, who had been remanded in custody since April 2025 for several extremist criminal offences and, shortly before the deadline of this Report, was convicted, though the verdict was not yet final.**

Prior to the 2023 elections, Bombic served as a potent marketing tool for the Smer-SSD party. Positioning himself as an 'independent representative of the alternative scene' and acting under the guise of 'freedom of speech', he propagated extremism, attacked politicians from the opposite spectrum, and attacked ordinary people – he published private data and telephone numbers of rank-and-file civil servants, such as police officers intervening against aggressive citizens during the pandemic, and threatened specific individuals, including journalists and civic activists.

Bombic lived long-term in Great Britain with occasional personal visits to Slovakia, and carried out his activities in the online space, mainly on Telegram. Despite a European arrest warrant being issued for him initiated by Slovak authorities, Great Britain did not extradite him, and his case was heard at several court hearings. There were strong indications that his legal representation, as well as the payment of high financial bail for his release in the initial stage of the investigation, was financially secured by the law firm of the Minister of Defence from the Smer-SSD party.

Following the new government taking office, D. Bombic communicated remotely in a discussion show with the Minister of Interior, Matúš Šutaj Eštok, with whom they laughed about the abolition of the Special Prosecutor's Office and the planned abolition of the National Crime Agency, i.e., the state authorities that participated in the criminal

prosecution of the extremist. The Minister of Interior had no problem discussing with a person who had attacked rank-and-file police officers in the past.

Bombic agreed to voluntary extradition to Slovakia in January 2025. He was transported to Bratislava by a government special flight, which provoked negative reactions among a part of the public. The judge of the Specialized Criminal Court ultimately did not take him into custody. Bombic moved freely around Bratislava and lived in an apartment provided to him by the law firm of the Minister of Defence, Robert Kaliňák. His firm also provided his defense. Because Bombic violated his bail conditions by continuing to post aggressively on his Telegram channel, the Supreme Court of the Slovak Republic ordered him into custody in April 2025.

Following Bombic's remand in custody, government representatives propagated a hoax claiming this occurred merely because he had voiced his opinions and been impolite. In reality, the case involved several extremist criminal offences. Because these hoaxes were peddled by high-ranking politicians, they were once again lent an unwarranted veneer of credibility and factual legitimacy.

The attacks directed against judges were not anomalous in the context of prior government actions against specialised police and prosecutorial bodies, which included interference with the work of police officers and prosecutors who had been sidelined. **Continuous attacks against the judiciary, specific courts, and the appointment of judges by the highest state representatives had a devastating effect from the perspective of the rule of law.** The fact that a large amount of criticism and the exerting of pressure on the judiciary came from government politicians was also unique in the history of the Slovak Republic.

The public state defence of a prosecuted extremist represented another characteristic element of the destruction of any effective state strategic communication.

It could be summarised that the government's strategic communication sought to achieve the absolute polarisation of society, the sowing of hatred, and the creation of a state of permanent distrust towards law enforcement agencies. Ultimately, it aimed to foster societal frustration, culminating in a capitulation regarding adherence to legality and the rule of law.

During his time in custody in 2025, D. Bombic sent vulgar and extremist messages in the form of audio recordings to his Telegram channel, such as claiming that 'Progressive Slovakia (note: *Progresívne Slovensko* political party) participated in the execution of journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancée, the terrorist attack at *Tepláreň* (note: LGBTQI pub in Bratislava), and the assassination attempt on Prime Minister R. Fico.' At the same time, he came up with the thesis that on November 17, 2025, they would attempt a violent coup, which would be their path to power.

The Corps of Prison and Judicial Guards of the Slovak Republic conceded that no existing legislation expressly prohibited this form of communication from custody. Bombic repeatedly complained about the slowness of the judicial proceedings and criticized the political power that was 'unable to help him', which sounded paradoxical in relation to the fact that his defence was provided by the law firm of the Minister of Defence.

As a rule, whenever Bombic directed criticism at government politicians, they would publicly defend him at subsequent press conferences while simultaneously attacking the courts. The continuing independence of the courts, which in similar cases did not let themselves be influenced by political pressures, was one of the last untouched and unconquered democratic aspects in the Slovak Republic.

In addition to Bombic, the state resorted to direct support for disinformation sources. For example, subsidies from the Prime Minister's reserve in the amount of 10,000 euros were allocated to the civic associations *Verbina* and *Heuréka*, which operated the disinformation portals *Hlavný denník* and *Hlavné správy*.

The degradation of strategic communication, alongside a tactical rapprochement with the Russian Federation, was immediately apparent in incremental steps. The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs maintained a subpage on its portal called 'Myths about Ukraine' (*Mýty o Ukrajine*), from which some parts were deleted. In total, there had been seven chapters in this part of the site, three of which disappeared: 'Sanctions against Russia do not work', 'Ukraine refuses peace negotiations with Russia', and 'We should not send weapons to Ukraine and thus prolong the war'.

Fundamental shifts occurred at the international level when Hungary and Slovakia refused to sign an EU Council document aimed at strengthening democratic resilience, countering disinformation and information manipulation, and supporting independent media.⁴

One of the minor positive exceptions to the state's actions in the fight against hybrid threats, alongside the professional attitude of the Ministry of Education towards the lecturing activities of external entities, were the steps taken by the Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic (MIRRI). In October and November 2025, as part of the Digital Seniors project, the ministry included the civic association *Hoaxy a podvody* in a roadshow focused on lectures about hoaxes and scams for seniors across nine cities throughout Slovakia.

Equally exceptional was the €30,000 in support granted to *Hoaxy a podvody* by the Digital Coalition—a national initiative established at the instigation of the European Commission—for disinformation prevention and combating online identity abuse. These funds were allocated for organising an international forum, conducting lecturing

activities, and producing podcasts. This was exceptional due to the fact that, in addition to MIRRI, the evaluation committee included as members the Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic, the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic, and the IT Association of Slovakia.

2.1 THE END OF THE CENTRE FOR COUNTERING HYBRID THREATS

Because 2025 marked the definitive end of Slovakia's most followed Facebook page dedicated to countering disinformation—founded in 2018 by D. Púchovský, who was serving in the Police Force at the time—a partial recapitulation of the previous year's annual Report compiled by *Hoaxy a podvody* is provided here. This recapitulation, supplemented by new findings, aims to offer a comprehensive picture.

Following D. Púchovský's departure from the Police Force on 1 December 2023, prompted by the outcome of the parliamentary elections, the page *Hoaxy a podvody - Polícia Slovenskej republiky* remained inactive for almost six months. Púchovský's former colleagues refused to manage it due to fears of political pressure and the potential repercussions of the state institutions' new policy direction.

The page was ultimately transferred to the Ministry of the Interior, specifically under the Centre for Countering Hybrid Threats (CBHH), where it was renamed *Hoaxy a podvody - Ministerstvo vnútra SR*. Peter Ihnatišin became the new director of the Centre in early 2024. He was previously known as a Ministry of Defence employee who, alongside a colleague, authored an unofficial report following a foreign trip by civil servants to Brussels in April 2023. This document, which contained false information and participants' statements taken out of context, reached the then-opposition leader R. Fico a month later, who weaponised it during the election campaign as evidence of a 'conspiracy of officials'. Following the elections, two other participants of the business trip who had co-authored the same disinformation were promoted to high-ranking state positions alongside Ihnatišin.

Through its Facebook page, the CBHH published over 150 posts in 2025—a dramatic decrease compared to its output under the police. Nearly a hundred of these addressed online scams and cybersecurity.

The page debunked a mere six disinformation narratives: one concerned false reports about child abductions, another addressed a foot-and-mouth disease epidemic, and the remaining four were hoaxes regarding the activities and measures of the Ministry of the Interior. It was this proactive defence of the ministry leadership's political decisions that elicited mocking reactions from the public. In one notable instance, the ratio of mocking to positive reactions was 3,600 to 62.

⁴ <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9463-2025-INIT/en/pdf>

The public widely perceived the page as a politicised tool of the ruling power, intended solely for the defence of the Ministry of the Interior. When relevant posts were published, they were largely educational, cautious, and evergreen content that entirely ignored the current security situation in Europe. Notably, not a single public post addressed the Russian war against Ukraine.

AI-generated videos, as well as promotional videos for an upcoming state manual on crisis situations—published half a year prior to its release without any context—appeared amateurish.

The fundamental issue with this style of state communication was not merely the public mockery, but primarily the abysmal reach of its posts, near-zero engagement (averaging ten or fewer reactions per post), and a decline in its total follower count from over 151,000 in 2023 to just over 146,000. The decision to disable the private messaging function further exacerbated the situation, as direct, personal, and real-time communication with citizens had historically provided the administrative team with crucial insights.

The state page's messaging occasionally appeared contradictory. At times, it positioned itself as a defender or promoter of Meta's decisions, such as when it highlighted its cooperation with the platform in uncovering fraudulent activity or blocking deceptive posts. Conversely, reports from other sources indicating that Meta profited by billions of dollars from fraudulent posts were conveniently sidelined.⁵

Another post reported on the USA's termination of its memorandum on counter-acting disinformation with the Czech Republic. The Slovak state page offered no factual criticism of this decision; on the contrary, the author appeared pleased with the development, stating: 'The Czech Republic is currently preparing for elections, during which an intense political struggle is taking place. The termination of the memorandum by the USA will create equal conditions for political camps, as they will not be restricted by activities that could interfere with the parties' election campaigns.'

The page published its final post of the year on 18 November 2025. From that date until the drafting deadline of this Report, it remained entirely inactive. This cessation was likely linked to the transfer of the CBHH director to the newly created role of Director of the Strategic Communication Department within the Ministry of the Interior's Office—a department formed by merely renaming the press office. According to acquired information, several CBHH employees transferred to this new department alongside him, leading to the definitive termination of the centre's activities, a fact the ministry itself confirmed in early 2026.

⁵ <https://www.reuters.com/investigations/meta-is-earning-fortune-deluge-fraudulent-ads-documents-show-2025-11-06/> and <https://www.facebook.com/hoaxyapodvody/posts/pfbidO2gu7VHAtpZAFy46rTgxzD6qvnZ4qwgWrVjKP7SQuQXPW8ArBiffRkEM45vyeAsz5Ql>

The CBHH had exhibited no visible activity since the 2023 parliamentary elections. Even its official website⁶ was still predominantly populated with the output of the previous team. Through its new approach, the state ultimately dismantled the largest anti-hoax page in the Slovak Republic. Its minimal activity was maintained purely on a superficial level—resembling a Potemkin village—for one singular reason: to retain acquired EU funding.



⁶ <https://www.hybridnehozby.sk/>

3 RUSSIAN WAR IN UKRAINE

The dominant vector for hybrid threats in Slovakia in 2025 comprised information operations originating from the Russian Federation. The proliferation of pro-Russian, anti-European, and anti-Ukrainian sentiments was facilitated either directly by Russian sources or through long-established local actors, encompassing both individuals and groups. Notably, the highest representatives of state institutions emerged as disseminators of pro-Kremlin interests.

The objectives of these varying, yet complex, information operations remained consistent with past efforts, tying closely to the Russian war in Ukraine and the strategic interests of V. Putin:

- achieving Russia's victory in the Russian war,
- demotivating the international community and individual nations from sustaining aid to Ukraine,
- precipitating the weakening and eventual demise of the European Union and NATO,
- restoring Russia's geopolitical influence and reverting the broader European security architecture to the pre-1989 status quo.

Russian hybrid operations continued to be tasked with degrading the defence capabilities of third countries, including Slovakia.

The impact of propaganda predicated on spreading fear, panic, hatred, and the narrative of inevitable capitulation in the event of a conflict was already evident in 2023. At that time, one of the most pervasive disinformation narratives was the predicted mobilisation of Slovak men into the war in Ukraine. *Hoaxy a podvody* dedicated detailed analysis to this phenomenon in the two preceding editions of the Report on Disinformation.

The essence of this narrative was to demotivate the public regarding the potential future defence of the country. Under its influence, 60,242 adult men officially opted out of potential mobilisation that would require bearing arms in 2023. By comparison, this figure was a mere 85 in 2021, and just under a thousand in 2025. The orchestrated spread of fear and panic concerning mobilisation vanished from the public sphere following the 2023 parliamentary elections. The purveyors of these hoaxes conveniently 'forgot' their unfulfilled predictions of impending mobilisation and pivoted to other topics.

In this context, observing developments within the political arena proved highly revealing. While certain representatives of the then-opposition had fearmongered in

2023 about potential mobilisation and direct involvement in the war, by 2025—now holding government office—this same group of politicians endorsed the creation of the National Defence Forces (NOS) project, a civilian military training initiative for auxiliary or potential combat roles.

Adult men who had previously renounced potential conscription were barred from joining the NOS. They could only participate by formally withdrawing their renunciation, with the caveat that they could not resubmit it in the future. In 2025, 20 men took this step, likely including a highly politically exposed figure who, two years prior, had actively encouraged opting out of conscription and claimed to have done so himself.

At the highest levels of politics, the collision of two contradictory worldviews translated into concrete actions over a two-year period. **Transitioning from purveyors of panic and fear to architects of an effective civilian military unit (now inclusive of women) represented just one of the many paradoxes defining both Slovak politics and the disinformation scene.** Such behavioural patterns elicited conflicting reactions among consumers of propaganda and hoaxes, occasionally sparking reproachful remarks; predominantly, however, they were simply ignored—much like the other logical inconsistencies and ideological somersaults detailed throughout this Report.

The seemingly surprising public support for the NOS actually reflected the prevailing opinion of the majority. According to the Globsec Trends 2025 survey, 68% of Slovaks believed the country should exert greater effort to establish a voluntary military service. Such sentiment, standing in stark contrast to the panic generated in prior years, likely stemmed from a nostalgic optimism prevalent within a significant segment of the disinformation scene—a nostalgia that idealised life under socialism prior to 1989, including the mandatory military conscription of that era.

Yearning for the 'good old days', 'cheap and accessible' food, and generally 'better' interpersonal relations formed the foundation of potent narratives across various online discussion groups dedicated to retro memories. Against the backdrop of these nostalgic posts, pro-Russian propaganda was distinctly palpable; at times, it was overtly exposed, seamlessly transitioning into contemporary topics that reflected direct support for the Russian Federation's actions in Ukraine.

Despite this shift in public opinion regarding civilian military defence, the Globsec Trends 2025 findings revealed that only 49% of Slovaks would actually defend their homeland in the event of an attack, while 41% gave a definitive 'no'. Among the surveyed nations, Slovaks ranked last in their willingness to defend their homeland. **This stands as one of the most alarming findings from such surveys, starkly demonstrating the horrendous consequences and operational effectiveness of long-term Russian propaganda in Slovakia, which carries catastrophic implications for the future.**

3.1 PARALLEL REALITY

A core component of the Russian online strategy focused on manufacturing a parallel reality. It was not uncommon to encounter posts detailing entirely fabricated Russian military successes on the front lines. In one notable instance, an AI-generated image portraying damaged F-16 fighter jets was widely circulated, purportedly depicting the aftermath of a sophisticated strike on the Ukrainian air force. However, observant readers quickly noticed that the cockpit of one of the 'fighter jets' was situated on its tail.

Similarly, a report detailing a 'revolutionary Russian laser system that turned the American KH-11 satellite to dust' was swiftly categorised as absolute fiction.

Equally baseless was the intelligence regarding the deaths of 28 French instructors—or allegedly up to a hundred French soldiers—in the Chernihiv and Dnipropetrovsk regions. This was propagated by Pavol Slota, the son of a former National Council member and a known disinformation actor who frequents Russia and Russian-occupied sovereign Ukrainian territories.

Fabricated reports concerning the deaths of third-country nationals served secondary influence objectives: to spread panic across the international community and to instigate domestic tension within the purported casualties' home nations, thereby pressuring them to **halt aid to Ukraine**. Consumers of this fake news rarely paused to consider that their own compatriots had allegedly been killed by the Russian army; instead, they expressed positive sentiments, amplifying the sown fear and echoing the necessity of ceasing aid to Ukraine.

A distinct manifestation of support for the Russian army's actions emerged on Telegram in the form of a drawing by a Slovak author. This artwork portrayed a specific Russian soldier who had been captured on video killing his Ukrainian opponent in a knife fight.

Another highly contrived method of constructing a parallel reality involved **attributing fabricated, propagandistic statements to real public figures**. A prime example targeted US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who supposedly claimed on a television news broadcast that the American government intended to convince Elon Musk to switch off internet access for Ukrainians. This was an outright hoax based on a manipulated television broadcast. The underlying desires of Russian propaganda and its sympathisers were thereby projected onto the American politician, despite the fact that he never made such a statement.

Perhaps the most bizarre fabrication was a report claiming the Russian Federation had threatened to strike the ammunition plant in Michalovce, eastern Slovakia. Widely shared posts detailed specific scenarios predicting that 'an Oreshnik would fly in'. The Head of Communications at KNDS, Guillem Monsonis, clarified in a phone call

with the *Hoaxy a podvody* team that absolutely no ammunition production occurred at their facility; rather, it was exclusively utilised for the servicing and repair of equipment damaged during the fighting in Ukraine. This repaired inventory included PzH 2000 self-propelled howitzers, CAESAR wheeled howitzers, GEPARD self-propelled anti-aircraft guns, MARS II multiple rocket launcher systems, and DINGO armoured transport vehicles. However, not even direct factual clarification from the plant's representative could stem the panic— **a panic ironically manufactured by the Slovak audience itself, which simultaneously fearmongered about a potential Russian strike while overtly cheering for it.**

Consumers of this type of content inevitably experienced a harsh collision with reality whenever Russian operational failures occurred. An effective psychological defence against the intrusion of factual reality was simply to banish it from their awareness— **resorting to wilful ignorance and outright denial**. This identical coping mechanism was applied to reports detailing the record-breaking armament of the Ukrainian army by both state and private Slovak enterprises. Having clung to the coalition parties' pre-election promise of sending 'not a single bullet to Ukraine anymore', these voters deliberately chose to ignore the empirical data contradicting that pledge.

3.2 FORMS OF SPREADING PROPAGANDA

The Russian Embassy in Bratislava played a significant and targeted role in the importation of Russian propaganda. Through its extensive activity on social media, it generated dozens of posts weekly. In one instance, it peddled a fabricated story claiming that Ukrainians celebrate Nazis, specifically referencing the figure of Stepan Bandera. Predominantly, it amplified the statements of top Kremlin officials and provided updates on social events organised on its premises. Even when extraordinary instances of disinformation dissemination or overt threats from the Kremlin occurred, no Slovak authorities publicly responded to these actions.

The social network Telegram served as the fastest conduit for introducing Russian propaganda to the Slovak audience, from which it subsequently proliferated. Consequently, all major disinformation narratives were replicated almost verbatim (at a 1:1 ratio)—such as the allegations accusing Ukraine of attacking its own infrastructure in order to falsely frame Russia and thereby thwart peace negotiations between Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump.

The international coordination of social media accounts played a critical role in spreading propaganda, a phenomenon specifically addressed in the chapter concerning the Slovak online television channel TV OTV. A similar strategic approach was evident in a disinformation narrative involving British newspapers, whose front pages allegedly reported on '120 fraudulent Ukrainian foundations stealing financial aid'. This hoax,

like many others, aimed to demotivate willing nations and consequently halt their assistance to Ukraine—whether in the form of state aid or successful civic crowdfunding campaigns. In reality, these British newspaper front pages did not exist; they were the product of graphic manipulation. This particular piece of disinformation was disseminated by specific accounts across at least Russia, Czechia, Slovakia, and Hungary.

When serious repercussions of the Russian war spilled over beyond Ukrainian territory, propagandists employed a tactic of deliberate downplaying. This was evident, for example, during the incursions of Russian drones into Polish airspace. Anonymous accounts either minimised the severity of the event or distorted the narrative to absolve Russia of any responsibility. In response to this manipulative tactic, the *Hoaxy a podvody* team proactively highlighted not only the specific fake news items but also the broader mechanisms of propaganda impact, the gravity of hybrid threats, and the potential for provocative activities orchestrated by Russian sources within the territory of the Slovak Republic.

Within the information space, an observable increase occurred in the weaponisation of artificial intelligence to produce Russian disinformation. One notable example was a widely circulated video featuring a young Ukrainian in military uniform, begging for help and crying desperately that he did not want to die. The disinformation scene amplified this video with various emotive commentaries, including direct insults aimed at President Zelenskyy. According to the accompanying narrative, this alleged 23-year-old had supposedly been abducted from the street and sent directly to the front lines.

The Italian fact-checking portal Open.online revealed that the video originated from a TikTok account named Fantomoko, which had since been deleted. This account routinely published AI-generated videos depicting purported soldiers claiming they were ‘forced to go to die’ in the trenches. The account functioned as an exporter of disinformation, enabling the content to reach specific national networks where local proxies of Russian propaganda would translate and contextualise it for their respective audiences.

On rare occasions, the authors themselves admitted to utilising AI-generated videos—for instance, to ‘spice up’ their content. However, this admission was (perhaps deliberately) overlooked by the mass audience, and the footage continued to be disseminated as factual.

Propaganda also reached younger demographics through innovative channels, such as the release of the military strategy game Squad 22: ZOV on the Steam platform. Introduced in 2024 and available free of charge, the game drew heavily upon the narratives of official Russian institutions. It focused on the events spanning from 2014 to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, portraying them exclusively from the perspective of the Russian armed forces.

In addition to debunking specific items of disinformation, the *Hoaxy a podvody* project provided broader perspectives on current events unfolding across various sectors in Russia. By highlighting authentic threats from Russian propagandists regarding the bombing of Europe or the deployment of nuclear weapons, the project aimed to inject a sober and realistic assessment of the Russian Federation’s true intentions. These intentions stood in stark contrast to any purported desire for peace, perfectly encapsulated by a headline from the Russian news agency RIA Novosti: ‘There is no other option: no one should stay alive in Ukraine.’

This reality check was supplemented by the aggregation of frontline videos documenting the failures of the Russian army and the systematic brainwashing of the Russian populace, including the indoctrination of children in kindergartens. Furthermore, it showcased the murder of Ukrainian civilians (corroborated by intercepted radio communications of Russian soldiers), the grim aftermath of Russian strikes targeting civilian infrastructure, and similar content. These formats shone a harsh light on the true nature of the ‘Russian peace’ —a core tenet of Russian propaganda that served only to conceal its ultimate objective: the total defeat of Ukraine and its erasure from the map.



This was also a form of Hoaxy a podvody's strategic communication

The highest levels of engagement by far were achieved by the authoritative statements of top European politicians, such as Finnish President Alexander Stubb and

Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Radosław Sikorski. Standing in stark contrast were the pro-Russian statements of Slovak Prime Minister R. Fico, whose Facebook posts easily garnered tens of thousands of likes. **These two divergent worlds, both equally successful and widely shared, served as further proof of the persistent polarisation of Slovak society.**

A notable paradox occurred when R. Fico himself became a victim of Russian propaganda. In May 2025, Russian sources circulated a hoax concerning Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić, who allegedly had to cut short a business trip to the USA due to health complications. Conspiracy theorists attempted to peddle a narrative about his poisoning, grouping the Slovak Prime Minister among the potential victims of such an attack.

Another familiar hybrid tactic involved the **distortion of history** in favour of the Kremlin's current geopolitical objectives. The trajectory of such efforts ranged from the aforementioned nostalgic optimism to the outright denial of the historical reality surrounding the 1968 occupation of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. Massively shared posts referred to it as a 'so-called occupation', claiming that 'the Russian did not steal our property; left us our banks; left us agriculture and factories; traded with us; ensured calm, contentment, and peace'. Conversely, the 1989 Velvet Revolution was depicted as a period characterised by Western looting, war, and tension.

Whenever such sources did concede the negative impacts of the 1968 occupation, they conveniently shifted the blame to the Ukrainians, citing the fact that the Soviet leader at the time, Leonid Brezhnev, was born in the territory of present-day Ukraine. This propaganda strategy by pro-Russian actors pursued two primary objectives: (1) to absolve Russia of historical responsibility for the 1968 invasion (paralleling its current denial of responsibility for the aggression against Ukraine), and (2) to polarise Slovak society by appealing to individuals who remember the communist regime with nostalgia and are susceptible to alternative historical interpretations.

Much like the occupation, the Soviet Union's role during the initial years of the Second World War was entirely obscured; Slovak purveyors of pro-Russian propaganda enthusiastically adopted and deployed the term 'Great Patriotic War'. The effort to rewrite history was captured by a statement from the disinformation account Odboj V4: This effort to rewrite history was perfectly encapsulated by a statement from the disinformation account Odboj V4: 'They would have exterminated us. And today they are 'allies'? The Germans wanted to exterminate us. The Americans bombed us. And now these murderers are supposed to be my role model and ally? No. A hungry Russian soldier who liberated us is closer to me than a well-fed Western dog who sold us for profit. I do not forget. I do not forgive and I do not bow to those who once took aim at my nation.'

Cultivating the image of a 'peaceful Russia' was not an isolated form of information manipulation. Politically exposed persons frequently pushed the narrative that 'peace comes from the East'; in stark contrast, the *Hoaxy a podvody* team compiled a list documenting over 70 conflicts since the beginning of the 20th century in which Russia was involved.

Given the domestic political climate and the pervasive impact of Russian hybrid threats, Slovakia represented an ideal target for various hybrid operations. This threat loomed particularly large over journalists, opposition politicians, and civic activists—groups that had already experienced the direct impact of information operations targeting their professional or civic endeavours

3.3 OTHER RUSSIAN DISINFORMATION NARRATIVES OBSERVED IN SLOVAKIA

- Ukraine is preparing to attack Poland.
- Ukrainians are responsible for the events at the Auschwitz concentration camp. Within this context, various other disinformation narratives and tactics emerged, aimed at distorting the history of the Second World War to the detriment of Ukrainians.
- Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk / German Chancellor Friedrich Merz is a grandson/descendant of a Nazi.
- Actor Arnold Schwarzenegger supports Russia.
- Georgian snipers killed protesters at the Maidan.
- American celebrities travelled to Ukraine for financial reward—a disinformation video pushing this claim was even shared by Elon Musk.
- Ukrainians sell children at 'bazaars'.
- Ukraine will mobilise one million women starting in September 2025, including mothers, teenagers, and female medics.
- Ukrainian children swore allegiance to Bandera with torches in Lviv. This lie was propagated by the Slovak disinformation account František Bubák, which manipulated genuine footage of the Baida youth patriotic movement from the island of Khortytsia in the Zaporizhzhia region.
- Ukraine supplies Western-donated weapons to terrorist and separatist units in Africa to expand its sphere of influence and weaken African nations' bilateral relations with Russia.

- Ukrainian provocateurs who allegedly 'do not want peace' were supposedly flown to Alaska during the Trump-Putin summit.
- The Slovak police detained a Ukrainian arms smuggler. This information circulated despite the police never disclosing the detainee's nationality—a favoured tactic among disinformation actors who reflexively shift the blame for any negative event onto Ukrainians in order to incite hatred.
- American special forces conducted a raid in Ukraine, discovering NATO-operated underground bunkers filled with mutilated human bodies. This claim relied on a video of unknown origin that had been circulating for several years, most likely depicting a morgue. The originator of the hoax, the account Pepek Vyskoč, claimed that global elites run secret underground laboratories where they torture small children to extract adrenochrome—a substance allegedly used by celebrities as an elixir of youth. According to this account, the entire planet is interwoven with massive underground tunnels. For years, disinformation outlets have spread rumours that Donald Trump's soldiers repeatedly liberated kidnapped children from these tunnels; this video was presented as 'proof' of the conspiracy theory.
- A Ukrainian infiltrated Prime Minister R. Fico's lecture for students, or alternatively, a Ukrainian brought the 'insolent' students to the event. In reality, the individual was a Slovak teacher.
- Pope Leo XIV 'dethroned Zelenskyy' at his inaugural mass, claiming to hate him and Ukraine while expressing love for Russia (propagated via a deepfake video).
- President Zelenskyy was 'high on drugs' during his visit to Finland, purportedly proven by a few-second video. (The footage actually originated in 2023 and had been manipulated).

A recurring theme within Russian propaganda was the fearmongering over a potential shortage or complete cessation of Russian gas and oil supplies transiting through Ukrainian territory to Slovakia and other countries. The disinformation scene was particularly sensitive to this vector of hybrid influence. It pre-emptively blamed Ukraine and its government for any potential transit complications or price hikes for end consumers, whilst entirely absolving the party actually responsible for causing both the security and energy chaos. This topic resonated deeply in the political messaging of Slovak government representatives, ultimately culminating in early 2026 during the crisis surrounding the damage to the Druzhba oil pipeline.

3.4 PROMINENT REPRESENTATIVES OF RUSSIAN PROPAGANDA IN SLOVAKIA

Úroveň hodnovernosti a autenticity bola vyššia, ak sa nositeľmi falošných správ stáva. The perceived credibility and authenticity of fake news increased significantly when specific, real individuals served as its vectors. The more prominent the figure disseminating Russian lies, the greater the risk that a larger audience would accept the content as factual, compared to when such narratives were peddled by lesser-known authors or anonymous groups.

Slovak musician Oskar Rózsa emerged as one of the most high-profile purveyors of Russian propaganda and disinformation. In one specific instance, he wrote that President Zelenskyy was a 'junkie who has a 35-million-euro mansion in Florida, another 15 properties around the world, 1.2 billion in his accounts, and his wife is capable of spending 1 million euros in a jewellery store'. Within the constrained space of a single Telegram post, the artist managed to condense all the primary hoaxes concerning the Ukrainian president, presenting them as established facts.

Rózsa became a prominent collaborator with the Slovak government elected in 2023. Initially, he prepared a new arrangement of the Slovak national anthem for the Ministry of Culture—a commission worth nearly €50,000—and later signed a cooperation agreement with the Ministry of Defence regarding the activities of its musical ensemble. There was no indication that his repeated dissemination of lies or his use of vulgar language in any way hindered his official cooperation with Slovak state authorities.

In a similar vein, unsuccessful political candidate Miroslav Heredoš has been highly vocal since the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite regularly publishing falsehoods and distorted information, he managed to cultivate a substantial fanbase numbering in the tens of thousands of followers. In one of his posts, he proclaimed that Slovakia's true enemies were the West and NATO; conversely, he portrayed Russia as posing absolutely no threat to the nation.

Another example was the sustained activity of former police officer Marek Šoun, a 'civic activist' with ties to the Smer-SSD party. In one published video, he presented footage allegedly from Odesa, showing Russian flags waving from the windows of a residential building while its inhabitants chanted glory to Russia. In reality, the footage depicted dormitories in Khabarovsk, Russia. Prompted by the swift reaction of the *Hoaxy a podvody* team and likely the reporting of harmful content by other users, Meta deleted his original post. Šoun immediately republished it, yet the social media operator took no further action against him. This specific disinformation narrative had previously circulated on Russian accounts; Šoun merely acted as its Slovak mascot—a crucial role from the perspective of Russian propaganda dissemination.

Šoun's approach exemplified another disinformation method prevalent not only within the Slovak scene: the decontextualisation of authentic photographs or audiovisual material by placing them into fictitious scenarios or applying fabricated geolocations. A slightly higher degree of sophistication was evident in videos where the original audio was either altered entirely or overlaid with audio tracks from unrelated events.

While certain purveyors of pro-Russian sentiment faced public mockery and a decline in credibility, the activities of other figures carried a far greater risk. Ján Čarnogurský, who served as Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic in the 1990s, ranked among the most enduring and active pro-Russian advocates. In addition to frequent trips to Russia and regular meetings with Russian representatives—including on the premises of the Russian Embassy in Bratislava—he travelled in 2025 to a training camp near Mariupol, where he was filmed firing an assault rifle alongside Russian soldiers. Čarnogurský authored several articles detailing his travels, through which he disseminated pro-Russian propaganda in a highly professional and articulate manner. By avoiding superficial disinformation and colloquial language, he cultivated an expert, professorial persona; this calculated approach significantly increased the penetration and acceptance rate of Russian hoaxes within Slovak society.

For example, Čarnogurský routinely claimed that the Minsk agreements were blatantly violated primarily by the Ukrainian side, that the Donbas had supposedly always been Russian, and that Russia genuinely desired peace.



J. Čarnogurský near Mariupol

3.5 TERMINATION OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE DISINFORMATION ACCOUNT SLOVAKINFO

The Facebook profile *Slovakinfo Pravdivé Informácie* (Slovakinfo True Information) became active in mid-February 2025, though indications suggested it was a repurposed older account. Its activities demonstrated a concerted effort to portray Ukraine and the European Union in the worst possible light—specifically as bloodthirsty warmongers—while conversely highlighting the alleged heroism, humanity, and peaceful nature of Russia. Its content featured fabricated information regarding frontline events alongside fictitious stories of kind-hearted Russian soldiers saving Ukrainians—for instance, by allegedly donating their own kidneys to Ukrainian children.

The posts lacked any source attribution, and it was easily verifiable that the accompanying photographs had been misappropriated. They belonged to real—and in some cases, deceased—individuals who were assigned new identities and fabricated backstories.

Other posts sought to bolster the false narrative of widespread popular support for Russia across Europe. In reality, posts boasting of ‘pro-Russian gatherings of biblical proportions across Europe’ utilised photographs from April 2022. These images depicted pro-Russian protests held in Germany, predominantly in areas with a higher concentration of residents of Russian origin.

The posts generated by this disinformation profile achieved massive share counts, allowing it to steadily amass new followers. After the *Hoaxy a podvody* project repeatedly drew attention to its activities, the account was presumably deleted from the social network. This removal may or may not have been directly related to the mass reporting of its content by *Hoaxy a podvody*'s followers.

3.6 PRO-RUSSIAN ACTIVITIES IN THE REAL WORLD

A heightened degree of direct threat emerged from events and actions carried out beyond the virtual sphere—in the real world. In 2025, the disinformation scene began organising **rallies ostensibly aimed at opposing progressivism**; in reality, these gatherings served to proliferate pro-Russian narratives, historical revisionism, and disinformation. Approximately 100 participants attended the inaugural protest, where speakers delivered manipulative claims designed to discredit the West and justify Russian aggression. While subsequent gatherings occasionally attracted larger crowds, they never approached the sheer size of corresponding pro-democratic and pro-Ukrainian rallies.

One of the principal supporters of these events was **Andrej Palko**, son of former government minister **Vladimír Palko**. While his father became a disseminator of pro-Russian propaganda via the *Marker.sk* portal, the son adopted a far more aggressive, pro-Putin stance across his social media accounts.

Analysing A. Palko's evolution within the online environment proved particularly interesting. Previously, he was publicly known as an actor who actively supported the LGBTI+ community, building his social media popularity through the creation of humorous videos. Only over time did he morph into a purveyor of Russian propaganda—or, more accurately, of hateful content directed against Ukraine.

Incitements to vandalise the property of Ukrainians residing within the Slovak Republic occasionally spilled over into the real world. Nevertheless, according to

both intelligence channels and public police briefings, no significant manifestations of violence were recorded against the Ukrainian community in 2025.

The fascist group **Slovenské hnutie obrody (Slovak Revival Movement)** and the collaborationist association **Brat za brata** (Brother for Brother) submitted two separate petitions to the President of the Slovak Republic, Peter Pellegrini, sharing a common objective: to secure the lifting of sanctions imposed on the Russian Federation. In the first instance, a significant portion of the signatures was allegedly forged. In the second instance, even a purported 450,000 signatures proved insufficient, as the petition sheets lacked a formally articulated question and instead functioned merely as a generalised appeal to the Slovak government. Consequently, both referendum initiatives ended in failure and were never called.

The *Hoaxy a podvody* team received public alerts regarding the **distribution of printed leaflets** deposited directly into residents' letterboxes. The leaflet prominently featured the Ribbon of Saint George—a symbol long weaponised by V. Putin to bolster his domestic politics—and conveyed indirect support for the Russian war in Ukraine. The main headline of the leaflet proclaimed: ‘Congratulations on the Day of Victory over Fascism! Embassy of the Russian Federation in the Slovak Republic’.

The leaflet completely omitted any supplementary historical context regarding the liberation of Slovakia, an event that directly precipitated the emergence of a new form of dictatorship in the ensuing years. Myopically focusing on the undeniably significant defeat of fascism remains a frequent tactic of Russian propaganda, deployed specifically to obfuscate the malign activities of the country's current political leadership.

No Slovak institution publicly reacted to the physical distribution of these leaflets into the letterboxes of Slovak citizens.

3.7 SLOVAK YOUTH IN RUSSIA

Analysts from the *Hoaxy a podvody* project prepared a detailed assessment of a trip undertaken by young Slovak students to Russia for the World Youth Festival. This analysis served as a continuation of a similar report published in 2024. The 2025 iteration delved deeper: it not only comprehensively identified all the Slovak participants of the expedition but also presented substantial evidence exposing the propagandistic underpinnings of the event. The festival harboured the clear potential to brainwash international attendees in favour of Russian strategic objectives. These findings were subsequently published by *Aktuality.sk*. The complete transcript of the article follows below.

Investigative Report: The Slovak Delegation Was Present for the Brainwashing in Russia

The analytical team of *Hoaxy a podvody* took a closer look at the World Youth Festival and identified the members of the Slovak delegation.

The World Youth Festival is an international event established in 2024 as a Russian project. This year, it spanned five days and took place in Nizhny Novgorod. Over 2,000 young participants from across the globe completed a comprehensive 'cultural-educational' programme.

Behind the ostensibly innocent visits to matryoshka factories, the endless smiles in official photographs, and the dancing, lurks a propaganda behemoth. Its primary objective is to rehabilitate the global image of the Russian Federation following its waging of war in Ukraine.

Beneath this veneer of pageantry lay opportunities to take a virtual photograph with President Putin, acquire cards bearing the likeness of mass murderer Joseph Stalin, or visit the 'Museum of the Special Military Operation'. The roster of speakers featured controversial and internationally sanctioned figures who openly endorse Russian aggression in Ukraine.

The *Hoaxy a podvody* project has uncovered the background of this year's festival—details that were ostensibly intended to remain hidden from the outside world. All information was sourced from publicly available data and represents the culmination of the analytical team's work.

By its very nature, the festival is designed not merely to brainwash participants, but to prime them for roles directly or indirectly disseminating Russian messaging within their home countries and local communities. It is highly probable that this underlying agenda remains imperceptible to the majority of young attendees, who view the event primarily as an opportunity for travel and international networking. It is reasonable to assume that only a minority are genuine zealots and active purveyors of the Putin regime's ideology; nevertheless, in at least one documented instance, a friendship was forged between a member of this radicalised minority and the Slovak delegation.

The aforementioned risks regarding the influence of Russian propaganda via this youth festival are not a novel revelation brought to light solely by the *Hoaxy a podvody* project.

Both the Estonian and Latvian intelligence services openly warn against such events in their annual reports. The Estonian Internal Security Service (KAPO) explicitly cautions against participating in these gatherings (an abridged version of their warning follows below):

'In order to push its divisive agenda and maintain its shrinking sphere of influence, the Kremlin is making a concerted effort to attract young people from neighbouring countries to events in Russia, focusing on those it considers more impressionable. These

individuals may later be exploited for geopolitical purposes or to influence politics in their home countries.

After a period of a reduced number of propaganda events aimed at youth abroad due to the war, the Kremlin is once again actively offering free online and offline programmes, competitions, excursions, and olympiads designed to attract young participants under the guise of legitimate opportunities.

It is important to remember that nothing comes for free – Russia will sooner or later demand something in return.

The recruitment of youth remains a priority of the Kremlin's divisive strategy, even during the ongoing war against Ukraine. Russian embassies abroad are tasked with actively pursuing this goal.

In addition to sanctions, it is essential to recognise and expose Russian influence operations to prevent the exploitation of children by a hostile foreign power. Even the participation of one or two children in a propaganda event – whether in person or online – can be misused to falsely portray a portion of the Estonian population as supporting the Kremlin.

We urgently request representatives of educational and youth organisations, along with local government officials, to remain vigilant and report any hostile influence activities targeting Estonian youth by Russia or Belarus to KAPO.'

Notably, the Slovak Information Service (SIS) did not issue any analogous warning in its most recent annual report.

Members of the Slovak Delegation

As was the case last year, the Slovak delegation's trip was organised by the Russian Embassy in Bratislava. The delegation was grouped under the auspices of the civic association *Slovanský výbor* (Slavic Committee). This organisation was founded following the unsuccessful 2023 parliamentary elections by Tomáš Špaček, a former candidate for the *Republika* movement, who had previously run equally unsuccessfully on the candidate list of Marian Kotleba's *LSNS* party. The group was officially registered as a civic association on 23 January 2024.

Špaček is a regular visitor to the Russian Embassy in Bratislava and frequently travels to Russia, where he meets with representatives of various organisations and appears in local media. Beyond his continuous dissemination of Russian propaganda, he is notorious for denying the massacre of civilians in Bucha and labelling the Slovak National Uprising as a 'violent coup aimed against its statehood and sovereignty'.

During his political candidacy, he built a highly successful TikTok account. Its content consisted entirely of videos promoting Russian propaganda, to which Špaček

merely added Slovak subtitles. This served as a direct pipeline through which the most egregious Kremlin lies—including the aforementioned denial of the Bucha massacre—reached the Slovak audience. Over the past year, Špaček's account has amassed approximately 5.7 million views, despite publishing only 100 videos.

Another member of Špaček's organisation who travelled to Russia was Robert Russel, currently a Slovakia-based local assistant to Member of the European Parliament (MEP) Milan Mazurek. In 2018, Russel attended a hearing at the Supreme Court of the Slovak Republic, where he accompanied a trio of men accused of extremism: Jakub Škrabák, Michal Buchta, and Jaroslav Pagáč (alias Reborn).

Buchta subsequently received a three-year suspended sentence and a fine. Škrabák, head of the extremist group *Slovenská pospolitost'* (Slovak Brotherhood), received a suspended sentence that is reportedly still pending final legal resolution today. Pagáč was ultimately acquitted. Notably, during that same hearing—at which contemporary photographs from 2018 confirm Russel's presence—*LSNS* member Anton Grňo shouted the fascist greeting '*Na stráž!*' (On guard!), an act for which the Supreme Court later fined him €5,000.

The ideological convergence of individuals supporting extremist movements, including the neo-Nazi scene, with the doctrines of contemporary Russia under Vladimir Putin is by no means an isolated phenomenon, nor is it uniquely Slovak.

The trio of the most publicly prominent participants was rounded out by Lea Lauková, another unsuccessful candidate for the *Republika* movement and currently a local assistant to MEP Milan Uhrík. Lauková was originally scheduled to speak on a discussion panel titled 'How Young Politicians Change the System from the Inside'. For undisclosed reasons, she was ultimately replaced by Russel.

Lauková's Facebook videos from the event ranked among the most widely viewed. She recently boasted that a video of barely thirty seconds—in which she praised the Russian festival while criticising the current Slovak government and president for the lack of a comparable domestic initiative—had been viewed by over half a million users.

Špaček claimed that the Slovak delegation consisted of 11 members aged between 17 and 44. The *Hoaxy a podvody* team managed to identify nine of them; evidence confirming the presence of the remaining two has yet to be established. It remains uncertain whether Špaček's stated figure was accurate, particularly given that his claimed lower age limit was demonstrably false: the youngest participant in the Slovak delegation was just 16 years old at the time of the festival.

Alongside the aforementioned trio, five other participants travelled from Vienna, transiting through Dubai and Moscow, to reach Nizhny Novgorod: students Ján Horník, Justín Soroka, and Sebastián Didier Belaj, along with E.T. and Jozef Hrdlička. This

nine-member list was finalised upon the arrival of Natália Tatiana Saturyová at the festival site.

For students Horník and Soroka, this was not their first excursion to Russia. While Soroka's previous visits reportedly possessed a spiritual character tied to the Orthodox Church (his father being an Orthodox priest), Horník's focus lay in cultural and artistic activities, such as giving artistic recitations of works by Russian authors. Hrdlička returned to the festival following his inaugural attendance in 2024, during which the *Hoaxy a podvody* project had been unable to identify him.

Natália Tatiana Saturyová travelled to the festival venue from the city of Tomsk, where she lives and studies. This 20-year-old—who also participated in the event's previous edition—relocated from Slovakia to Russia after completing her secondary education. Based on publicly available data, the influence of Putin's propaganda is most pronounced in her case among the entire Slovak delegation.

Saturyová refers to the Second World War as the 'Great Patriotic War'—a term routinely employed to obfuscate the Soviet war crimes committed alongside Hitler's Nazi Germany during the conflict's first two years. In her public posts, she explicitly thanks the Embassy of Russia in Slovakia, further corroborating the embassy's active involvement in such initiatives targeting Slovak citizens.

Information gleaned from public sources includes Saturyová's personal evaluation of the 2024 festival: 'Unforgettable moments, exceptional people, strong impressions, beautiful memories... Everyone who supported me in this "mission" was with me, in my heart... Thanks again, I will remember this for a long time.'

These sentiments were accompanied by selfies taken against the backdrop of the stage where, notably during the 2024 event, Putin, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, and singer Yaroslav Yuryevich Dronov (alias Shaman) had performed.

Among other activities, Saturyová attended a military parade in Tomsk on 9 May 2025, commemorating the end of the Second World War. She prominently wore the orange-and-black Ribbon of Saint George—a symbol historians note has been heavily co-opted by Putin to bolster his current ideological doctrine. She has also been photographed wearing the ribbon on separate occasions entirely unrelated to military parades.

Distinct from the delegation organised by *Slovanský výbor*, former Slovak politician and Prime Minister Ján Čarnogurský also attended the World Youth Festival. According to the official programme, he was scheduled as a panellist for the discussion titled 'Soft Power of Youth, or How New Generations Change the World'; however, he does not appear in any of the more than nine thousand publicly available photographs from the event.

Far overshadowing his festival participation was his subsequent trip near Mariupol, where he was filmed firing weapons alongside Russian soldiers—a development first reported by the *Hoaxy a podvody* team. It is highly plausible that he managed to attend both the festival and the military exercise during a single ‘business’ trip to Russia.

The *Hoaxy a podvody* team later obtained open-source intelligence revealing that one of the Slovak students publicly poses holding an unidentified weapon, and reportedly spends his free time extensively playing the popular video game *World of Tanks*, specifically choosing to play as the Soviet army.

Note: During the preparation of this article—and following the initial findings of the Hoaxy a podvody team—Tomáš Špaček released information disclosing the identity and a photograph of student Ján Horník, claiming he has Russian roots. ‘I am pleased to announce that Slovanský výbor has expanded with another member. The new addition is Ján Horník, a smart young student with Russian roots, who will devote himself to youth work in our organisation,’ Špaček stated on the Slovanský výbor Telegram channel.

Dozens of Lecturers and Organisations

According to the official programme, participants were offered dozens of events across various formats—ranging from individual presentations and panel discussions to concerts, sporting activities, and numerous other engagements. Given that some activities overlapped across multiple iterations of the programme, determining their exact total proved difficult. Every day was meticulously choreographed from morning until late evening.

From this packed programme, we focused our analysis on the discussion segments. Relying solely on public sources, it was impossible to independently verify the extent to which the actual delivery of these lectures matched their official descriptions. Similarly, any private meetings held by certain participants outside the official itinerary remained undisclosed. The head of the Slovak delegation, Tomáš Špaček, adhered to a separate schedule, publishing only a fraction of his activities.

Among the more than 60 speakers, panellists, and moderators were individuals currently subject to international sanctions due to their complicity in the war in Ukraine. The line-up of Russian figures and experts was supplemented by several international guests—spanning Europe, Africa, and the Americas. Judging by their public activities, these individuals are united by a boundless devotion to Russia and the Putin regime, actively pushing pro-Russian narratives within their respective home countries.

The Russian contingent included representatives acting on behalf of internationally sanctioned organisations, state institutions, the State Duma, research institutes, non-governmental organisations, and ostensibly ‘private’ companies. These featured entities such as the RT television network and various other Russian, Belarusian, and foreign media outlets; the social networks Telegram and VK; the Institute of Science

and Technology; Russian Railways Technologies; the Rosatom educational centre; and a multitude of think tanks, platforms, politicians, and analysts. The roster was remarkably extensive, making it beyond the scope of this article to name every presenter—especially given that our focus remains strictly on the discussion-based segments of the festival.

The overall programme was divided into 15 distinct sections, some intended exclusively for participants aged 14 to 17. Despite this structure, occasional overlaps occurred between discussion panels sharing the same title and line-up. Furthermore, the publicly advertised titles frequently employed vague phrasing designed to conceal the true objective of the discussion. However, in instances where the content descriptions were slightly more detailed, the genuine propagandistic nature of the entire event was glaringly laid bare.

The Transformation of Young People into Putin Supporters

As part of a media exercise, the audience was tasked with developing an international campaign targeting young people with a single, shared objective.

The exercise was co-led by Mikhail Zvinchuk, the internationally known war blogger behind ‘Rybar’, who is currently subject to international sanctions. Rybar’s Telegram channel is followed by hundreds of thousands of people. However, it is not run by a single individual; rather, it is operated by several dozen Kremlin-funded administrators whose task is to disseminate a strict line of war propaganda.

Zvinchuk spoke at the festival on multiple occasions. Following one of his lectures, he was approached by an Indonesian participant who demonstrably interacted with at least one of the Slovak attendees, with whom she maintained contact even after the event concluded. Alongside her published photographs with Rybar, the Indonesian woman wrote:

‘It was truly fun to learn and ask the boss of the Rybar channel many questions after his seminar regarding my work—which is spreading the truth and facts about the special military operation. I asked for recommendations on how to put pressure on the “Ukrops”. After three years, I am already tired; it was more successful 2.5 years ago. After attending numerous seminars, my eyes were opened wide upon hearing all the disinformation and the “Ukrops” on social media—it was terrible that they were behind everything.’

She expressed herself in a similar vein across several of her other posts, which she even organised into a gallery named ‘Special Military Operation’. In another post, she inadvertently admitted the impact that Russian propaganda had exerted on her, which she initially encountered through a relative. Until that point—particularly at the outbreak of the Russian war—she had supported Ukraine.

Her other publicly available posts spread hardline pro-war and anti-Ukrainian propaganda, alongside the most egregious Kremlin lies and manipulations. Her case serves as a textbook example of the influence wielded by such events, wherein a passive consumer transforms into a proactive disseminator of propaganda within their home country.

In her private, yet publicly accessible photo gallery, she boasted a picture alongside a soldier—or rather, a mannequin of a soldier—next to which a large letter ‘Z’ was mounted on the wall. It is not entirely clear where the photograph was taken; however, Tomáš Špaček published a photograph from the exact same location. This serves as proof that such a propaganda museum was indeed located either directly within the festival grounds or in its immediate vicinity. For obvious reasons, this facility was conspicuously absent from the collection of nearly ten thousand official photographs.

A Peculiar Fight Against Hoaxes

The letter ‘Z’, serving as a symbol of Russia’s military campaign in Ukraine, was also visible as a prominent neck tattoo on the Russian Jeff Monson during his performance. He is indeed a Russian citizen with an American name; the professional wrestler was born in the USA, where he spent almost his entire life. He relocated to Russia over ten years ago and only recently legally renounced his American citizenship. In Russia, he occupies various regional political positions and acts as a radical defender of Russian aggression in Ukraine.

The sports section was complemented by kickboxing champion Vladimir Mineev, who simultaneously holds the position of Deputy Chairman of the Donetsk Parliament—an illegal entity operating within Russian-occupied territory.

Vyacheslav Fetisov, a formerly outstanding ice hockey player with a significant footprint in the NHL, led a discussion on how sports can unite people. Unsurprisingly, one would be hard-pressed to find any mention in his speech of Russian offensive operations targeting Ukrainian athletes and sports facilities, or any acknowledgement of the consequences of the Russian war, such as the global sanctions imposed on Russian athletes. Furthermore, in his capacity as a Deputy Chairman of the State Duma, Fetisov is personally subject to international sanctions.

The fight against disinformation was featured in other discussion panels—albeit executed in a distinctly Russian style. For example, the synopsis of one discussion mentioned clarifying lies regarding the ‘Great Patriotic War’, while, according to the programme, the panellists seamlessly transitioned to the Russian war in Ukraine. ‘Participants will discuss how disinformation tools have transformed from the past into the digital age.’

At one of the workshops, the youth were invited to try out ‘the core fact-checking methods using the example of fake narratives from the European Union’. The exercise

was led by the Portuguese Alexandre Guerreiro, who is widely considered a propagandist for autocratic regimes within the legitimate fact-checking community. In the past, for example, he travelled to Venezuela as an ‘independent’ observer of local elections. Špaček makes no secret of his cooperation with the very same organisation that ostensibly ‘fights against hoaxes’. Such Kremlin-funded ‘fact-checking’ organisations pose a significant risk; by disseminating ‘their truth’, they possess the potential to manipulate the course of elections in third countries.

Another discussion panel focused on the detection of ‘hidden, invasive deepfakes in the global media’.

Communication, AI, and Špaček’s Drone Flight

Although the festival offered up to 15 different programme categories, certain topics were repeated with noticeable frequency. The organisers placed heavy emphasis on communication, social networks, artificial intelligence, and related fields. One need not search hard to understand why the Russian hosts selected precisely these areas for the ‘education’ of their widely represented international audience.

One of the numerous practical exercises presented creative ways of utilising neural networks, while another was devoted to a guide on ‘how to produce viral content’. Artem Geller, the developer of Putin’s primary website Kremlin.ru, also shared his experiences. Igor Sujin, the founder of the propaganda media outlet *DailyMoscow.ru*, repeatedly appeared as a moderator or co-panellist.

Among the speakers was Grigory Azarenok, a presenter for Belarusian state television who is included on the UK sanctions list because he is ‘involved in undermining democracy and the rule of law, and in suppressing civil society and the democratic opposition’.

During the festival, the Adversarial Machine Learning (AML) method was presented. This involves activities aimed at deceiving artificial intelligence models or similar automated software. The presenter provided several specific examples, including hard-to-detect attacks such as malware that causes economic damage worldwide. Another exercise focused on introducing publicly available investigative tools.

The discussion titled ‘Future Under Control: AI in Every Sphere of Human Life’ presented practical case studies demonstrating how governments, corporations, and research centres utilise artificial intelligence. It placed a strong emphasis on operations within Russia and concluded with an open question: Who will master the digital world of tomorrow, and how?

One ‘special’ activity undertaken by the leader of the Slovak delegation stood out from the rich programme offering. On his social media accounts, he boasted about piloting a simulated flight of an attack drone into the premises of a nuclear power plant.

Epilogue

We have described only a few fragments of this massive and intensive five-day endeavour, relying solely on publicly available sources. What remains unanswered is what other activities were prepared for the participants with the aim of subtly yet effectively influencing them in areas that have no place at such an event—an event that, this year, was open to students as young as 14 years of age.

The information presented in this article should naturally fall within the purview of the Slovak Information Service's (SIS) activities, even if the named individuals have not broken any laws. Crucially, these are influence operations conducted by a foreign state power explicitly targeting citizens of the Slovak Republic.

In light of these findings, the Slovak participants become—willingly or unwillingly, consciously or unconsciously—carriers of the ideology of an autocratic regime that poses an existential threat to the future of democracy and Europe.

Unfortunately, the activities of the SIS concerning Russian threats were minimised after 2023.

In times when the public cannot rely on an effective—or even existent—state effort to combat hybrid threats, the burden of responsibility falls upon the aforementioned groups. Everyone can contribute through their own skills and free time; no one else will do it for them.

This, too, is what civil society's struggle for democratic principles is all about.

Note outside the published text: Following the publication of the article, the Hoaxy a podvody project obtained information indicating that, in at least one case, a school took steps to prevent its student from participating in a similar event in the future. Prior to this, the school had reportedly lacked the relevant information, and crucial facts had been concealed from it by the student's parents.

3.8 BRAT ZA BRATA

The *Brat za brata* (Brother for Brother) movement played a significant role in propagating Russian disinformation in 2025, acting as the group that maintained the most overt relations with representatives of the Russian Federation. That same year, the association's leader, Matúš Alexa, received an award from V. Putin, which was formally presented to him by the outgoing Russian Ambassador to Slovakia, Igor Bratchikov.

The movement's activities were traditionally geared towards bolstering Russian propaganda: disseminating pro-Putin ideology under the guise of cultural and historical discourse, ostensibly 'caring' for historical monuments, and organising their own public events. The movement's itinerary included regular meetings with Kremlin regime

representatives, notably encompassing documented visits to the Russian Embassy in Bratislava, where its members also convened with certain Slovak coalition politicians.

In October 2025, the civic association *Hoaxy a podvody* was the first to report on the establishment of the *Národná informačná služba* (National Information Service – NIS) by the *Brat za brata* movement. The movement justified this initiative as an effort to gather intelligence on individuals whom they claimed were harming Slovakia. According to M. Alexa, by the time this information became public, the concept had already been operational for four months, and he was in the process of preparing a broadcasting studio for its future operations.

National media and state political representatives eventually addressed the establishment of the NIS. The Director of the Slovak Information Service (SIS), Pavol Gašpar, reacted in an interview with TV JOJ: 'As long as such an organisation has the legal form of a civic association registered with the relevant authority, this authority has an obligation—if it has ascertained or been notified that such an organisation is usurping the activities of state bodies—to call upon it to cease such activities. If it fails to do so, it can even be dissolved.'⁷

By early 2026, no further developments regarding the NIS were publicly known. The statements made by the SIS Director lacked credibility given the heavily pro-Russian orientation of the Slovak political scene at the time.

Representatives of the movement persisted in their intimidation campaigns against civic activists and anyone taking action to counter the influence of Russian propaganda in Slovakia.

The most high-profile incident occurred in September 2025 at a meeting of the Košice City Council. The subject of the meeting was a motion to relocate the Memorial to the Soldiers of the Soviet Army from the city centre to an alternative site. The city council's session was marred by threats and pressure exerted by pro-Russian activists, including M. Alexa.

Amidst the tense atmosphere, a shout of 'We should shoot like in America' emanated from the pro-Russian camp. This marked the culmination of a string of threats that local councillors had been receiving even prior to the meeting. Alarming, this occurred just one day after the assassination of political activist Charles James Kirk in the US.

Present at the scene within the pro-Russian camp was Alexander Riabov, chairman of the petition committee that had collected over 10,000 signatures demanding the monument remain in its original location. Riabov, who has Russian roots and is a known

⁷ <https://joj24.noviny.sk/politika-24/1123041-sef-sis-v-politika-24-o-informacnej-sluzbe-organizacie-brat-za-brata-ak-supluje-stat-treba-ju-rozpustit>

apologist for the Russian Federation, served at the time as the chairman of the Pole association, which published a magazine replete with conspiratorial and disinformation articles. Through the company UAB A Telecom, he was directly connected to the Belarusian businessman Andrey Yedko. Despite his overt pro-Russian activities, even in early 2026, he continued to hold a position as a member of the Management Board of the News Agency of the Slovak Republic (TASR).

Several aggressive and manipulated posts and videos emerged from the city council meeting. These permeated the disinformation scene, featuring prominently on the social media accounts of Riabov's wife, Rebeka Riabová. She subsequently became a member of the Council for Media Services—an independent body responsible for regulating and overseeing legal compliance in broadcasting, retransmission, on-demand audiovisual media services, and content-sharing platforms. She provided a clear indication of what her tenure regarding the regulation of harmful content might entail during a public hearing of the National Council's Committee for Culture and Media, where she argued against efforts to counter disinformation, framing the issue instead around 'freedom of speech' and 'censorship'.

How did the vote in Košice conclude? The city councillors mandated the city management to explore viable options for relocating the monument and removing its communist symbols. They adopted a resolution instructing the mayor to commission an expert assessment regarding its relocation. In the interim, the monument was to be fenced off, with information boards installed to provide accurate historical context.

The *Hoaxy a podvody* project covered the *Brat za brata* movement through an educational series, mapping topics such as the group's origins, its relationship with the Night Wolves motorcycle club, its connections to Russian security services, its contacts with representatives of the Putin regime, and the role of its members acting as fake observers during Russian elections. Tellingly, no visible steps were taken by the state—not even on a preventive or educational level.



Russian propaganda also reached Slovak consumers via social media accounts and pages whose names, at first glance, betrayed no obvious orientation towards Russia, war, or politics. This functioned as a standard 'fishing' tactic.

3.9 TV OTV

In 2024, the *Hoaxy a podvody* team uncovered a network of coordinated accounts across European countries, including Slovakia, which disseminated the exact same disinformation and pro-Russian propaganda simultaneously, automatically translated into the local languages.

In Slovakia, the online television channel TV OTV, well-known as a pro-Russian disinformation outlet, formed part of this Telegram-based network. Despite these facts, its representatives had held official accreditation to the National Council and the European Parliament in previous years.

Following the publication of the *Hoaxy a podvody* team's findings, TV OTV ceased its participation in the coordinated account network and began publishing exclusively its own content on its Telegram channel.

The brother-in-law of the channel's owner was a politically exposed person at the regional level, linked to the activities of the Facebook page *Okresná organizácia SMER – SSD Pezinok*, which regularly disseminated hateful and aggressive content.

Because the *Hoaxy a podvody* team's findings were continuously called into question within the disinformation scene, a comprehensive, evidence-based summary was published in 2025:

- As we pointed out in October 2024, TV OTV massively disseminated automated Russian propaganda on Telegram. It published approximately 100 posts daily, comprising predominantly excerpts from Russian media reports. This constituted a coordinated operation from abroad, with identical content appearing simultaneously on at least 10 other foreign channels in various European languages.
- The presenter's interviews with foreign guests are conducted predominantly in Russian. And who are these foreign guests? Almost exclusively Russians—political scientists, academics, analysts, members of parliament, or even a government envoy 'for the crimes of the Kyiv regime'.
- Well-known figures from the Slovak alternative scene hold regular segments in TV OTV programmes. The majority of these individuals are overtly pro-Russian, and the interviews are conducted entirely in that spirit.
- On social media, it frequently cross-posts content from Russian media outlets currently on the EU sanctions list.
- The outputs of TV OTV are unequivocally pro-Russian in their content. It reports on Russia entirely uncritically, whilst covering the West with a markedly negative sentiment.
- On its YouTube channel, it regularly and uncritically broadcasts appearances by Russian government representatives and spokespersons. When it does feature other foreign leaders, they are almost exclusively from Belarus or Serbia.
- It wholly adopts Russian wartime vocabulary. Across all TV OTV communication channels, we documented the following formulations and their respective frequencies: 'special military operation' (510 instances), 'Kyiv regime' (320 instances), 'Banderites' (70 instances), 'denazify' (35 instances), and 'Ukro-Nazis' (30 instances).
- On Telegram, it has shared posts from the Russian Embassy 507 times to date, making it one of its most frequently amplified sources. Furthermore, content

from *RIA Novosti* (71 instances), the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation (52 instances), and TASS (40 instances) also features prominently.

- From its inception, it has maintained close ties with the pro-Kremlin movement *Brat za brata*. Through joint interviews, mutual content sharing, and the covering of each other's activities, their mutual sympathies are glaringly obvious. Joint photographs of their representatives alongside Russian Ambassador Bratchikov at a Russian Embassy reception are also readily accessible online.
- TV OTV collaborates with the private Russian media outlet *Octagon.Media*, utilising it to obtain statements from Russian politicians. Presenter Lenka Zlatev has published several articles there, and Konstantin Dzultaev—a close associate of TV OTV who unsuccessfully applied for journalistic accreditation in Slovakia twice—is also employed by the outlet. His applications were rejected by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs under both the previous and current governments.
- What TV OTV engages in can no longer be classified merely as 'alternative news reporting'. It is the systematic dissemination of pro-Russian narratives across multiple platforms, driven by a clear ideological focus and supported by a network of contacts that extends far beyond Slovakia's borders.
- To reiterate, this channel: massively amplifies the content of Russian state media and its embassy; spreads pro-Kremlin narratives; employs the militaristic vocabulary of Russian propaganda; provides a platform exclusively to pro-Russian voices, both domestic and foreign; and masquerades as an independent media outlet while, in reality, disseminating a targeted foreign agenda.
- TV OTV genuinely operates as a proxy—or extended arm—of Russian propaganda. This does not represent a plurality of opinions. Rather, it is a component of a hybrid operation designed to undermine trust in the actual victim of the war raging beyond our borders, as well as in our allies and the foundational values of Western civilisation.

Several months after the publication of this summary, the Czech intelligence agency—the Security Information Service (BIS)—stated in its 2024 Annual Report that 'in the area of spreading content directly sponsored by Russia, information channels directly connected to the Russian state apparatus maintained their activity'. Among these, it explicitly mentioned *Selský rozum* (Common Sense), designating it as 'controlled from Russia'. The Telegram channel *Selský rozum* functioned as the gateway for the coordinated content distributed by TV OTV and other accounts.

The BIS noted regarding the *Selský rozum* channel: 'The *Selský rozum* channel was created shortly after the start of the war in Ukraine, and its activities are tied to Russian intelligence services. For example, in February 2024, the channel spread an open call for the collection of information about the Czech manufacturer of Vampire multiple rocket launchers and its employees. The Russian side has long criticised

Czechia for supplying weapons to Ukraine, including the alleged use of Czech weapons against Russian civilians. Russia attempted to transfer this narrative into the Czech media environment with little success.'

During the same period, the Ukrainian StratCom centre *SPRAVDI* published identical information.⁸

The conclusions reached by the Czech intelligence service corroborated the 2024 findings of the *Hoaxy a podvody* team. This so-called 'connection' was highlighted in a video by Peter Tóth—a former member of the SIS, a former associate of convicted mobster Marian Kočner, a secret witness in the murder trial of Ján Kuciak and Martina Kušnírová, and a vocal representative of the disinformation scene. In his video, he called upon the General Prosecutor's Office of the Slovak Republic to investigate whether the founder of the *Hoaxy a podvody* project was acting as an agent of Czech counter-intelligence.

In response to the dissemination of this disinformation, D. Púchovský filed a criminal complaint against P. Tóth with the General Prosecutor's Office. During his testimony, Tóth backtracked, stating that this was merely his personal evaluation of the situation based on available information. He failed to provide the investigator with any relevant evidence to substantiate his initial claims regarding Púchovský's alleged cooperation with the Czech intelligence service. Ultimately, the police rejected the criminal complaint.

⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/hoaxyapodvody/posts/pfbid0qC5HBi1Lgm4xrC3sLChT1moSA4PC3v4ShaoD7Cv8ZsXg-WWHnSJZ2WopDXcJ3GMDGI>

4 OTHER DISINFORMATION TOPICS

It would be a hoax to claim that disinformation related to the Russian war in Ukraine was the sole player within the Slovak disinformation space. Russian sources themselves had a much broader scope of themes encompassing various spheres of society. Slovak society became so deeply immersed in conspiracies that any given area or specific individual could become the subject of questioning, manipulation, deception, or aggressive attacks.

Most of the following subchapters could easily stand alone as more extensive studies, limited only by the capacity of this publication. These were key topics that became instruments of the hybrid threats operating within and beyond Slovakia in 2025.

4.1 THE EUROPEAN UNION

The European Union and NATO remained natural targets for disinformation campaigns in 2025, just as in the past. The goal of such attacks was to weaken their standing in the eyes of the general public—specifically, the inhabitants of the member states. These long-term, continuous attacks harboured the ambition to fracture the cohesion of pro-Western organisations, a strategy which, over a horizon of several years, could precipitate the withdrawal of the least resilient member states.

Alongside traditional hoaxes directed against EU representatives (most frequently targeting Ursula von der Leyen as the 'daughter of a Nazi') or promoting non-existent regulations (**such as the mandatory consumption of insects, a claim spread directly by a Slovak coalition political party**), the following narratives were also captured in the Slovak information space in 2025:

- The Facebook profile *Jozef Ferianc - Republika*, alongside 6,500 other users, shared a report concerning the 'panicked flight' of Ursula von der Leyen and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz from the European Parliament after Viktor Orbán allegedly exposed massive corruption worth €5 billion. The information originated from the German YouTube channel *Politik Fokus 24*, which regularly published AI-generated videos featuring fabricated sensations. In addition to this alleged massive corruption, the channel released videos claiming that Austria was leaving the EU, or that Europe had experienced a total economic collapse in 48 hours due to a single decision by V. Putin.
- One well-known account spreading false claims, operated by Miroslav Kamenský, posited that the European Commission was preparing a directive mandating specific dimensions for soup plates—specifically, that they must not exceed 21

centimetres in diameter. Those violating this fabricated regulation were purportedly subject to fines of up to €10,000. This deceptive narrative was debunked by the European Commission via the Agence France-Presse (AFP) news agency. AFP discovered that the information originated from an article published on the website *Medium.cz*, which had explicitly stated in its introduction that it was satire. The author of the article described his texts as humorous, intended not to harm or insult anyone, but merely to entertain and help alleviate everyday stress.

- A frequent narrative asserted that the EU harms more than it helps. The profits of foreign company owners supposedly increased the standard of living exclusively in their home countries. In the context of drawing EU funds, Slovakia was allegedly selling out, destroying its own constitution, and functioning merely as a political and economic colony. Through this mechanism, Slovakia supposedly gained €25 billion while losing another €56 billion. The author of these claims was the previously mentioned account, **Miroslav Heredoš**.
- A video depicted French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer 'doing drugs while riding a train'. The video's quality was deliberately degraded so that the viewer would mistakenly perceive a napkin on the table as a packet of drugs.
- The Romanian presidential elections were allegedly rigged by France and globalists. A TikTok video reportedly showed undercover French soldiers waiting for the election results, ready to instigate a civil war if the opposing candidate won. Comments circulated in Telegram groups exonerating Russia from its previous interference in Romania's electoral processes. Furthermore, Telegram founder Pavel Durov accused the head of the French foreign intelligence service of asking him to ban Romanian conservative posts prior to the elections. The French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs vehemently denied any such interference, calling on everyone to 'show responsibility and respect for Romanian democracy'.
- The topic of the digital euro repeatedly gained traction, framed as the future sole payment option that the EU would be able to 'turn off' at any time, thereby stripping citizens of all their financial resources.
- A photograph of a High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy was subtly altered to evoke negative emotions. This involved attacks on women and modifications to their appearance—a tactic previously deployed against Slovakia's former president, Zuzana Čaputová.
- A post by the pro-Russian and strongly anti-European Czech politician Nela Lisková, chairwoman of the *Nezlovní* movement, garnered over 3,000 shares. In the video, she discussed a fabricated scandal surrounding the company Dr. Oetker, alleging that it unpacks expired food and manufactures new products

by melting it down in ovens. The video was deliberately misleading, designed to imply that the EU was intentionally supplying this recycled food to Eastern Europeans. It served as a typical emotional appeal intended to deepen opposition to the EU.

- The EU, together with NATO, allegedly orchestrated the manipulation of the Moldovan parliamentary elections with the aim of dragging Moldovans into a war against Russia and enslaving them. According to these predictions, Moldova was destined to be occupied by these two organisations. The country's 'neutrality' was supposedly threatened by this fictitious interference, paving the way for puppets of foreign state powers to enter the scene. Furthermore, the victory of pro-democratic and pro-Western candidates was predicted to trigger an economic collapse or continuous attacks against the Russian minority.
- European politicians shamefully waited to be received by US President Trump like obedient schoolchildren (deepfake).

4.2 MOLDOVA

The *Hoaxy a podvody* team intensively monitored the Slovak information space during the Moldovan elections, dissecting the traditional disinformation spread in favour of Russia. Following the elections, the flow of such narratives abruptly ceased. This reduced activity correlated directly with the failure of pro-Russian politicians. The tactic of silence and retreat has consistently characterised the disinformation scene in the wake of failures, whether domestic or foreign.

The team also elucidated the fundamental disinformation narratives for the Slovak audience, introducing significant pro-Russian Moldovan figures within the context of their attacks against the EU and NATO.

Worth noting was the unprecedented commitment of Moldovan institutions, which not only actively suppressed pro-Russian influence—whether stemming from external or internal sources—but also publicly presented concrete evidence highlighting the successful interventions of state authorities. For instance, the head of the Moldovan police acted as a primary communicator; he made public appearances and, in one interview, showcased tangible evidence in the form of seized pro-Russian leaflets.

The public appearance of an authoritative figure, combined with authenticity and tangible evidence, should be a standard component in countering information operations—and not merely when addressing attacks aimed at subverting the electoral process.

The proactive steps and tactics of the Moldovan police stood in stark contrast to the inaction of their Slovak counterparts.

4.3 USA

A remarkable shift occurred regarding events in the United States of America. For many years, the USA had been portrayed by the Slovak disinformation scene as an arch-enemy. A broad spectrum of propaganda narratives depicted the country across all spheres in the worst possible light. A fundamental breakthrough materialised following the election of Donald Trump as the US president. **For a specific segment of society, the formerly 'evil America' became a new role model, a partner, and a respected nation whose newly implemented policies ought to be emulated by Slovak politicians.**

The dismantling of the American government's efforts to counter disinformation, the proliferation of blatant lies and aggressively offensive posts by US representatives, their wavering stances on Ukraine, attacks on critical media, and meetings with V. Putin all enjoyed broad support from the disinformation-consuming masses. In short, America's changing trajectory became a blueprint that Slovakia and Europe were supposedly meant to follow.

A fundamental shift in attitude occurred not only among the general population but also among elected Slovak representatives. While their stance towards the USA had been harsh and uncompromising during their time in opposition—for instance, when they branded the Defence Cooperation Agreement (DCA) between the two nations as treason—by the end of 2025, they had not cancelled it. On the contrary, they maintained warm, amicable relations that culminated in billion-dollar investments favouring the USA.

The embrace of these American policy shifts was publicly articulated by a Slovak government politician, who appealed to the US government to expand its existing sanctions against Europeans combating disinformation to include specific individuals originating from Slovakia. **Such a public request by an elected representative, urging a foreign president to sanction his own fellow citizens, was an unprecedented step.**

In some cases, other previously unseen parallels emerged: actions or statements by the American government occasionally mirrored the exact behaviours previously exhibited by those in positions of power within Slovakia.

This similarity between the USA and Slovakia was also evident in the behaviour of their respective fanbases, although the *Hoaxy a podvody* team did not examine this area in exhaustive depth. The American societal segment supporting Trump actively suppressed and ignored his pre-election promise to end the Russian war in Ukraine almost immediately upon re-election. For them, too, the tactics of silence, denial, and wilful ignorance took over when faced with a harsh clash with reality.

A major turning point did not occur until early 2026, following the operation directed against Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro. From that moment, a noticeable

decline in the Slovak disinformation scene's support for Trump's policies became apparent—a development that will, among other topics, be the subject of next year's Report on Disinformation in Slovakia.

The *Hoaxy a podvody* team addressed events in the USA operationally from the perspective of hybrid threats, specifically mapping their developments within the Slovak information environment. It focused exclusively on events that directly influenced the domestic sphere, refraining from analysing them within the broader context of US domestic operations.

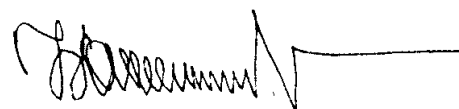
The USA did not conduct international activities in this domain on a scale comparable to the Russian Federation, save for the application of sanctions against specific individuals. It remained a key ally of the Slovak Republic. Whenever certain disinformation and manipulative narratives did emerge, they were largely isolated manifestations driven by the parasitic reflex of established Slovak conspiracy figures, eager to capitalise on any polarising and aggressive topic.

Within its anti-hoax initiatives, the project occasionally analysed false reports stemming from D. Trump's statements, issuing the following clarifications:

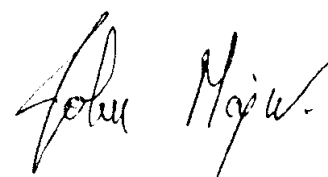
- The United States did not spend \$350 billion on the Russian war, nor did it surpass Europe by \$200 billion. In reality, European contributions have consistently exceeded US contributions. Furthermore, a significant portion of American military aid (approximately 90%) is spent domestically and reinvested into the US economy.
- President Zelenskyy did not claim that half of the American money sent to Ukraine is 'missing'. He stated that half of the promised funds had not been received—a fundamental distinction.
- The Ukrainian constitution forbids elections during a war (under martial law); this is a legal safeguard designed to protect the democratic process from foreign interference and mitigate the immense logistical challenges inherent to wartime. President Zelenskyy is not a dictator and commands the support of over 50% of the Ukrainian population, not 4%.
- There has been no eastward expansion of NATO, as NATO itself cannot expand unilaterally. Instead, democratic nations independently decide whether they wish to become members of the alliance. The accession process is entirely voluntary and involves several rigorous steps, including meeting specific criteria and completing a formal application. The fact that many of Russia's former neighbours decided to apply for NATO membership testifies to their threat perception regarding Russia and their desire for collective security.
- Who initiated this war, which has now lasted for over four years? RUSSIA.



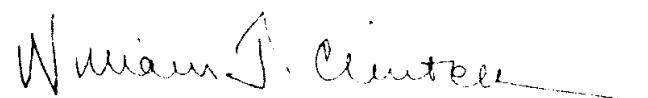
ЗА РОСІЙСКУ ФЕДЕРАЦІЮ:
ЗА РОССИЙСКУЮ ФЕДЕРАЦИЮ:
FOR THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION:



ЗА СПОЛУЧЕНЕ КОРОЛІВСТВО
ВЕЛИКОЇ БРИТАНІЇ
І ПІВНІЧНОЇ ІРЛАНДІЇ:
ЗА СОЕДИНЕННОЕ КОРОЛЕВСТВО
ВЕЛИКОЙ БРИТАНИИ
И СЕВЕРНОЙ ИРЛАНДИИ:
FOR THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT
BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND:



ЗА СПОЛУЧЕНІ ШТАТИ АМЕРИКИ:
ЗА СОЕДИНЕННЫЕ ШТАТЫ АМЕРИКИ:
FOR THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:



The new administration had the Budapest Memorandum removed from the US government website. Signed in 1994 by the leaders of the USA, Russia, and the United Kingdom, the memorandum guaranteed Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, and respect for its existing borders, as well as a commitment to refrain from the threat or use of force against it, in exchange for Ukraine relinquishing its nuclear arsenal. Ukraine fulfilled this commitment in 1996 when it handed over all its nuclear warheads to Russia, having possessed the third-largest arsenal of such weapons in the world in 1991.

4.4 FOOT-AND-MOUTH DISEASE

In the spring of 2025, an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease struck predominantly southern Slovakia. This resulted in the culling of approximately a thousand head of cattle, pigs, and other livestock, the liquidation of several farms, and the imposition of strict hygiene measures across the affected regions, including the temporary introduction of border controls with neighbouring states.

Even though the disease affected 'only' livestock, the associated extraordinary measures and the convening of crisis committees were starkly reminiscent of the COVID-19 pandemic era. A similar parallel could be drawn regarding the reaction of a specific segment of the public: many perceived the foot-and-mouth outbreak as an elite conspiracy or dismissed it as entirely fabricated, adopting a mocking stance towards the implemented measures and actively attacking state authorities.

While the efforts of certain state institutions to communicate swiftly and proactively cannot be denied, the overarching absence of effective strategic communication remained glaringly apparent.

All forms of state communication were met with widespread scepticism across the entire Slovak public. For the demographic that had not succumbed to disinformation, official messaging appeared entirely inauthentic given the incumbent government's prior actions—namely, the *de facto* abolition of all strategic communication departments and its own track record of fabricating hoaxes. Conversely, for the segment of the population that routinely consumed hoaxes, it was incomprehensible why their government was suddenly introducing extraordinary measures; consequently, they adopted a mocking stance towards the state's genuine efforts to manage the crisis.

The state-run Facebook page *Hoaxy a podvody* – *Ministerstvo vnútra SR* published merely three highly generalised posts on the topic—a grossly insufficient response from what had once served as the primary crisis channel for strategic communication.

Instead, the crisis was actively addressed by the *Hoaxy a podvody* team. Through more extensive posts, the team outlined the basic facts surrounding the disease and provided detailed analyses of the specific disinformation narratives circulating within the information space.

4.5 THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Although three years had elapsed since the conclusion of the COVID-19 pandemic by 2025, related disinformation narratives continued to surface within the Slovak information space at regular intervals. Their dominant figurehead—and *de facto* mascot—was **Peter Kotlár**, a Member of the National Council of the Slovak Republic.

From the very onset of the government's tenure, he was appointed to the position of Government Plenipotentiary for reviewing the process of governance and resource management during the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to entering politics, he had built a profile within the disinformation community through his appearances on the online channel *TV Slovan*, where he notably disseminated pandemic-related hoaxes.

From a political perspective, observing the timing of Kotlár's public appearances alongside the reactions of his coalition colleagues proved highly revealing. A discernible pattern emerged: he would frequently convene press conferences featuring 'shocking' content to serve as a mass distraction precisely when the media was reporting on internal crises or problems plaguing the government coalition. Likely due to the utility of this informational tactic, he enjoyed the overt support of Prime Minister R. Fico, who repeatedly defended him.

Eventually, several of his colleagues, including cabinet ministers, began adopting a critical stance towards Kotlár's statements. They pointed out that the role of plenipotentiary had been established expressly to review state management processes during the pandemic; however, Kotlár remained myopically focused on questioning the efficacy of vaccines and spreading disinformation. The state genuinely required a rigorously prepared analysis of its crisis management during the unprecedented pandemic, both to learn from past mistakes and to refine future protocols.

Despite the highly publicised, ongoing conflict within the government coalition and mounting criticism of Kotlár's activities, he was not dismissed from his salaried position as plenipotentiary. No disciplinary action was taken against him, even as he repeatedly delayed the publication of his mandated report.

This political stalemate likely persisted for purely pragmatic reasons: as a member of parliament, Kotlár formed part of a razor-thin coalition majority that held merely a three- to four-vote advantage over the opposition. Had he been dismissed from his plenipotentiary role, this fragile majority could have been further compromised, severely complicating the coalition's ability to govern. While he would not have lost his parliamentary seat, he could have easily begun withholding support for key government proposals as a form of retaliatory protest.

The statements Kotlár delivered at his sporadically organised press conferences stand among the most egregious examples of state-sponsored disinformation ever sown into society in the history of the Slovak Republic. Their potential impact was rendered exponentially more dangerous by the simple fact that their vector was an elected representative of the state.

In the spring of 2025, P. Kotlár stated: **'The integrity of the Slovak gene pool has been disrupted. [...] Moderna and Pfizer turned the vaccinated into genetically modified organisms; they handled people like corn without their knowledge.'**

The **State Institute for Drug Control (ŠÚKL)** responded to Kotlár's statements: 'The State Institute considers the views presented by Mr. Kotlár to be unscientific, dangerous, and capable of endangering public health. Although Mr. Kotlár positions himself as an unbiased and free-thinking explorer, in reality, his statements amount

to the dissemination of an alarmist message, and we will consider lodging a criminal complaint.'⁹

From a strategic communication perspective, it was an unprecedented step for a state scientific institution to decide to react directly and personally to a government representative. Even though Kotlár's statements were questioned by some of his political colleagues, the information space lacked any clear, distinct, and authoritative defence of scientific institutions from representatives of the coalition parties.

Scientific institutions remained isolated and uncoordinated in their defence, forced to communicate on their own behalf like a 'one-man army'. The need for crisis communication emerged in areas where it would have been previously unimaginable: instead of promoting their research, scientists had to focus on resolving a crisis triggered by an elected state representative. According to their own statements, this situation fostered widespread hatred and hostility, while also deterring potential future scientists from seeking employment with them amid such a tense social atmosphere.¹⁰

The *Hoaxy a podvody* team regularly responded to P. Kotlár's statements, even though its strategic guidelines ordinarily precluded naming politicians—preferring, in cases of disinformation, to focus solely on the content without attributing authorship. However, this rule was suspended in relation to Kotlár and his activities, given the direct threat they posed to the public health of Slovakia's citizens.

The team's responses were formulated in consultation with ŠÚKL, resulting in the identification of fundamental flaws in Kotlár's messaging: an absence of transparency, a lack of evidence, a direct contradiction of scientific consensus, and potentially severe negative consequences. This final point, in particular, posed a grave risk to the most vulnerable segments of the population and could have exacerbated the growing epidemic of whooping cough—a once-eliminated disease that saw 4,600 recorded cases in Slovakia by mid-2025.¹¹

Another statement by Kotlár, claiming that the **individuals alters human DNA**, was considered a direct public health threat. According to MUDr. Milan Kulkovský, this assertion led directly to instances where patients refused blood transfusions from vaccinated donors. Compared to such highly damaging claims, Kotlár's assertion that **'there was no pandemic'** seemed almost innocent and harmless. This particular claim was subsequently voted Hoax of the Year for 2024 in a poll organised by the *Hoaxy a podvody* team.

9 https://www.sukl.sk/hlavna-stranka/slovenska-verzia/media/tlacove-spravy/sukl-reaguje-na-vyjadrenia-splnomocnenca-vlady?page_id=6478

10 <https://dennikn.sk/4812150/kotlar-s-blahom-agresivne-reaguju-na-sav-aj-pre-zlu-atmosferu-mladi-odchadzaju-hovori-vedkyna/>

11 <https://www.sme.sk/domov/c/do-europy-sa-vratila-epidemia-zaskrtu-pripadov-pribuda-aj-na-slovensku>

Kotlár also came into conflict with another scientific institution, the **Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAV)**. Commissioned by the government, the SAV prepared a comprehensive report on the effects of mRNA vaccines, specifically addressing the question of whether they are capable of altering DNA.

'Based on our comprehensive analysis, as well as the most up-to-date scientific knowledge, we can unequivocally assure the public that the amount of residual DNA in mRNA vaccines complies with established standards. Furthermore, this DNA is fragmented, meaning it is not present in the vaccines intact, but broken into small pieces. At the same time, we wish to emphasise that there is no credible scientific or medical evidence indicating that this residual DNA alters the human genome,' stated Professor Silvia Pastoreková, Director General of the Biomedical Research Centre of the SAV.¹²

A segment of the public adopted a critical stance towards the SAV report, primarily for economic reasons: its preparation cost €350,000 during a period of severe strain on public resources, yet—in line with general scientific expectations—it did not yield any supposedly 'groundbreaking' new findings.

Despite Kotlár's previous pledge to tear up his university medical degree if his claims about vaccines were proven false, by the end of 2025 he had failed to do so. Instead, he continued to defend his activities and announced the indefinite postponement of his mandated report on state management during the pandemic.

In early 2026, he confirmed that the police had officially **charged him with disseminating an alarmist message** in connection with his statements regarding vaccines. This development caused embarrassment and bewilderment within the disinformation scene concerning the fulfilment of promises by this political spectrum. Having gained its popularity by spreading disinformation, it now found itself—despite governing the state—unable to dictate the decisions of certain independent state bodies.

4.6 OTHER MEDICAL DISINFORMATION

- A national state of emergency was allegedly declared in Japan due to unexplained deaths of infants vaccinated with mRNA vaccines. Paediatric intensive care units were reportedly full, and top Japanese scientists purportedly blamed Bill Gates and pharmaceutical companies for genocide. A real Japanese expert was quoted, allegedly calling the vaccine a 'Trojan horse designed to kill'. This was an outright hoax.
- Certain sources republished an old news report from 2022, detailing when the Moderna company recalled over 760,000 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine in Europe following the discovery of an unknown foreign body in a single vial. In

2025, this information was shared by several thousand individuals completely devoid of context or chronological framing.

- Statements made by so-called 'disinfluencers' posed a tangible danger to public health. Singer **Robo Papp** propagated a conspiracy theory asserting that HIV does not exist. He subsequently ignored a challenge to accept a blood transfusion from an HIV-positive patient. Another user, operating under the pseudonym **Michal Či** and boasting over 64,000 followers, presented himself as an independent healer and vendor of nutritional supplements. In massively shared posts, he cast doubt upon scientific studies, medical professionals, researchers, and vaccination—including the immunisation of pregnant and breastfeeding women. In an unrelated incident, the same author disseminated an alarmist message regarding an attempted child abduction in Trnava. In a formal statement, the Slovak police confirmed they had received no such reports and announced their intention to demand an explanation from the post's author.
- The websites *badatel.net* and *darwin.sk* reported that **'broccoli beats cancer better than surgery and chemotherapy combined'**. The police had investigated the activities of the *Bádatel'* portal in the past but were ultimately unable to identify its operator.
- Social media posts erroneously linked Vitamin K to alleged infertility, autoimmune diseases, and cancer. Analysts from the *Hoaxy a podvody* team documented statements from mothers actively refusing the administration of Vitamin K to their newborns in hospitals, labelling the supplement a dangerous poison.
- Former Minister of Justice and President of the Supreme Court of the Slovak Republic, **Štefan Harabin**, shared a video on his Facebook profile claiming that during a summit in Alaska, V. Putin had handed D. Trump a 25,000-page document. This dossier supposedly contained evidence of a global conspiracy involving COVID-19 vaccines, allegedly masterminded by Microsoft founder Bill Gates. The underlying photograph did not originate from any meeting in Alaska; in reality, it was a deepfake based on an image from the 2017 G20 summit in Hamburg, which both presidents had attended.
- The deaths of both prominent and lesser-known individuals continued to be ruthlessly exploited to push the narrative that vaccination was the cause (for instance, the case of Norwegian biathlete Sivert Guttorm Bakken, whose official cause of death remained undetermined even by early 2026).
- Chemotherapy was falsely presented as a catalyst for the faster spread of cancer. This was highly misleading, as the cited new Chinese study merely discussed a potential side effect observed under strictly controlled laboratory conditions, not a general clinical rule.

¹² https://www.sav.sk/?lang=sk&doc=services-news&source_no=20&news_no=13026

- Journalist **Dag Daniš**, writing for *Marker.sk*, promoted a disinformation narrative claiming that **mRNA vaccines caused genetic changes and cancer**. He referenced an article from the Children's Health Defense website, a platform notorious for its disinformation content. The cited article quoted several American scientists who were already well-known for making controversial statements or actively spreading disinformation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Crucially, the article linked to a legitimate study by German scientists that contained absolutely no indication whatsoever that mRNA vaccines cause DNA alteration or cancer.
- A massively shared social media post recommended the preventative use of **ivermectin**. This was a lingering remnant from the pandemic era, during which alternative forms of 'treatment' gained immense popularity within the disinformation scene, deliberately sidelining the official recommendations of the professional medical community.

4.7 ATTACK AT A SLOVAK SCHOOL

In January 2025, a student at a grammar school in Spišská Stará Ves attacked his classmates. A teacher and a female classmate of the student died in the assault. The police managed to apprehend the perpetrator shortly thereafter.

The Hoaxy a podvody team proactively urged the public to refrain from making premature judgements or jumping to conclusions based on disinformation. As anticipated, Slovak disinformation accounts (among others) swiftly mobilised, and on the very day of the attack, they began propagating the following disinformation narratives:

- Linking the attacker's motive to an entirely unrelated public event in the town and other occurrences (for example, suggesting it was the consequence of another student refusing to shake the President's hand);
- Attributing blame for the broader societal situation directly to the actions of the governing parties;
- Claiming the student's actions were the direct result of progressive ideology, the 'corrupt' West, or the USA;
- Falsely asserting that the attacker was Ukrainian and that the mainstream media was covering this up.

The court trial was expected to commence in 2026. The student was formally charged with the criminal offence of premeditated murder.

4.8 SELECTION OF VARIOUS DISINFORMATION NARRATIVES

- Mountains are not mountains, but rather plasma.
- The conspiracy theory concerning reptilians (as explained in a video recorded by *Hoaxy a podvody*).
- Sunscreens cause skin cancer.
- The Minister of Economy of the Slovak Republic, Denisa Saková, died on live television (deepfake).
- US President D. Trump died.
- Labubu is a demonic toy.
- Deepfake videos targeting D. Púchovský (a mocking tactic wherein, in one instance, a representative of the disinformation scene was manipulated, resulting in his own community mocking him).
- Pope Francis died a long time ago; the public was merely informed of his doppelgänger's death.
- The massive wildfire in Los Angeles was deliberately set because a 'smart city' needed to be built.
- 'Russophobic' Californians refused help from V. Putin to extinguish the wildfire.
- Firefighters and the military were exclusively protecting A. Schwarzenegger's house from the wildfire.
- The wildfire was caused by drugged homeless individuals.
- The terrorist attack at Bondi Beach in Australia was a hoax (supported by an AI-generated photograph claiming the 'hero was an actor covered in fake blood').
- Red helicopters bearing the inscription 'Novak Djoković' delivered three tonnes of humanitarian aid to Texas for flood victims (an AI-generated photograph).
- Jews 'had a good time' in the Nováky concentration camp because it supposedly featured a swimming pool.
- Fictitious and highly negative statements attributed to D. Trump's mother regarding her son.
- Hoaxes relating to a purported US attack on Iran (directed against NATO, or biased in favour of Russia).
- Unrelated photographs inserted into coverage of genuine protests in Romania (protests supporting a candidate banned by the court from participating in the elections; the author of this manipulation used a photograph of a massive crowd

from several years prior, presenting it in the context of the current protests, which in reality were sparsely attended).

- An Austrian-German disinformation online television channel attributed responsibility for the attempted assassination of Prime Minister R. Fico to NGOs and the political opposition. (In reality, a specialised court has provisionally sentenced a specific individual to 21 years in prison, with the verdict containing absolutely no evidence of accomplices or other third parties).
- The cybersecurity firm ESET was responsible for hacking the Slovak cadastral registry.
- Volkswagen is moving production out of Slovakia due to the energy crisis.
- Volkswagen is planning massive layoffs.
- Jeffrey Epstein admitted in leaked communications that he knew about the fall of the Slovak government in 2018, supposedly confirming a conspiracy theory. (He did indeed write similar words, but at a time when the government's resignation was already widely expected—specifically, on the very day it occurred).
- Hybrid influence: The Hungarian Ambassador to NATO, István Balogh, distributed atlases to his colleagues for Christmas in which Slovakia was depicted as part of Greater Hungary.

A parallel issue to the final point in the previous list was presented by a map of Slovakia produced by the publisher SLOVIA. While the Hungarian ambassador utilised disinformation to bolster the theory of Hungarian superiority over a neighbouring state, the Slovak map sought to artificially inflate national self-confidence using factual nonsense found in the accompanying texts alongside the map itself:

- According to the map, the Avars merely subjugated the Slavs and sent them to their deaths. In reality, this is an antiquated, one-sided view based on contemporary Frankish chronicles and 19th-century romanticism. Modern archaeology points to a symbiosis: the two groups lived together for centuries, intermingled, and adopted each other's fashions and weaponry. It was not simply a cruel master-and-suffering-slave dynamic, but often a mutually beneficial coexistence. The map purposefully opted for the simplistic narrative of a victimised people.
- Matthias Corvinus: a 'people's king'. The map actively employed this epithet. The reality: his reign was sustained by a crushing tax burden, necessitated primarily by his army. To the common man, he was no hero, but rather the reason for an empty pantry. The benevolent legend surrounding him only arose after his death.
- John Amos Comenius: national appropriation. The text explicitly claimed he had Slovak ancestors. Although this remains an unproven hypothesis, its inclusion here was entirely purposeful—a forced annexation of the European humanist to

artificially boost national self-confidence. Tellingly, the author failed to mention actual Slovak figures like Vavrinec Benedikt of Nedožery?

- Jozef Tiso: treading carefully. The text was the very definition of alibism. Although it acknowledged Slovakia as a satellite of the Third Reich, the phrase 'loved by some, condemned by others' was profoundly evasive. In an educational text, it is imperative to clearly name historical responsibility, not merely frame it as a controversy.
- Václav Havel: a double standard. While the map offered an alibistic relativisation for Tiso, the author felt compelled to append the label 'controversially perceived by citizens' to the democratic icon Václav Havel. This stark contrast clearly betrayed the author's underlying ideological orientation.
- Panel buildings: economic manipulation. The assertion that 'Getting an apartment back then [during socialism] was significantly easier' is sheer nonsense. Cheaper? Perhaps. Easier? Decades-long waiting lists and strict political vetting dictated the exact opposite. Claiming it was easy fuels the dangerous nostalgic optimism described elsewhere in this Report.
- Jozef Mind'áš: a fake 'Nobel Prize'. According to the map, he was a Nobel Prize laureate. The reality: the prize was awarded to the IPCC organisation as a whole; he was merely a member of the team. The Nobel Committee explicitly rejects such individual appropriation.

Disinformation was not confined solely to serious geopolitical domains, nor was it an invention of the 21st century. It has existed for as long as humanity itself and, through various perfidious tactics, has been eroding faith in facts and science for centuries. Highlighting the historicity, prevalence, and inherent danger of everyday hoaxes was precisely the objective of the educational series *Hoaxy starých mám* (Grandmothers' Hoaxes).

A regular contributor providing expert commentary on specific disinformation and manipulations was the physician MUDr. Milan Kulkovský, who addressed the following narratives throughout 2025:

- Breakfast is the most important meal of the day
- You must not drink water after eating fresh fruit
- Do not eat chocolate, or your teeth will decay
- Eat spinach to make you strong
- Drinking a glass of water with lemon on an empty stomach will make you lose weight
- Eating a lot of potatoes stimulates hair growth

- Do not read up close, or you will ruin your eyesight and need glasses
- Earwigs purposely crawl into our ears
- Beer foam makes women's breasts grow larger
- If you have an iron deficiency, stick iron nails into an apple before eating it
- Do not swallow chewing gum; it will remain in your stomach for years
- Have a shot of spirits to 'burn out the worm' (kill off the bacteria)
- Bacon can be used to reduce swelling



5 HATRED AS A PERSISTENT PROBLEM

Slovak student Simon Omaník was received at the Presidential Palace, alongside other students, during an award ceremony for winning a bronze medal at the Middle European Mathematical Olympiad. In order to express his political stance, he actively decided not to shake the hand of the President of the Slovak Republic, P. Pellegrini. Video footage of this moment subsequently went viral. Alongside supportive messages, a deluge of hateful posts was observed, including disinformation baselessly claiming that the student was homosexual, Ukrainian, or an agent of a foreign state power.

Similar manifestations of hatred remained a persistent problem within the Slovak information space throughout 2025. Thousands of social media accounts demonstrated the capacity to mobilise rapidly, attacking a broad spectrum of the population with whom they disagreed. Crucially, their aggressive attacks were no longer provoked and coordinated solely by anonymous administrators or virtual leaders; instead, they were frequently instigated by specific, identifiable individuals, often drawn from the ranks of high-level state officials. The polarisation of society—achieved by sowing hatred through the dissemination of disinformation—became a daily, normalised aspect of online coexistence for Slovaks in 2025. The *Hoaxy a podvody* team was also a regular target of these coordinated attacks.

5.1 ELIMINATION OF A HATEFUL ACCOUNT

In the spring of 2025, analysts from *Hoaxy a podvody* detected a new Telegram channel, the existence of which was subsequently reported by the Slovak media. For several weeks, the channel—entitled *Liberáli v tvojom mieste* (Liberals in Your Area)—published the photographs, residential addresses, and other sensitive personal data of civic activists, politicians, and various other individuals. The author actively placed these targets on what was described as a 'legitimately compiled name list of real internet aggressors, traitors, and true 'desolates'.

This form of doxxing and targeted harassment posed a severe security risk to the exposed individuals, who were subsequently targeted within the group's comments with credible threats of physical harm or death.

The *Hoaxy a podvody* analytical team successfully identified a user account that was among the very first to promote this new channel. It belonged to an individual operating under the pseudonym 'Michael Wallace'.

Employing further technological methods, the team revealed the identity of the person highly likely to be hiding behind this account: allegedly, it was Michal Medved', who had stood in the 2023 parliamentary elections on the candidate list of the extremist party *L'S Naše Slovensko*.

Matches observed between the photographs of 'M. Wallace' and M. Medved' included:

- identical eyes;
- identical photographic backgrounds;
- an identical hoodie;
- mutual cross-sharing of content between both user accounts.

Following the publication of these findings, the *Hoaxy a podvody* team was contacted directly by M. Medved', who provided his own explanation as to why he was allegedly not the administrator of the harmful channel. However, subsequent analysis revealed that he had deliberately provided misleading and manipulated information in a transparent attempt to shift responsibility onto a politically exposed person. His lie served as further, compelling proof that he was indeed the channel's administrator.

The public release of these uncovered findings caused the group's activities to grind to an immediate halt; no further individuals or their sensitive data were subsequently added to its feed.

Crucially, the team's public communication included an explicit request that supporters refrain from spreading hateful posts targeting those behind such forms of harassment.

Exposing the identities of individuals orchestrating similar channels can serve as a powerful deterrent against their future operations; therefore, such exposure should be a core component of the activities undertaken by organisations operating in the field of online security. Even if, conversely, publishing data about the authors somehow contributed to their further motivation, it remained unequivocally in the public interest that their true identities be known.

Similar analytical operations increasingly demanded enhanced personnel and logistical capacities. It was precisely for this reason that an independent project, *Légia Štefánik* (the Štefánik Legion), was established—the subject of the following subchapter.

5.2 ŠTEFÁNIK LEGION

In 2025, D. Púchovský (founder of the *Hoaxy a podvody* project) and social media expert J. Goda announced the establishment of the *Légia Štefánik* initiative, designed to mobilise tens to hundreds of volunteers. The objective of this new project—which operates entirely independently of *Hoaxy a podvody*—was, among other things, to build robust capacities for creative content production, its massive dissemination, and dedicated investigative work.

Analysts from *Hoaxy a podvody* participated in one of the initiative's inaugural activities, which aimed to uncover the identity of the individual hiding behind the social media account operating under the pseudonym 'Mr. Slovak'.

A network of similar accounts across various social platforms had long been disseminating politicised content and disinformation on a range of topics, reacting dynamically to current societal trends. Cunningly, alongside this harmful content, the network published entirely legitimate articles and posts aimed at highlighting Slovak culture, nature, historical personalities, and the like.

In this instance, as in many others, the operation relied on the **standard 'fishing' tactic** – the audience was provided with a predominant volume of legitimate content in order to naturally engage them and build trust. Followers who were 'caught' in this manner ultimately fell into a trap when the very same account slowly began feeding them concentrated doses of harmful content. At that stage, while they retained the option to unfollow the page and disengage, doing so was psychologically more difficult once they had been **drawn in**. If they remained, they inadvertently became regular consumers of the creator's manipulative production alongside the traditional content; ultimately, at the end of this grooming process, they were highly susceptible to succumbing to disinformation narratives.

The findings resulting from the collaboration between these two projects were subsequently published by the *Aktuality.sk* portal. The transcript of that article follows below.

EXPOSED: Who is hiding behind the disinformation project Mr. Slovak? From bizarre inventions to debts and Russian propaganda

The *Hoaxy a podvody* team, in cooperation with members of the *Légia Štefánik*, has revealed the identity of the man running one of Slovakia's most prominent disinformation pages: Mr. Slovak.

He is no covert political strategist or committed ideologue. Behind this web of accounts spreading pro-Russian propaganda, pandemic hoaxes, and fake patriotism stands Martin Krekáž (born Jobek) from western Slovakia.

His story is not fundamentally about politics. It is a chronicle of how an unsuccessful vendor of 'miracle' products pivoted to selling hate. Why? Simply because it is far more lucrative.

Misused Logos of State Institutions

To understand why Mr. Slovak generates over 100 posts a month (and that is merely on Facebook), we must examine his past. Martin Krekáž has a colourful history of internet ventures that promised the earth but almost invariably ended in fiasco.

He initially launched the brand *Mr. Reality*, later attempting to break through with the project *Dr. Vystrisa* (Dr. Straighten-Up). He marketed a flexible back brace, employing deceptive practices in the process. On the product's website, he listed fabricated endorsements from the Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAV) and the State Institute for Drug Control (ŠÚKL). Both institutions categorically denied any such cooperation. By the time this article went to press, the SAV logo had quietly vanished from the page. In the interest of fairness, it must be noted that Krekáž is no longer officially affiliated with the eponymous company, having been replaced by his business partner.

Krekáž's book—discussed later in this article—features an alleged statement from his former father-in-law, a medical doctor. The quote claims the *Dr. Vystrisa* brace is effective and that SAV scientists purportedly participated in its testing. Shortly before this article's publication, the SAV confirmed it had initiated legal proceedings regarding this false claim. It remains unclear whether Krekáž's former father-in-law actually made this statement or if his name was simply misappropriated.

Krekáž and his then-wife attempted to peddle almost anything: from luxury fragrances and face masks to various medical examinations, even promoting the alleged auction of a €96 million diamond in Bratislava. The result was consistently dismal: dysfunctional websites, mounting customer complaints regarding undelivered goods, and products of highly questionable quality.

This list of projects is far from final. Based merely on registered domains, there are likely dozens more, the comprehensive analysis of which would require several additional weeks.

Mounting Debts and Debt Collections

This brings us to the likely motive behind the current activities of the man better known as *Mr. Slovak*. The Krekážs left a trail of destruction in their wake: indebted companies, disputes with former employees, and public debts owed to the state. Although they successfully 'sank' numerous corporate entities, these debts eventually caught up with them personally.

All information presented in this article was obtained exclusively from open sources and official registers accessible to anyone with an internet connection.

Martin Krekáž is currently facing debt collection proceedings relating to arrears owed to a health insurance provider and various non-banking institutions.

His ex-wife is burdened by more than 20 active debt collections (involving creditors ranging from the Slovak Gas Industry [SPP] to the City of Bratislava). Although she holds shares in dozens of properties and plots of land, all are currently frozen by bailiffs.

Beyond their financial liabilities, Krekáž and his family are surrounded by a peculiar aura of 'sectarianism'. The *Hoaxy a podvody* team discovered videos in which their child recites incomprehensible words, alongside comments from the ex-wife replete with confused, esoteric statements. While the team possesses no confirmed evidence of their membership in a specific cult or sect, their online footprint is, to say the least, deeply disturbing.

A New Commodity: Hate and Fear

When the back braces and fabricated diamonds failed to yield profits, Martin Krekáž discovered a new 'product': human emotion.

The *Mr. Slovak* project (the irony of an ostensibly great Slovak patriot adopting an English moniker being quite glaring) operates on a simple principle. Krekáž grasped that hoaxes, aggression, attacks on experts, and exaggerated, performative patriotism reliably generate massive engagement.

These social media posts are interwoven with a mixture of political propaganda, disinformation spanning various topics (including the pandemic), and overt support for Russian narratives. There is no shortage of attacks directed at the Czech Republic regarding their shared history within a single state. Bizarrely, Vladimír Mečiar is depicted as a saint on a holy card. Life under socialism is portrayed in an exclusively positive light, whilst historical facts relating to the 1968 occupation are systematically questioned.

A 100% Slovak Bible at a Bargain Price

The Facebook page is complemented by the website *www.mrslovak.com*. It hosts numerous subpages, the common denominator being the 'First Slovak Folk Bible – 100% Slovak'. The author offers a printed version for €229, an electronic version on a 'gift' USB flash drive for €20, and an immediately accessible online version free of charge.

'The Slovak Nation' is listed as the author of this 'bible'. Its cover design is identical to the standard binding used for university students' final theses. According to the website, the author updates the online version of the 'bible' monthly with new additions.

From this extensive material, we learn, for instance, that 'Slovakia is a global country with 250,000 years of history'. The author also promotes his own newly designed Slovak flag, which he has dubbed the *ušľachtilá sLOVEnská vlajka Mr. Slovak* [the noble sLOVEnská (Slovak) flag Mr. Slovak].

Did He Violate Copyright Law?

Although the book's overall presentation appears graphically amateurish, the author cannot be denied the effort expended in compiling over 1,000 short texts detailing the history, prominent figures, and various interesting facts concerning Slovakia's past and present.

Here, however, any appreciation for his work ends. We discovered that several texts were lifted directly from other websites, entirely devoid of source citations within the book. Copyright issues may also arise regarding the photographic material; merely stating the source below a photograph is legally insufficient.

While the core of this 'bible' is relatively factual, the third quarter of the book introduces several bizarre elements highly characteristic of Martin Krekáž's past ventures.

He devotes an entire chapter to the proposed establishment of a 'Ministry of Happiness'. In another, he presents authentic portraits of historical Slovak figures, but with digitally altered mouths sporting unnatural, glowing white smiles.

'Limitovaná slovakovka' for Sale

In the section entitled *Mierová rezolúcia Referendového Vyhlásenia Človeka* (Peace Resolution of the Referendum Declaration of Man), he dismisses all referendums, protests, and petitions as ineffective, claiming that 'the state power ignores the demands of the bearer of power, i.e., the nation'.

The author of the 'bible' subsequently issues a strong condemnation of arms supplies and criticises pandemic-era measures—namely, mandatory testing and the compulsory wearing of masks. In the very same passage, he abruptly pivots to the topic of gender identity.

'We hereby inform the whole world that we are ready to take the management of our homeland into our own hands, exclusively in accordance with Natural and Kinship law,' he declares a few lines further down. This robust defence of neutrality as an antipode to NATO is complemented by explicit support for the now-defunct paramilitary association *Slovenskí branci* (Slovak Conscripts).

The profile of this 'bible' is finally rounded out by the promotion of various economic projects tied to M. Krekáž, including his back brace. Furthermore, there is no shortage of the cosmic-religious themes that he and his former wife previously pursued through other commercial ventures.

The 'bible' also pitches the idea of introducing a new currency, or an 'energetic quantum payment method'—specifically, banknotes bearing the insignia of the Mr. Slovak project. Krekáž appears to have an affinity for banknotes; a close associate of his is a dedicated collector. On the website for the *Dr. Vystrisa* project, Krekáž sells a 'unique Slovak product – a commemorative "slovakovka" – Vystri sa!®' for nearly five euros.

Just Another Hustle

Although the *Hoaxy a podvody* team initially hypothesised that the *Mr. Slovak* project might be affiliated with a broader political-communications entity, no evidence supports this. It is highly probable that a purely financial motivation underpins his daily, persistent, and determined efforts.

According to our conclusions, Martin Krekáž operates as a merchant on two distinct levels. On the first level, he trades in information. Like many influencers, politicians, and celebrities, he grasped the allure of spreading hoaxes and propaganda—the inherent viral attractiveness of harmful content. Aggression, attacks on international communities, exaggerated patriotism, the exaltation of Slovaks, questioning elites and experts, and the manipulation of emotions—these constitute the primary ingredients of his online activities, earning him tens of thousands of followers and daily engagement.

This brings us to the second level. He addresses the masses on the first level solely to funnel them to the second, more crucial tier: the point of sale. This is where the actual business transpires—the peddling of various, often dubious, goods. The fulfilment of the primary, and indeed sole, objective of the Mr. Slovak project is the generation of financial profit.

Martin Krekáž is no crusader for the truth. He is an information merchant who has merely swapped the sale of low-quality goods for the peddling of dangerous manipulations. The critical difference is that while a faulty medical brace may fail an individual, the systematic dissemination of disinformation and the deliberate polarisation of society ultimately harms us all.

6 STRATCOM FOR THE PROFESSIONAL PUBLIC

As part of its broader activities, the *Hoaxy a podvody* team dedicated itself to publishing professional materials, studies, recommendations, and expert insights in the field of strategic communication. The objective was to exert an educational impact on both the general and the professional public. The following two contributions serve as prime examples of this form of stratcom.

Yuri Bezmenov, the late former KGB propaganda agent, elucidated the **Kremlin's methodology for hybrid operations** in 1984 after defecting to Canada. The *Hoaxy a podvody* team reported on his views, contextualising them within the contemporary development of events in Slovakia:

1. **Demoralization** – the inability of the populace to perceive factual information and truth.
2. **Destabilization** – particularly concerning the economy, international relations, and the security apparatus.
3. **Crisis** – an event triggering a violent shift in state power and the economy.
4. **Normalization** – the installation of a government led by an authoritarian who promises a 'paradise on earth' whilst travelling to Moscow to curry favour with murderers (all while cultivating the illusion that the situation remains under control).

The **RESIST 3** framework, developed by Dr James Pamment, director of the Psychological Defence Research Institute at Lund University, offered a structured approach for both government communicators and citizens to build resilience against information threats:

1. **Recognise:** The identification and assessment of information threats. This included understanding the distinction between misinformation (false information shared without the intent to mislead), malinformation (the distortion of true information with the intent to mislead), and disinformation. Emphasis was placed on recognising narratives and suspicious behaviour (e.g., coordinated activity or automation).
2. **Early warning:** Monitoring risks to protect key priorities and audiences. This involved implementing digital monitoring and utilising risk assessments to anticipate threats before they could proliferate.
3. **Situational insight:** Transforming collected data into practical and actionable insights to enable a rapid response. The goal was to provide clear, concise briefings (answering the 'So what?') for senior executives and policy advisors.

4. **Impact analysis:** Prioritising and escalating threats based on an assessment of their potential impact. This facilitated determining whether a response was even necessary and helped classify the threat (e.g., distinguishing between normal debate, harmful speech, or foreign interference).
5. **Strategic communications:** Implementing effective communication strategies. This encompassed proactive responses (such as information campaigns to raise public awareness) alongside reactive responses (such as debunking disinformation or offering a counter-narrative).
6. **Tracking effectiveness:** Evaluating communications and processes to drive continuous improvement. This entailed not merely measuring the success of a campaign, but also assessing internal processes (e.g., speed of response, team collaboration) to ensure the organisation could effectively learn from past incidents.



7 INTERNATIONAL FORUM STRATCOM UNDER PRESSURE 2025

On 5–6 November 2025, the civic association *Hoaxy a podvody* organised its inaugural international forum, STRATCOM UNDER PRESSURE 2025, in Bratislava. Following the relocation of the Globsec Forum to Prague, this marked the first security-focused event of such a large scale to be subsequently hosted in Slovakia.

In total, the event was attended by over 100 guests from 30 European countries and Canada. Attendees included representatives of international organisations, ambassadors and members of diplomatic missions, political representatives, former government ministers, and former members of the security forces, alongside various other experts.

Beyond core security issues, the discussions were dominated by topics such as strategic communication, global geopolitical developments, interference in democratic electoral processes, digital security, the fight against disinformation and Russian propaganda, the Russian war in Ukraine, social media, the European Union, and the future trajectory of strategic communication in Slovakia.

Although this was the inaugural edition of the *Hoaxy a podvody* project's forum, participant feedback indicated that the event exceeded its organisers' expectations in terms of scale, programme, and logistical execution. Consequently, there are firm plans to host a follow-up event in November 2026.

Overview of discussion panels, moderators, and speakers:

Opening speeches

David Púchovský – founder of *Hoaxy a podvody*; Karen Mollica – Ambassador of Canada to Slovakia

Keynote speech

Miroslav Wlachovský – former Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic

I. Politics as a Rudimentary Element of StratCom and Countering Disinformation

Juraj Krúpa – Member of Parliament; Jaroslav Nad' – former Minister of Defence of the Slovak Republic; Róbert Ondrejcsák – former State Secretary of the Ministry

of Defence of the Slovak Republic (moderator: Jana Krescanko Dibáková – *Denník SME*)

II. StratCom and Disinformation Channels as a New Mainstream

Vladimír Šnidl – *Denník N*; Domicián Zahorjan – founder of the NEST Institute, former analyst at the Centre for Combating Hybrid Threats; Andrea Michalcová – Director of the Centre for an Informed Society (moderator: Samuel Marec – publicist)

III. Foreign Interference in Elections

Martin Klus – former State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic; Thomas Kurz – Ambassador of Germany to Slovakia; Jennifer Irish – Director of the Integrity Lab at the University of Ottawa (moderator: Martin Hodás – *Denník SME*)

IV. Digital and Cyber Security of State vis a vis Disinformation

Samuel Migal' – Minister of Investments, Regional Development and Information of the Slovak Republic; Irena Bihariová – Member of Parliament; Peter Terem – Vice-Rector, Matej Bel University (moderator: Mario Nicolini – Ambrella)

V. Military Aspects of StratCom: What We Did (Not) Learn from Russian Aggression in Ukraine?

Pavel Macko – former Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic; Martin Sklenár – Globsec, former Minister of Defence of the Slovak Republic; Dominik P. Jankowski – Director of the Economics and Security Committee at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (moderator: Victor Breiner – Director of Infosecurity.sk)

VI. Technological Aspects of StratCom and Fighting Disinformation

Mária Bieliková – Director of the Kempelen Institute of Intelligent Technologies; Peter Košinár – Senior Malware Researcher, ESET; Tomáš Kriššák – Gerulata Technologies (moderator: Jakub Goda – social media expert)

VII. Enemy at the Gates: Containing Russians

Alexander Duleba – SFPA; Anders Lindren – Deputy Ambassador of Sweden to Slovakia and Austria; Pasi Tuominen – Ambassador of Finland to Slovakia and Czechia (moderator: Pavol Demeš – analyst)

VIII. Digital Services Act: The EU's Active Defense?

Unnamed expert in legislation and regulation; Veronika Ostrihoňová – Member of the European Parliament; Andrew Lee – Vice President of Government Affairs, ESET

IX. StratCom 2.0. in Slovakia: The Way Forward

Peter Köles – former Head of the Strategic Communication Department at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs; Domicián Zahorjan – founder of the NEST Institute, former analyst at the Centre for Combating Hybrid Threats; Victor Breiner – Director of Infosecurity.sk, former advisor to the Minister of Defence (moderator: David Púchovský – founder of Hoaxy a podvody, former member of the Slovak Police Force in the field of strategic communication)

Further information about the event was published on the dedicated forum website, www.stratcomunderpressure.com, and in a separate publication. In addition to a detailed overview of all discussion panels, this publication provided an analysis focusing on five key findings and significant statements made by the participants. If you are interested in acquiring this publication, you may send an email to info@hoaxya-podvody.sk. Video recordings of selected discussion panels are available on the *Hoaxy a podvody* YouTube channel and on Spotify.

Partners of STRATCOM UNDER PRESSURE 2025: ESET, Embassy of Canada to Slovakia, SHAPE Production, AudiologicPRO and INFINITY Reklama.

8 TRIP TO UKRAINE

In July 2025, representatives of the civic association *Hoaxy a podvody* undertook a working trip across Ukraine. Its primary objective was the production of audiovisual and photographic materials aimed at presenting factual accounts of the Russian war to the Slovak audience, alongside forging international cooperation agreements with local state institutions and non-governmental organisations.

The Open Society Foundation contributed significantly to the financial backing of the trip. The core elements of the programme were facilitated by the Embassy of Ukraine in the Slovak Republic.

During the trip, the *Hoaxy a podvody* team recorded—and in the subsequent months processed—seven interviews exploring topics such as the Russian war, strategic communication, disinformation, propaganda, defence capabilities, and contextual developments from a Slovak perspective. These interviews featured the following respondents:

- Hlib Fischenko, security analyst
- Dmytro Krasnianskyi, war veteran
- Liudmyla Dolhonovska, former advisor to General Zaluzhnyi
- Stanislav Zhelikhovskyi, political scientist
- Yurii Savchuk, Director of the War Museum
- Peter Krenický, Slovak priest serving in western Ukraine (formerly stationed in Melitopol)
- Mykola Bielieskov, military and security analyst

The entire trip was extensively documented and continuously broadcast via video reportages, photographs, and written updates across multiple posts on the project's social media accounts.

On the final day of their stay in Kyiv, a notable incident occurred at a local café. While the team was recording an interview with one of the respondents, an elderly woman on the café's terrace was detained by plainclothes operatives from the Ukrainian intelligence and security services. Shortly thereafter, uniformed police officers and bomb disposal experts arrived at the scene.

As Ukrainian institutions¹³ and media later reported, the woman had brought an explosive device to the café, allegedly provided to her by agents cooperating with the Russian Federation. Operating under a cover story, these agents posed as

¹³ <https://t.me/SBUkr/15407>

Ukrainians and instructed her to deliver an ‘unspecified package’ to that specific café. This represents a widespread tactic employed by Russian intelligence services to exploit unwitting civilians. In this instance, the plot was uncovered in time, and a potential tragedy was averted.

As part of the trip’s official agenda, representatives of the civic association *Hoaxy a podvody* met with officials from the **Centre for Strategic Communication** (operating under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine), the **Centre for Countering Disinformation** (under the National Security and Defence Council), and the War Museum. They agreed to cooperate in countering Russian propaganda in both Ukraine and Slovakia through various methods, including systematic information exchange and mutual educational initiatives. To this end, a formal memorandum of cooperation was signed between the *Hoaxy a podvody* project and the **Institute for European Security Studies**.

One of the initial fruits of this international cooperation was the preparation of a Slovak translation of the publication *Ruscism Is...* (originally published by the Centre for Strategic Communication) slated for subsequent distribution to the Slovak public in 2026.



9 LECTURING ACTIVITIES

Over the course of 2025, the civic association *Hoaxy a podvody* saw increased interest in its lecturing activities from schools, despite a continuous disinformation and politicised campaign.

Seven of the project’s lecturers gave presentations to 3,141 students and their teachers across 49 primary, secondary, and higher education institutions in 25 Slovak cities. A total of 95 free lectures were delivered to schools, averaging more than two lectures per week during the academic year.

The lectures and workshops focused on education regarding social media, internet addiction, cyberbullying, the mimicking of life-threatening trends, recognising false information, and related topics. The theoretical components were supplemented with interactive exercises. A portion of these was inspired by educational modules the lecturers had encountered during their own training programmes.

In addition to its school-based activities, project members organised several discussions for the general public. Furthermore, in cooperation with the Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatisation of the SR, they delivered lectures on hoaxes and scams to hundreds of seniors across nine Slovak cities as part of the *Dni seniorov* (Seniors’ Days) event (Roadshow 2025 – Digital Skills Festival).¹⁴

If you are interested in organising such lectures, please contact the civic association *Hoaxy a podvody* via miroslav@hoaxyapodvody.sk or info@hoaxyapodvody.sk.

9.1 DISINFORMATION CAMPAIGN

At the end of June 2025, a disinformation campaign was launched against the civic association and its school lecturing activities. Jana Jányová—a politically active member of the *Smer-SSD* party who was working at the Ministry of Defence of the SR at the time—made the following claims in a video posted to her social media accounts: ‘Activist David Púchovský, now the face of the progressive “queer” agenda and an assistant to MP Jaroslav Spišiak of Progressive Slovakia, visits schools and talks to children about so-called queer identities and non-binary gender under the guise of tolerance [...]. Without parental consent. Without discussion. Something immoral.’

A few days later, headteachers and staff from several schools contacted the *Hoaxy a podvody* team, forwarding an official directive from the Regional Office of School Administration. The purported aim of this directive was to investigate the civic association’s lecturing activities.

¹⁴ <https://www.digitalniseniori.gov.sk/o-projekte/roadshow-2025/>

During the same period, the Minister of Education, Tomáš Drucker, convened a press conference to push back against disinformation reports that created the impression of civic associations operating uncontrollably on school grounds. The civic association *Hoaxy a podvody* publicly supported and aligned itself with the Minister's statement, as it had never acted improperly and had consistently complied with the Education Act.

In August 2025, the Ministry of Education clarified in an official response that the **subject of the announced inspection was never the activities of the *Hoaxy a podvody* project itself**. Rather, it aimed to determine whether there had been any misconduct by teachers, who are obliged under the Education Act to secure parental consent for students' participation in lectures provided by third parties, and to verify whether the lecture topics aligned with the official curriculum.

The project's lecturers were always assured by the teachers that the students possessed the necessary consent; in a small minority of cases where consent was lacking, those students simply did not attend the lectures. The ministry ultimately confirmed that the inspection uncovered no misconduct: **'[...] 3,827 schools in all regions of Slovakia were approached. The Regional Offices of School Administration found no violations of the law during the inspections conducted. Control activities will continue with the aim of maintaining the political, ideological, and religious neutrality of the educational process.'**

In September 2025, the project's founder, D. Púchovský, convened a press conference to present the aforementioned facts and the findings of the Ministry of Education. During the briefing, he strongly refuted the completely unfounded claims made by J. Jányová, which were being continuously amplified by disinformation media. For example, *Hlavné správy* reported on the supposed 'spread of anti-government propaganda' during the project's school lectures. The Ministry of Education itself also publicly objected to the content of this article on its Facebook page.¹⁵

To further bolster transparency, the civic association subsequently published a recording of D. Púchovský's lecture on its YouTube channel, later releasing a condensed version as well. This step also aimed to help satisfy the high demand from schools for expert lectures in this field.

Despite these transparent steps, J. Jányová continued to publish disinformation regarding the civic association's school activities; in one instance, this even escalated into a personal attack against the mother of the project's founder. **Consequently, the civic association and D. Púchovský have initiated legal action.**

¹⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/hoaxyapodvody/posts/pfbid031QReZsfx1kECbogGunwDtpsQu4WQc1qcX3d4UyWDg-D4iC6yuDFk3x4262KTueZxJl>

Due to relentless pressure from the disinformation scene, Minister of Education T. Drucker repeatedly addressed the topic, carefully explaining the conditions under which external entities could conduct lectures in schools. **However, such efforts fell on deaf ears within that segment of society—lacking their trust, he inevitably became a target of disinformation and hate speech himself.** His consistent stances and professional, non-aggressive communication style amidst a tense atmosphere of socio-political pressure represented a rare positive phenomenon in Slovakia at the time.

The events of 2025 served as stark evidence of politicised actions and coordinated attacks against civil society, orchestrated by politically prominent figures and their aligned disinformation media. The fabrication of hoaxes and the construction of a parallel reality were exported into a disinformation network comprising various so-called media outlets, groups, and individual accounts. These actors generated fresh disinformation, incited hatred, and crucially, targeted specific individuals with threats of physical harm or death. As noted in the section discussing the parallel reality of Russian hoaxes, these actors experienced inevitable clashes with factual reality—which they neither accepted nor understood—yet they persisted in their activities regardless.

In sharp contrast to the transparent and professional activities of the *Hoaxy a podvody* project stood the **lectures delivered by dubious societies and associations**, which the project proactively sought to expose. One such example was the civic association *Obroda Slovanov* (Revival of the Slavs), which offered school lectures ostensibly aimed at promoting 'Slavic ideas, traditions, and ideals'. This particular association dedicated itself to organising lectures, seminars, and releasing publications that were frequently critical of Western civilisation, democracy, and the Vatican.

In another instance, the ***Brat za brata*** movement facilitated a lecture on the Second World War at a Czech primary school in Nový Jičín. The lecture was not delivered by a direct member of the group, but rather by Rostislav Moščák—a collaborator from their partner organisation, *Klub vojenskej histórie Tatry Spišské Bystré*. During the session, students were given the opportunity to examine replicas of military uniforms and weaponry. Concurrently, a 19-point outline of the lecture was published, which conspicuously omitted key historical events such as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. There was similarly no mention of the Holodomor, the brutal oppression of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic's population, or the Soviet gulags.

Thirdly, the *Hoaxy a podvody* project obtained intelligence indicating that a former primary school teacher in Bratislava had been **disseminating political propaganda** among fourth-grade students. Specifically, this involved effusive praise directed at Gustáv Husák, the former Czechoslovak president and figurehead of the communist dictatorship. According to one parent, the teacher was instructing the children about Husák even during periods strictly designated for subjects like maths, and had prominently hung a portrait of Husák on the classroom wall.

10 PODCAST

The first twelve-part series of the *Hoaxy a podvody* podcast, hosted by *Denník SME* journalist and former television presenter Jana Krescanko Dibáková, continued with nine episodes in the first half of 2025. The interviews were recorded at the Shape podcast studio in Bratislava, featuring the following topics and guests:

Who is the Face of Russian Propaganda in Slovakia?

- Alexander Duleba, political scientist and analyst
- Filipp Sedov, a Russian living in Slovakia, lecturer, and civic activist

How Slovakia is (Not) Managing the Fight Against Disinformation?

- Otakar Foltýn, then-Coordinator of Strategic Communication for the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic
- Daniel Milo, former Director of the Centre for Combating Hybrid Threats

Hybrid Threats from the Perspective of the European Union and NATO

- Pavel Macko, former Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic
- Vladimír Šucha, former Head of the European Commission Representation in Slovakia

The World After Trump's Ascent: Will Disinformation Destroy Us?

- Miroslav Wlachovský, former Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic
- Branislav Ondrášik, publicist

On the World of Slovak Disinformation Media

- Lukáš Diko, Editor-in-Chief of the Ján Kuciak Investigative Centre
- Martin Hodás, journalist at *Denník SME*

A Discussion on Hatred, Bullying, and the Fight Against Them

- Kristína Tormová, actress
- Zuzana Juránková, supervisor for youth assistance (*IPčko*)

How Hoaxes are Destroying Slovakia

- Domicián Zahorjan and Patrik Haburaj, former analysts at the Centre for Combating Hybrid Threats, Institute for New Security Threats – NEST Institute

Why We Believed in Hoaxes and How We Got Out of It?

- Juraj and Marek, respondents from two different generations who formerly believed in hoaxes

How to Survive the Era of Hatred and Hoaxes

- Ľubomír Daňko, former Director of the National Criminal Agency (NAKA), analyst for the *Nadácia Zastavme korupciu* (Stop Corruption Foundation)
- Jakub Goda, social media expert

As part of the collaboration with the *Denník SME* journalist, 14 'reels' videos were produced, rapidly outlining the hoaxes of the week spreading during that period. Additionally, four live broadcasts featuring the project's founder, D. Púchovský, were aired, designed to provide a broader perspective on current events within the Slovak information space.

Outside of the primary series, two special podcasts hosted by D. Púchovský featuring athletes were recorded: the first with Czech ice hockey goaltending legend Dominik Hašek on the topic **'Why are Russian athletes responsible for the killing of Ukrainians?'** and the second with Slovak athlete Matej Tóth, titled **'Suddenly, some have become patriots.'**

The autograph acquired from D. Hašek was offered by the *Hoaxy a podvody* project in an auction for its social media followers. It was ultimately secured by Slovak actor and presenter Juraj Bača for the sum of €250. He donated the entire auctioned amount to the fundraising efforts of the *Mier Ukrajine* (Peace for Ukraine) initiative and other organisations dedicated to the defensive support of the Ukrainian army—a strict prerequisite for participating in the auction.

The second series of the *Hoaxy a podvody* podcast launched during the pre-Christmas period of 2025. The host was D. Púchovský, who invited psychologist Kristína Blažeková and *Denník N* journalist Vladimír Šnidl to the inaugural episode titled **'How to Survive Christmas Without Hoaxes?'**. The podcast seamlessly continued with subsequent episodes into the following year.

11 FRAUDS AND SCAMS

The *Hoaxy a podvody* project continued its preventive and educational activities regarding online scams throughout 2025. Despite regular public communications—including warnings from the Police Force—successful scams continued to occur, as widely reported by the media.

Within the online environment, the most prevalent techniques included **spoofing** (the falsification of caller ID), **vishing** (fraudulent voice calls) and **phishing** (the illicit acquisition of sensitive information). Alongside these conventional methods, a discernible **surge in the exploitation of artificial intelligence (AI)** was observed. AI provided malicious actors with versatile and diverse capabilities for generating fake images, videos, or voice clones to advance their fraudulent objectives. Consequently, AI significantly bolstered the perceived authenticity of such content, thereby obfuscating its fundamentally deceptive nature.

In addition to its online communication, the *Hoaxy a podvody* project conducted lecturing initiatives aimed at protecting the elderly demographic from false information and scams—a subject thoroughly detailed in a separate chapter of this Report.

11.1 THE MISUSE OF INSTITUTIONS AND PRIVATE CORPORATIONS

A specific type of scam involved the **collection of fictitious fines** on behalf of government agencies. The demands, sent via text message, concerned alleged penalties for exceeding the speed limit or failing to pay electricity bills, for example. Their common feature was an attached hyperlink redirecting users to a fraudulent form, where the potential victim was prompted to enter sensitive information—most often relating to a credit or debit card. The messages also employed coercive language designed to create a false sense of urgency, causing the recipient to feel anxious and compelled to act immediately.

In addition to text messages, similar fraudulent methods were deployed via email. For example, scammers **posed as employees** of the General Health Insurance Company (*Všeobecná zdravotná poisťovňa*). They informed clients of an alleged **entitlement to a special financial reimbursement** of up to €500. Here, too, the goal was not to disburse money, but to fraudulently extract it. In other cases, a slightly less obvious scam targeted the mandatory update of an insured person's personal data; what appeared to be an 'innocent' form concealed a field in the subsequent step explicitly designed to extract credit card information.

In the case of email-based scams, the risk to potential victims was arguably higher: the messages were structured more professionally and, by their very nature, offered broader possibilities, particularly regarding graphic design. Scammers were able to produce messages that were graphically identical—a 1:1 replica—to the official communications of real institutions, such as banks.

Fraudulent emails compiled in this way harboured a greater potential to deceive their recipients than **SMS messages** alone. However, the tactical advantage of text messages lay in their direct addressability, their more personal nature, the near-guarantee of immediate delivery and reading, and the total lack of risk of ending up in a spam folder. Slovak banking institutions regularly issued warnings about such fraudulent schemes, including via push notifications within their official mobile apps.

Scammers employed the same methodology when posing as Meta and other major tech companies. In Meta's case, the emails were designed to **harvest login credentials** for user accounts. One common pretext was an alleged copyright infringement involving the publication of certain posts—a highly plausible scenario for many fan pages or news portals. This perceived plausibility proportionally increased the likelihood of a user clicking on the malicious content and subsequently entering their login credentials into a form closely resembling Facebook's genuine login page.

The most effective defence was the **thorough verification of the phone numbers and email addresses** from which such messages were sent. In cases of ongoing uncertainty, recipients were advised to contact the official hotlines of the institutions supposedly reaching out to them. **This tried-and-tested method of utilising official hotlines was strongly recommended by the Hoaxy a podvody project as the most robust defence.**

The victims of these spoofing and impersonation scams were not limited to government institutions and private companies; they also included specific private individuals. In deepfake videos, Prime Minister R. Fico was depicted announcing the dispatch of emails regarding the deactivation of Facebook user accounts; President P. Pellegrini allegedly promoted a new investment opportunity; and Finance Minister Ladislav Kamenický ostensibly discussed daily earnings of up to €800. Other types of fabricated content promoted a new form of financial assistance for retirees requiring a 'special form', or new types of gambling purportedly endorsed by well-known influencers. **The exploitation of these public figures** provided scammers with the much-desired authenticity and credibility, leveraging a specific, socially recognised face as the bearer of the fraudulent message.

11.2 THE SCAM IS IN THE DETAILS

Unfortunately, some scams involved significantly more elaborate preparation. For example, the official corporate email domain @microsoft.com was subtly altered by scammers: instead of the letter 'm', they used the letters 'r' and 'n' placed side by side, mimicking the official address in the form of @rnmicrosoft.com. A potential victim could easily overlook this minute detail, even when actively checking the sender's email address.

A similar *modus operandi* was observed in the case of Slovak websites. At the time the public warning was issued, these counterfeit domains were not yet active; they had been preemptively identified through an independent investigation by the **Hoaxy a podvody** team:

- flnancnasprava.sk – the substitution of the letter 'l' for the letter 'i'
- financnasqrava.sk – the substitution of the letter 'q' for the letter 'p'
- aktualit.sk/aktualiti.sk/aktualty.sk – an orchestrated attempt to mimic a prominent news portal

11.3 THE PROLIFERATION OF FRAUDULENT PHONE CALLS

Fraudulent phone calls remained one of the most prevalent forms of fraud; according to the tel-zoznam.sk portal, they reached an all-time high, increasing by 522% over the course of the year. A positive development, however, was the reported neutralisation and dismantling of fraudulent call centres across Europe—an outcome far less frequently observed in Asian or African jurisdictions.

A common tactic employed in scam calls was the **'police officer'** scam. The caller would pose as a member of the police force, informing the recipient that they had fallen victim to a scam—for example, that their identity had been compromised to take out a fraudulent loan. Frightened by this prospect, the victim was more likely to cooperate, typically by transferring their remaining funds to a 'safe account' for the ostensible purpose of 'protecting' them. In reality, this was the scammer's account, and the fictitious victim eventually became a very real one.

The police officer persona was also introduced as a coercive threat in civilian extortion scenarios. For example, following intimate online communication between a male victim and a female scammer, the man would shortly be contacted by another person (or the same individual using a different voice). This caller would claim that the female was a minor and that, as her legal guardian, they were reporting the matter to the authorities. The phone was then passed to a fake police officer, who confirmed the

'authenticity' of the case. Ultimately, this fake officer offered the victim the option to pay a 'fine' to ensure the case would not be officially pursued.

This police scam was also perpetrated via fraudulent emails purportedly signed by the 'police chief'. The targeted victims were abruptly accused of committing a serious crime, such as viewing child pornography.

To convince victims of the police narrative's authenticity, scammers sent forged police badges or images of stolen or lost ID cards belonging to real people—including deceased individuals.

To protect oneself against 'police scams', three key pieces of advice were repeatedly emphasised: the police will never ask you for money; the police will never send you a photograph of their badge; and the police will never instruct you to hand anything over to a third party. This final piece of advice pertained to scams that originated in the virtual or telephone sphere but ultimately crossed into the real world, culminating in the victim handing over cash to a specific courier or leaving it at a designated drop-off location.

Fraudulent calls were also frequently made by individuals posing as investment advisors, cryptocurrency experts, or bank employees. These scammers claimed to be 'saving accounts and investments', provided false financial advice, or demanded the payment of exorbitant fees. This scenario was merely one of many wherein victims were coerced into installing remote-control applications on their phones or computers. This illicit software allowed funds to be stolen outright, without the victim ever voluntarily disclosing their login credentials.

11.4 SCAMMERS KEPT UP WITH THE TIMES

Scammers proved highly resourceful, continually adapting to new trends and technologies. This adaptability is evidenced by the following three cases documented by the *Hoaxy a podvody* team in 2025.

In the first case, a message was sent via WhatsApp from a known contact whose account was already under the scammer's control. This compromised account asked an acquaintance to **vote in a poll to ostensibly support their child**. Because such messages mimic real-life scenarios, their perceived credibility was high. After voting in the fictitious poll, the victim clicked a button that authorised their phone number via WhatsApp, thereby unwittingly granting the scammer full access to their own account. The scammer then immediately began contacting the victim's friends on their behalf, typically requesting urgent financial loans.

The second case involved a trend of **heartbreaking stories** featuring alleged former employees of specific retail companies (such as *dm* and *Douglas*, both of which

were exploited in this manner). These fictitious employees claimed their employers had treated them abysmally and fired them without cause. Seeking 'revenge', they purportedly decided to reveal corporate secrets to the public in the form of incredible deals—for instance, offering high-quality cosmetics at nominal prices via secret websites supposedly known only to staff. Ultimately, these offers were entirely fraudulent.

In the third case, private Facebook accounts were **hijacked and renamed to 'META IA' using the following methodology**. The *Hoaxy a podvody* team documented this process and provided the corresponding advice on how to respond:

1. You will receive a direct message from a profile named 'Meta IA'. It claims that your account has violated community rules and will be permanently blocked within 24 hours unless you verify your identity via an attached hyperlink.
2. The link redirects you to a convincing fake page that prompts you for your Facebook login credentials.
3. If you enter your login credentials on this page, the scammer instantly harvests them.
4. They will subsequently change your profile name (to 'META IA') and alter your profile picture.
5. If they also change your password, you will be locked out of your account, at which point they will begin sending fraudulent messages to your entire contact list.
6. Believing they are being contacted by Meta's official customer support, your contacts may also fall for the scam and consequently lose their own accounts.
7. In some instances, the scammer will purposefully not change your password immediately. Instead, they will quietly spy on you without your knowledge—monitoring your private communications, extracting other sensitive data, hijacking your associated business pages, or running fraudulent advertisements using your linked payment methods.
8. It is crucial to remember that in many cases, the 'Meta IA' account messaging you is simply the hacked profile of one of your existing friends.
9. If you suspect your Facebook account has been compromised, you must immediately use the official reporting form at: <http://facebook.com/hacked>.

11.5 OTHER SCAM TACTICS IN THE ONLINE SPACE

- Fraudulent job offers abroad sent via WhatsApp.
- Fraudulent offers of lucrative earnings (€40–60 per hour ostensibly for the delivery company *Packeta*—misappropriating the company's brand), and promises

of high remuneration for clicks, likes, or reviews on social media. Alternatively, schemes offering real but nominal initial pay that quickly transitions into a financial loss, fostering a compulsive need to recoup the funds—a recovery that never materialises.

- Fake fundraisers soliciting donations for non-existent individuals (utilising AI-generated photographs).
- Fake fundraisers exploiting real people in need (diverting funds via altered bank account numbers).
- Fake messages regarding the purported inheritance of a large fortune from abroad.
- Fraudulent sales offering products at suspiciously low prices.
- Fraudulent guides promising free shopping (e.g., on *Shein*, executed via AI-generated voice scams).
- Fraudulent clearance sales of 'bankrupt stores' (promoted using AI-generated images and photographs).
- The promise of free Spotify streaming via a 'special' app (which ultimately crashes Android phones; the cybersecurity firm ESET has previously issued warnings regarding this).
- Fraudulent product reviews for items that will either never be shipped or are of abysmally poor quality (employing fake AI-generated reviewers or influencers).
- Fraudulent real estate advertisements for sale or rent (where the primary goal is to extract money, such as a fictitious reservation fee).
- Fraudulent contests for non-existent prizes ('Leave a comment, you could win a car'—a scam that notably exploited the car manufacturer *Škoda*).

11.6 HOW TO AVOID FALLING FOR SCAMS

- Do not be deceived by unusually attractive job offers, product sales, or contests boasting exaggerated prizes from unverified or fraudulent companies.
- Enable two-factor authentication (2FA) for all applications and websites where available, or utilise a reputable third-party authenticator app.
- Utilise randomly generated passwords via verified password managers; never reuse the same password across multiple accounts.
- Check directly within the applications to see which devices are currently logged in, and immediately terminate sessions on any unrecognised devices.

- Never forward security, login, or any other verification codes delivered to your mobile phone or email inbox to anyone.
- Rigorously verify the sender's email address on any payment requests.
- Verify the URLs of online stores (ensuring the presence of 'https' and cross-referencing for genuine independent reviews).
- Do not enter your debit or credit card information anywhere except through the secure payment gateways of verified merchants.
- If in doubt, do not hesitate to contact the police, the postal service, the courier company, or any other institution supposedly involved to independently verify the information.
- If fraud has occurred, report it to the police immediately, contact your bank, and alert the technical support team of the relevant service provider.
- Proactively discuss online scams and security practices with family members and within your local community.



12 OTHER ACTIVITIES

The year 2025 yielded several dozen bilateral meetings for the *Hoaxy a podvody* team at both the national and international levels, alongside their participation in multiple domestic and foreign events within the fields of security and strategic communication.

On a weekly basis, project members proactively focused not only on the project's development and future trajectory but also established official partnerships and collaborations. Furthermore, they worked to enhance their own skill sets, whether through direct participation in specialised training or by drawing inspiration from successful organisations and systematically exchanging information.

The following overview is not an exhaustive catalogue of all project activities in this area.

GLOBSEC

Representatives of the civic association participated in the Globsec Forum 2025 in Prague. There, parallel to bilateral international negotiations, they curated online coverage of discussion panels focused on security and strategic communication for their social media audience.

In addition to the forum, project representatives were invited to other events organised by Globsec, such as expert discussions. One of these focused specifically on the threat of foreign attempts to interfere in future democratic elections in Slovakia.

INTERNATIONAL EVENTS IN RIGA

Among the project's traditional activities was participation in two international events in Riga, Latvia—the Riga Stratcom Dialogue and Digital Frontlines—which addressed topics such as artificial intelligence, European unity, and the fight against fear. In addition to inspiring discussions, project representatives established valuable international contacts. Notably, these were forums previously attended on a regular basis by representatives of Slovak state institutions.

POHODA FESTIVAL

The *Hoaxy a podvody* project presented its work at a festival for the first time. This was not just any festival, but Slovakia's largest: the *Pohoda Festival*, where the project hosted a dedicated booth for visitors throughout the entire three-day event.

Festival-goers could contribute to their own collection of hoaxes, arrange free lectures for schools, take home interesting merchandise and educational materials, obtain advice on how to combat misinformation and communicate with its victims, participate in contests, or sign up for the project's newsletter.

Combining culture and entertainment with the serious topic of countering hoaxes generated high visitor interest in the project's activities. This was equally true for the public discussion moderated by D. Púchovský, featuring guests J. Goda (social media expert), Katarína Klingová (Globsec), and V. Šnidl (Denník N). Consequently, participation in similar events is firmly planned for the future.

MUNICH SECURITY CONFERENCE (LEADERSHIP PROGRAM)

The *Hoaxy a podvody* team was represented at the alumni assembly of the Munich Security Conference (MSC) Leadership Programme in Lisbon, an annual convocation convened in collaboration with the Körber-Stiftung.

In 2025, the Lisbon summit gathered 75 delegates from across the globe, comprising both former and incumbent ministers, state secretaries, MPs, diplomats, prominent analysts, and journalists. The discourse was further enriched by the participation of esteemed figures, including the Portuguese Ministers of Defence and Finance, as well as the President of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

Delegates representing Portugal, NATO, and various international organisations commended the scope and operational nature of the initiatives executed by *Hoaxy a podvody* in cultivating information resilience and countering disinformation. Particular recognition was accorded to their pedagogical endeavours targeting the youth demographic, alongside their comprehensive lecturing programmes designed for student.

CEDMO

In addition to participating in the discussion forum in Prague, institutional collaboration between the *Hoaxy a podvody* project and CEDMO (Central European Digital Media Observatory) continued. The *Hoaxy a podvody* analytical team supplied intercepted disinformation narratives, the public credulity of which was subsequently examined by CEDMO through comprehensive public opinion polling. The empirical results of this collaboration were made accessible at <https://cedmohub.eu/cedmo-trends/>.

Predicated on this international cooperation, the following findings were established within the Slovak demographic, *inter alia*:

- 22% of citizens believe the claim that ivermectin is an effective cancer treatment;
- 30% of citizens believe the claim that Slovak doctors have significantly higher salaries than their counterparts in Germany and Austria, based on average wage calculations;
- 29% of citizens attribute responsibility for the war in Ukraine to Ukraine itself;

- 68% of citizens consider it credible that D. Trump called Ukrainian President V. Zelenskyy a dictator, due to whose war the United States had allegedly spent \$350 billion.

LOOKING FOR TRUTH - YOUTH AGAINST DISINFORMATION

A representative from *Hoaxy a podvody* completed a training session led by ADEL Slovakia for young people from Slovakia, Lithuania, Hungary, Ukraine, Poland, and North Macedonia on combating disinformation. The workshop served as the blueprint for creating a customized version for Slovak schools as part of the project's lecturing activities.

MEDIA LITERACY SEMINAR IN TŘEŠŤ

Upon the invitation of the Fulbright Commission's representation in Slovakia, a delegate from the *Hoaxy a podvody* team delivered a lecture to several dozen American high school educators who had undertaken teaching assignments at academic institutions across Slovakia and the Czech Republic during the respective academic year.

The two-day seminar convened at the Třešť Chateau in Moravia, providing a valuable platform for informal discourse with representatives from the Czech academic and non-governmental sectors, as well as with the President of the Senate of the Czech Republic.

FIMI SEMINAR IN BERLIN

The *Hoaxy a podvody* project maintained representation at a week-long international programme organised by the German federal government in Berlin. This event focused on the roles and responsibilities of influencers and media professionals in the fight against disinformation and Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI).

The programme was curated for 16 journalists from 16 countries, encompassing delegates from African and South American nations, as well as countries in the Western Balkans and Fiji. These participants engaged in substantive discourse with representatives from several German federal ministries, influential think tanks, media houses, and prominent German journalists.

VIZUÁLNE DENNÍKY (VISUAL DIARIES)

The *Hoaxy a podvody* project served as a media partner for the *Vizuálne denníky* exhibition, which featured the works of a family of Ukrainian artists (Vlad Yurashko, Vika Shumskaya, Valeria Yurashko) who have maintained long-term residency in Slovakia. The exhibition was hosted at the Flatgallery in Bratislava.

Furthermore, in 2025, the civic association *Hoaxy a podvody* was represented at the **12th annual Human Forum**—an international forum on democracy and human rights convened in Banská Bystrica. The association also participated in the **NATO Public Forum** in The Hague, an event organised for the professional public running concurrently with the NATO Leaders’ Summit, as well as the **187th Bergedorf Round Table** in Vilnius, attended by both former and active international diplomats and ministers. At the latter venue, D. Púchovský delivered a presentation detailing the contemporaneous security paradigm in the Slovak Republic, placing particular emphasis on the long-term evolutionary trajectory of hybrid threat operations, substantiated by specific empirical case studies.

Additionally, project representatives attended the **Fake News** exhibition organised by the Czech Association in Slovakia as part of the Days of Czech Culture initiative. During this event, they facilitated discussions regarding fabricated news narratives and digital hazards, specifically tailored for an elderly demographic audience.



13 TRANSPARENCY

In accordance with applicable legislation, the civic association *Hoaxy a podvody* publishes its economic and organisational annual reports on its official website, www.hoaxyapodvody.sk, and in the Register of Financial Statements, with the objective of transparently informing the public and project partners. The annual report for the 2025 fiscal year will be published over the course of 2026, strictly within the statutory deadline.

In the 2025 calendar year, the association’s funding derived from three distinct sources: grants, donations from legal entities, and donations from private individuals. During that period, the civic association did not engage in any business or commercial activities for the purpose of generating profit.

All entities that participated in financing the civic association’s operational activities in 2025 are enumerated in the concluding section of this publication alongside its institutional partners. More granular financial data will be made accessible in the forthcoming annual report.

Comprehensive information regarding the civic association, its currently valid statutes, and its statutory bodies is available in the Register of Non-Governmental Organisations—specifically within the Civic Associations section—on the official website of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic.

- **Organisation Name:** Hoaxy a podvody
- **Legal Form:** Civic Association
- **Identification number (IČO):** 56122543
- **Registered Office:** Mlynarovičova 1594/8, 851 03 Bratislava-Petržalka
- **Website:** www.hoaxyapodvody.sk
- **Registration Number:** VVS/1-900/90-69432
- **Registering Authority:** Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic
- **Date of Establishment:** March 7, 2024
- **E-mail address:** info@hoaxyapodvody.sk
- **Bank Account (IBAN):** SK62 0900 0000 0052 2105 5315

The provided data is current as of March 1, 2026.

14 CONCLUSION

From the perspective of the civic association *Hoaxy a podvody*, the year 2025 could be characterised as a year of profound contrasts. Compared to its inaugural year, the association's activities multiplied and expanded significantly beyond the purview of social media.

The increased frequency of participation in international events, the multitude of bilateral negotiations, the organisation of public events—spearheaded by its own prominent international forum in Bratislava—as well as a record number of lectures delivered to students and seniors, a journey across Ukraine accompanied by numerous public appearances, the publication of proprietary materials, the recording of podcasts, and findings generated through rigorous investigative activities could, collectively, convey the impression of a year for which the only apt designation would be 'success'. The reality, however, was markedly different. **Societal and geopolitical external factors intervened significantly, impacting far more than just the project's operations.**

Perceptibly constrained operational funding opportunities limited further development and the achievement of specific results, despite the documented progress. The paucity of financial resources perpetuated a paradigm wherein every member of the organisation was compelled to maintain alternative employment. This inflicted the most severe negative impact on its functioning: a drastic curtailment of individual time capacities. Consequently, the financial resources provided by donors, partner organisations, institutions, and other third parties were all the more critical to the project's survival. These identical challenges were endemic throughout the entire non-profit and civic sector.

The situation was exacerbated by the actions of state representatives and the inertia of institutions for which the engagement of civil society in the spheres of strategic communication and countering hybrid threats should have constituted a complementary, partnered form of cooperation. Due to economic, capacity, and statutory constraints, no non-state entity could realistically substitute for the passive posture of the responsible state institutions, which in **2025 effectively capitulated in the fight against Russian propaganda and in their collaboration with the third sector.**

The state persistently erected barriers between itself and civil society, seemingly perceiving a threat when civic activities were predicated not only on countering false news and propaganda, but also on advocating for the European Union, NATO, democracy, freedom of the press, minority rights, and inclusion. **Governmental decisions proved devastating to numerous organisations, significantly restricting their continued operations.** In certain instances, abolished state support was partially offset by public fundraising campaigns driven by active citizens and crowdfunding platforms; however,

despite their historic dedication and success, the overarching needs of all civic organisations and associated projects remained unmet.

The continuation of perpetually derogatory rhetoric by state representatives contributed significantly to societal polarisation, engendering and sustaining a permanent antagonism toward the activities of civil society within a specific segment of the populace.

Given that the state did not publicly conduct any activities in the realm of pro-democratic, pro-Western, and pro-Ukrainian strategic communication, any non-governmental entity engaging in these areas inevitably attracted the hostile attention of security forces and disinformation media. These entities, acting in tandem with certain state representatives, formed a highly effective organism predicated on direct or indirect cooperation.

Based on acquired intelligence, the state monitored such organisations through various means in both the virtual and physical worlds—including the operations of the Hoaxy a podvody project. This exerted constant psychological pressure on specific individuals and escalated the risk of potentially unprecedented invasive measures stemming from the deliberate misuse of security forces. The state's 'strategic communication', when configured in this manner, drastically heightened the risk of previously unimaginable forms of attack by radicalised segments of society and lone wolves against civic activists and active citizens. Consequently, these individuals were actively transformed into the common 'enemies' of both the state and Russian sympathisers.

The prevailing atmosphere—characterised by the devastation of civil society, the systematic sowing of hatred, a geopolitical pivot towards the Russian Federation, and the reasonable suspicion that security forces were being misused to restrict and liquidate the activities of non-governmental associations—maintained a pervasive climate of **fear and uncertainty**. In such a perilous predicament, cooperation among members of the third sector, coupled with international collaboration and robust support from other institutions and individuals, constituted the most critical variables for the preservation of democracy, equal rights, and freedom of speech.

On the one hand, the potent geopolitical influence of elected state representatives systematically dismantled the effective functioning of both state bodies and non-governmental organisations. On the other hand, their invasive offensives—manifesting as state-sponsored hoax generation, the gradual restoration of bilateral relations with the Russian Federation, aggressive rhetoric, the active endorsement of continued polarisation, verbal assaults directed at specific individuals, the trajectory of legislative processes, and the brazen actions of the highest constitutional officials—served as a dark harbinger of the direction in which the Slovak Republic is likely to evolve in these areas throughout 2026.

The primary and arguably sole strategic objective of the Slovak Republic became the preservation of criminal legal impunity for specific individuals at any cost—even at the grave expense of further destructive measures against civil society and a creeping convergence with the practices and regime of the Russian Federation.

The objective of incapacitating security and other state apparatuses in the realm of strategic communication and countering Russian propaganda was comprehensively accomplished in 2025. The security of citizens and the third sector, inclusive of the very future of democracy, was imperilled more than ever before, bearing the ominous threat of further catastrophic developments.



15 THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT AND COOPERATION

The scope of activities undertaken by the civic association *Hoaxy a podvody* multiplied in 2025—only its second year of operation—as is empirically evidenced throughout this Report. None of this would have been possible without the steadfast support of civil society, institutional and private partners, and all those who participated in content creation, podcast production, technological provisioning, or any other form of assistance advancing the project's objectives and mission. Sincere gratitude is extended to everyone involved.

Special recognition, alongside a permanent place in the project's history, has been earned through the dedicated work of original team member Michal Hajdúch—an IT programmer, lecturer, and civic activist—who unexpectedly passed away in 2025.

The *Hoaxy a podvody* team sincerely thanks all its financial contributors who resolved to support the increasingly broad scope of its activities via the Darujme.sk platform, whether through regular or one-off donations.

The society-wide and persistent interest in education regarding strategic communication, alongside the direct support of the organisation's activities, serves as profound evidence for the entire team that a Slovakia founded upon democracy, the equality of civil rights and liberties, inclusion, diversity, and robust institutions still retains hope.

Equally sincere gratitude is directed towards the other individuals, municipalities, state institutions, private corporations, foundations, and foreign embassies that supported the civic association *Hoaxy a podvody* in 2025 through diverse modalities—ranging from financial, grant-based, and logistical backing to any other form of assistance.

No support was ever taken for granted. In the context of contemporary global developments, the stances and decisions of all our supporters have manifested as potent expressions of courage and the robust defence of democracy. For the *Hoaxy a podvody* team, this constitutes a binding commitment to persevere in its endeavours and to never surrender.



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Not for sale.

This publication was not commissioned by any political party; it is the exclusive work of the author, who follows up his previous works created during his time in the Police Force..

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