

The Business of Misinformation: Slovakia



SNAKE OIL SPILLS ONTO THE WEB

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Main findings

In the last couple of years, misinformation and disinformation websites started to sprout across many European countries, with Slovakia being no exception. The presented report looks at 49 major Slovak disinformation and misinformation websites and sketches out their ownership as well as financial background. The report succeeds in identifying the ownership or operational structure behind 35 websites. In terms of financial data, the report canvasses four sources of income: tax designation, e-commerce, crowdfunding, and advertising. In conclusion, the Slovak misinformation and disinformation website scene appears to be run by multiple independent entities using various business models to sustain operation. Transparency and accountability remain an issue in most of the cases.

- Most of the websites with an unclear or concealed background are health and lifestyle related;
- 57% of websites were established during 2013-2016;
- Out of 14 health and lifestyle websites only one does not display ads or sells goods and services;
- Out of 49 websites, 38 either display ads or sell goods and services.

Introduction

The websites included on Konspiratori.sk, the main tool used to identify the sample of websites analyzed in this report (see *Methodology*), are assessed based on a set of publicly available criteria^[1] by a Review Board consisting of journalists, scientists, media experts as well as civil society representatives.^[2] Websites are ranked on a ten-point scale, with those scoring more than six points being described as having "dubious, deceptive, fraudulent, conspiratorial, or propaganda content."^[3] Out of 144 websites listed as such, we identified 49 that are predominately in Slovak.^[4] These websites constitute our research sample.^[5]

Based on their content, we classified the websites according to their thematic focus into six categories as following:

- Health and lifestyle
- Ideological or supporting a cause
- News-focused
- Christianity-related
- Paranormal
- Blogs

[1] Konspiratori.sk. "Criteria for including a website in the database", available online at <https://www.konspiratori.sk/en/inclusion-criteria.php> (accessed on 7 July 2019).

[2] Konspiratori.sk. "Review Board", available online at www.konspiratori.sk/en/review-board.php (accessed on 7 July 2019).

[3] Konspiratori.sk. "Protect your brand from being associated with controversial content", available online at <https://www.konspiratori.sk/en/> (accessed on 7 July 2019).

[4] This approach omitted some popular Czech misinformation/disinformation websites, which are also accessible to Slovaks due to the language similarity. These websites will be part of the Czech report in the "Business of Misinformation" project.

[5] Konspiratori also includes websites that are currently not active, out of the 49 websites constituting our research sample eight appear to be inactive.

LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Even though multiple websites claim to be transparent in terms of ownership structure and finances, the opposite is true for many of them. Many of the researched websites are in fact actively trying to conceal their identity by, among other things, abusing various anonymity services (domain privacy services or offshore hosting) as well as by publishing no contact or very limited information about themselves.

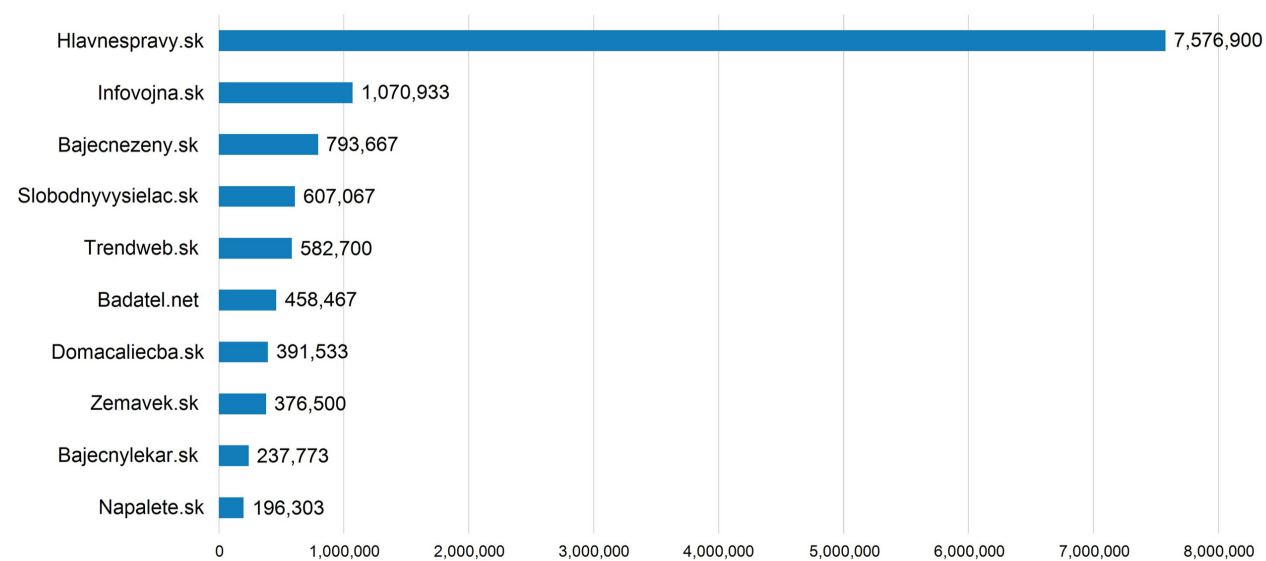
In terms of financial transparency, the situation is in many ways similar. Financial transparency is, however, also lower for other reasons. One of them is that in various cases there are multiple legal entities affiliated to the same website, which makes it harder to untangle financial details, e.g. Hlavnespravdy.sk being affiliated to Heuréka evolution-HS o.z., Heuréka evolution s.r.o. and Heuréka Evolution, o.z., three different legal entities.

Another reason for lower financial transparency is the type of legal entity used to operate these websites. In multiple cases websites are operated by a civil society organization or a sole trader. Even though these entities in most cases must file a financial statement, compared to other types of legal entities such as limited liability companies, their financial statements do not have to be publicly available, according to the Slovak legislation.

MOST POPULAR WEBSITES

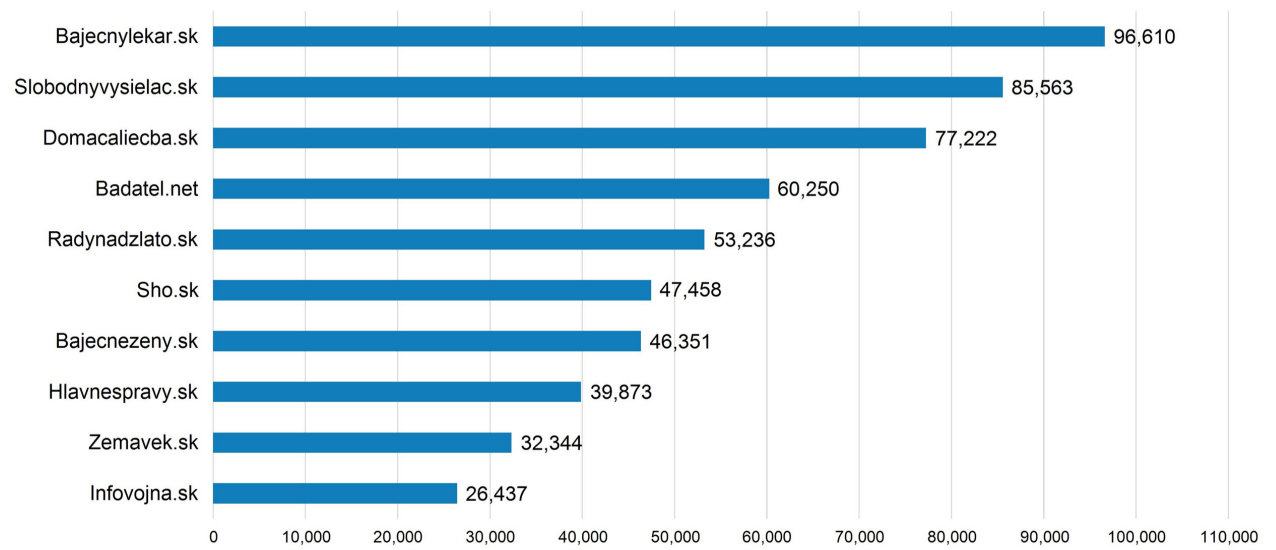
In terms of monthly visits, Hlavnespravdy.sk solidly dominates the top of the misinformation portals in Slovakia, with 7.5 million monthly visits. Whereas health and lifestyle websites account for the majority of the 10 most popular misinformation portals in Slovakia, news-focused websites dominate when it comes to aggregated monthly visits.

Top 10 websites by number of monthly visits



Note: The number of visits calculated as monthly average for February-April 2019
Source: Similarweb.com

Top 10 websites by number of Facebook followers



Source: Facebook.com (as of 22 May 2019)

However, a slightly different picture appears when looking at the number of followers on social media. Health and lifestyle websites clearly dominate on Facebook in both the number of spots in the top 10 ranking as well as by aggregated number of followers.

The strong relation between health and lifestyle websites and social media is also illustrated by analyzing the incoming traffic to these websites. The five websites whose traffic is mainly generated by social media are Bajecnzyivot.sk, Bajecnezdravie.sk, Trendweb.sk, Bajecnezeny.sk and Bajecnylekar.sk. More than 80% of each of these websites' incoming traffic comes from social media.

Facebook is the social media platform that generates the highest traffic for Slovak misinformation websites. Other social networks that send traffic to these websites include Pinterest, YouTube and VKontakte (a Russian social network). Pinterest is more popular with health and lifestyle websites whereas YouTube and VKontakte generate more traffic for news-focused websites.[6]

WHO PULLS THE STRINGS?

In 14 of the 26 cases where we were able to establish with a high probability the entity behind the websites are operated by a civil society organization (in Slovak, "občianske združenie")[7]; five are operated by a private limited liability company (in Slovak, "spoločnosť s ručením obmedzeným"); another five are operated by a sole trader (in Slovak, "živnostník"); and two are operated by an individual.

In the nine cases in which we were able to establish the entity behind the website, but with a lower probability, five are presumably operated by a legal entity, and four by individuals.

[6] Based on data provided by Similarweb.com.

[7] Hlavnespravy.sk self-declare two different types of legal entities operating/owning the website. A civil society organization as a publisher and a limited liability company as a service provider. Due to ambiguity of the used terms, hlavnespravy.sk was in this report counted as being operated by the civil society organization.

Most of the researched websites appear to be operated by independent entities, with the only observed exception being Slobodnyvysielac.sk and Slobodnyvyber.sk both being operated by the same civil society organization. However, it's impossible to definitively rule out the existence of any further connections due to the ownership structure of some of the researched legal entities.

Content-wise we found that the largest group of websites with a concealed identity are health and lifestyle websites, with 7 out of 14 cases.

WHO FUNDS MISINFORMATION?

There are four^[8] main sources of income for the misinformation websites canvassed in this report:

- tax designations
- e-commerce
- crowdfunding
- advertising

Tax designations

Under the Slovak tax system, Slovak taxpayers can allocate 2% (or 3% in certain conditions) of their tax liability to a qualifying entity of their choice. 10 websites out of 49 analyzed in this report use tax designations as part of their funding.^[9]

The obtained tax designation for all 10 cases in total averaged €36,437.91 a year for the period of 2016-2018.^[10] Unsurprisingly, most of the funds collected through tax designations go to larger websites. Zemavek.sk dominated with an average of €12,717 a year.

Revenue from tax designation attracted by Slovak misinformation websites, in €, 2016-2018 (top beneficiaries)

Website	NGO running the website	2016	2017	2018
Zemavek.sk	SOFIAN Publishing o.z.	9,242	13,084	15,825
Slobodnyvysielac.sk / Slobodnyvyber.sk	Združenie ľudí za lepšiu budúcnosť o.z.	10,068	12,481	67
Infovojna.sk	INFO VOJNA o.z.	4,433	0	13,382
Tartaria.sk	Občianske združenie TARTARIA o.z.	no	2,714	4,981

Source: CMDS based on data from Slovak Trade Registry
Amounts in euro, truncated to zero decimal digits

[8] In some cases, we were also able to identify other sources of funding, using data from the local trade registry, financial statements, tax filings or publicly available contracts. In five cases, we were able to collect data for the full financial background of the entity operating the website. However, because of legal restrictions, this was not possible for in other cases.

[9] PwC. "Pocket Tax Book 2019: A practical Guide to the Slovak Tax System," available online at https://www.pwc.com/sk/en/publikacie/assets/dane_do_vrecka_2019_digital_en.pdf (accessed on 5 July 2019).

[10] Calculated as total funds collected in all cases for the period of 2016-2018 and then divided by three.

Believe it or not: freeze lemons, zest them and get rid of diabetes, cancer and obesity

This was a widespread hoax shared by various Slovak health and lifestyle websites. As other health-related hoaxes before, the article was merely a poor translation of already published stories from foreign outlets and widely circulated chain e-mails.

The article suggests that lemons and lemon juice not only prevent and cure cancer, but also boost the immune system, prevent diabetes, kill parasites, improve cholesterol and can be used for a full body detox.

However, there is no credible study proving the positive effect of lemons on cancer prevention and treatment. Even though a few studies recently indicated that citrus fruits contain natural substances, such as limonoids and modified citrus pectin (MCP) that may enhance the body's ability to fight cancer, the research is inconclusive and mostly based on in-vitro and animal testing.

Potentially the most dangerous claim is hidden at the end of the article. Referencing an anonymous study, it argues that contrary to conventional chemotherapy, "lemon treatment" only kills cancer cells, thereby leaving healthy cells intact and improving the condition of the cancer patients. Besides being false and a blatant lie without any empirical evidence in research, such a claim poses a high risk to cancer patients who in their struggle might opt for alternative ways of treatment, thereby decreasing their chances to be cured.

Source:

<https://domacaliecba.sk/verte-tomu-ci-nie-citrony-zmrazte-postruhajte-zbavte-sa-cukrovky-rakoviny-i-obezity/>

Debunking:

<http://www.center4research.org/lemons-prevent-cancer/>

<https://uamshealth.com/healthlibrary2/medicalmyths/lemons cure cancer/>

<https://dennikn.sk/1008402/kto-zaraba-na-hoaxoch-o-rakovine-obchodnik-z-presova-ktory-predava-vyzivove-doplanky-za-50-eur/>

<http://sites.nationalacademies.org/BasedOnScience/lemons-cannot-cure-cancer/>

E-commerce

16 websites were observed to fund their operations through sales of goods and services,[11] mostly books and news and magazine subscriptions. Some of the websites including Zemavek.sk and Slobodnyvysielac.sk also run larger e-shops selling their own merchandise. For example, Slobodnyvysielac.sk sells a variety of products ranging from t-shirts to mugs and shot glasses to umbrellas and even roasting pans for chicken.[12]

Some of the websites focused on health and lifestyle including Badatel.net and Biosferaklub.info also operate their own e-shops that sell mostly books and dietary supplements. Badatel.net in many of its pages redirects readers to an affiliated e-shop[13] specialized in selling herbal medicines. According to some reports, both the e-shop selling herbal medicine as well as Badatel.net are operated by the same person who resides in Slovakia.[14]

In a separate case, Vedomec.com redirects its visitors to Damianvit.sk, an online store that sells herbal medicines. Similar to Vedomec.com, Damianvit.sk e-shop is clearly trying to conceal its ownership

[11] Commerce had to be visible on the website and excluded sale of ad space.

[12] See more information at <https://obchod.slobodnyvysielac.sk> (accessed on 5 July 2019).

[13] See more information at <https://drbuzgi.com/> (accessed on 5 July 2019).

[14] Benčík, Šnídl, cit.

structures. Damianvit.sk appears to be operated by a shell company registered in the U.K. According to various investigative reports, Vedomec.com and Damianvit.sk are operated by the same person, a Slovak expatriate living in London.[15]

Yearly revenue from sales of goods and services generated by Slovak misinformation websites (for latest available fiscal year)

Website	Funding, in €
Zemavek.sk (SOFIAN, s.r.o)	430,841
Extraplus.sk (Mayer media, s.r.o.)	133,196
Nemesis.sk (Pyramid Group, s.r.o.)	9,453
Arindrexler.com	n/a
Badatel.net	n/a
Biosferaklub.info	n/a
Davdva.sk	n/a
Infovojna.sk	n/a
Lifenews.sk	n/a
Otvoroci.com	n/a
Panobcan.sk	n/a
Protiprudu.org	n/a
Slobodnyvysielac.sk	n/a
Tartaria.sk	n/a
Magnificat.sk	n/a
Vedomec.com	n/a

Note: data is reported for legal entity owning/operating the website

n/a: not available

Source: Registeruz.sk

Zem a Vek published an edited picture of the then Slovak presidential candidate Zuzana Čaputová with a photo-shopped nose to appear more Jewish

Contrary to the hoax about lemon as a cure for cancer, the following case was an original created and spread by Zem a Vek (Earth and Age), rather than just a translation from a foreign outlet.

In its article, the magazine used a photo of then presidential candidate Zuzana Čaputová taken from the DennikN news portal. First, Zem a Vek claimed the photo was taken from its archive. Second, the photo of Zuzana Čaputová was modified to “make her look like a Jew.” Using image-editing software, her nose was hooked and her lips made bigger in order to resemble “stereotypical” physical features of a Jewish person.

The content of the article and the so called “Jewish nose” invoked similarity to the Second World War Nazi antisemitic propaganda. After public outrage and various journalists calling Zem a Vek out on this case, the magazine retracted the photo. However, it never apologized or explained why Čaputová’s photo was edited in such a way.

Source:

original article was retracted by Zem a Vek after public outrage

Debunking:

<https://www.omediach.com/hoaxy/15215-zem-a-vek-upravit-nos-caputovej-ako-na-antisemitskych-karikaturach>

[15] Benčík, Šnidl, cit.

Crowdfunding

A total of 15 websites canvassed by our research, particularly news-focused and ideology-powered websites, finance themselves through crowdfunding. The degree of sophistication of the crowdfunding campaigns varies broadly. All that some websites such as Protiprudu.org do is to only publish their bank account number and ask for donations. Other, more elaborate campaigns, like the one run by Slobodnyvysielac.sk, offer various payment options for donations including text messages, PayPal and Bitcoin.

The degree of transparency when it comes to crowdfunding also varies. Some of the websites do not publish any information about the funds received through crowdfunding (e.g. Parlamentne-volby-2016.sk). Other websites publish monthly financial reports in which they release information about their sources of funding (e.g. Slobodnyvysielac.sk).

Unsurprisingly, larger websites appear to collect more funding. On the high end, Slobodnyvysielac.sk pulls in on average [16] €8,657 a month from crowdfunding. In contrast, less popular websites such as Slobodavockovani.sk earn a couple of hundred Euros [17] a year from crowdfunding.

Yearly revenue from crowdfunding generated by Slovak misinformation websites (for latest available fiscal year)

Website	Funding, in €
Slobodnyvysielac.sk	98,859
Protiprudu.org	n/a
Zemavek.sk (Fond Sofian)	6,562
Slobodnyvyber.sk	5,443
Slobodavockovani.sk	3,000*
Davdva.sk	n/a
Hlavnespravy.sk	n/a
Infovojna.sk	n/a
Lifenews.sk (Inštitút Leva XIII.)	n/a
Magnificat.sk	n/a
Dolezite.sk	n/a
Slovenskeslovo.sk	n/a
Panobcan.sk	n/a
Parlamentne-volby-2016.sk	n/a
Rudovasky.com	n/a

*unclear reporting
n/a: not available

Source: self-reported data, "Transparent Account"

[16] Calculated as mean based on data from May, April and March 2019.

[17] Based on self-reported data.

Advertising revenues

The ad revenue generated yearly by 122 misinformation websites in the Czech Republic and Slovakia is estimated to range between CZK 23.9m (€930,000) and CZK 32.4m (€1.27m), according to a study from 2017 conducted by OSF Prague, a local NGO.[18]

However, this source of revenue has declined in the last few years mostly as a result of the work done by Konspiratori.sk, which has been lobbying advertisers to stop spending money on these websites. Within only one year since its inception, advertisers scrapped more than 17,000 campaigns planned for misinformation websites because of the work done by Konspiratori.sk.[19]

27 websites in our sample display ads. Many of these websites use Google's advertising platform, but some of them also use direct ad banner selling. Some websites are upfront about acknowledging that they sell ad space, but others tend to mislead readers, saying that they do not sell ad space when in reality they do so. For example, Nazorobcana.sk claims on its home page, in large fonts, that it doesn't carry ads, but an ad is displayed just above the disclaimer.

Zombies, under the influence of psychotropic substance, are fighting among the Ukrainian forces in Donbas. They continue to fight even after being shot in the head

According to this hoax, citing the Deputy Defense Minister of the Donetsk People's Republic "people's militia command" Eduard Basurin, members of the Ukrainian army were fighting in the Donbas conflict zone under the influence of an extremely powerful psychotropic drug. Moreover, as cited by the article, Basurin claimed that the alleged psychotropic substance makes Ukrainian soldiers turn into fearless and painless zombies.

To make his claim even more absurd, Basurin recalled a situation in which Ukrainian soldiers continued fighting even after being shot multiple times in their head and chest, with the alleged effects of this new psychotropic drug being reported to last for up to 10 days.

The hoax appeared in the Czech version of Sputnik. Since the Slovak and Czech languages are linguistically close and among native speakers almost mutually understandable, and since there is no Slovak version of Sputnik news, the article was also highly read and shared by the Slovak readership. As for the hoax, there is no scientific or other form of evidence to support the existence of the so-called zombies, nor do we have any proof of psychotropic drugs that would turn human beings into immortal soldiers. This hoax was debunked by several international and domestic news agencies.

Source:

<https://cz.sputniknews.com/svet/201702144747040-dlr-ukrajinske-zombie-bojujici-vystrel-hlava/>

Debunking:

<http://euromaidanpress.com/2018/06/28/dehumanizing-disinformation-as-a-weapon-of-the-information-war/>
<https://svet.sme.sk/c/20463950/zombie-ukrajina-drogy-hoax-fake-news.html>

[18] Nadace Open Society Fund Praha. "Analýza: Reklama na konspiračních a dezinformačních webech" (Analysis: Advertising on conspiracy and disinformation websites), available online at <https://osf.cz/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/reklama-na-konspiracnich-dezinf-webech-web.pdf> (accessed on 6 July 2019).

[19] Stratégie. "Diskutovaný projekt konspiratori.sk zrušil reklamy v 17 000 kampaniach" (The discussed project konspiratori.sk canceled advertising in 17,000 campaigns), available online at <https://strategie.hnonline.sk/marketing/954902-diskutovany-projekt-konspiratori-sk-zrusil-reklamy-v-17-000-kampaniach> (accessed on 7 July 2019).

Overview of misinformation websites in Slovakia, by content and funding sources

Website	Content category	Tax designations	E-commerce	Crowdfunding	Ads
Dennikpolitika.sk	News-focused				✓
Dolezite.sk*	News-focused			✓	✓
Extraplus.sk	News-focused		✓		
Hlavnespravdy.sk	News-focused	✓		✓	✓
Infovojna.sk	News-focused	✓	✓	✓	
Medzicas.sk*	News-focused				
Nadlani.org	News-focused				✓
Napalete.sk	News-focused				✓
Nazorbcana.sk	News-focused				✓
Necenzurovane.net	News-focused				✓
Nemesis.sk	News-focused		✓		✓
Otvoroci.com	News-focused		✓		
Priezor.com*	News-focused				
Protiprudu.org	News-focused		✓	✓	
Slobodnyvyber.sk	News-focused	✓		✓	
Slobodnyvysielac.sk	News-focused	✓	✓	✓	
Slovenskeslovo.sk	News-focused	✓		✓	✓
Zemavek.sk	News-focused	✓	✓	✓	
Lifenews.sk	News-focused and Christian religion-related		✓	✓	
Panobcan.sk	News-focused and ideological or supporting a cause		✓	✓	✓
Badatel.net	Health and lifestyle		✓		✓
Bajecnezdravie.sk	Health and lifestyle				✓
Bajecnezeny.sk	Health and lifestyle				✓
Bajecnylekar.sk	Health and lifestyle				✓
Bajecnyzivot.sk	Health and lifestyle				✓
Biosferaklub.info	Health and lifestyle	✓	✓		
Domacaliecba.sk	Health and lifestyle				✓
Medicalcentrum.eu	Health and lifestyle				✓
Radynadzlato.sk	Health and lifestyle				✓
Radyprezdravie.sk*	Health and lifestyle				✓
Radyzdravie.sk*	Health and lifestyle				✓
Slobodavockovani.sk	Health and lifestyle	✓		✓	
Trendweb.sk	Health and lifestyle				✓
Vedomec.com	Health and lifestyle		✓		
Davdva.sk	Ideological or supporting a cause		✓	✓	✓
Idemvolit.sk	Ideological or supporting a cause				
Parlamentne-volby-2016.sk	Ideological or supporting a cause			✓	✓
Rozhladna.org	Ideological or supporting a cause				
Rudovasky.com	Ideological or supporting a cause			✓	✓
Sho.sk	Ideological or supporting a cause	✓			
Tartaria.sk	Ideological or supporting a cause	✓	✓		
Anti-illuminati.wbl.sk	Paranormal				
Arindrexler.com	Paranormal		✓		
Cestacloveka.sk	Paranormal				✓
Mysteria.sk*	Paranormal				✓
Zahadnysvet.sk*	Paranormal				✓
Je-to-inak.livejournal.com*	Blog				
Lucasperny.Blog.pravda.sk	Blog				
Magnificat.sk	Christian religion-related		✓	✓	

Note: data was collected between 23 May 2019 and 3 June 2019.

*inactive website
Source: CMDS

Yearly revenue of companies owning/operating websites or directly associated companies (2018)

Website	Operating company	Revenue (€)
Zemavek.sk	SOFIAN, s.r.o.	430,906
Hlavnespravy.sk	Heuréka evolution, s.r.o.	153,965
Extraplus.sk	Mayer media, s.r.o.	133,196
Zahadnyvet.sk	Next Media Group, s.r.o.	99,751
Nemesis.sk	Pyramid Group, s.r.o.	9,453
Napalete.sk	Medialis spol. s r.o.	6,700

Note: displayed are legal entities whose financial statements must be publicly available due to the type of legal entity

Source: CMDS based on data from Slovak Trade Registry

Methodology

A useful tool providing an extensive database of Slovak and Czech misinformation/disinformation websites is maintained by Konspiratori.sk, a project run by Konšpirátori.sk o.z., a civil society organization in Slovakia.[20] Konspiratori.sk is a database of websites that produce and publish false information in various forms and formats.

To obtain information about the owners of domains in our sample we used WHOIS databases[21], which, in line with the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) regulations, store contact information about the owners of all registered domains.[22]

45% of the websites canvassed by our research listed the owner of the domain. The remainder used various ways to hide the identity of the owner.[23] In addition to WHOIS, we also researched all 49 websites to identify their “About” sections or contact information pages that would list the name of the entity owning or running the website. We also used information obtained through various investigative articles and blogs[24], as well as by searching the Investigative Dashboard databases.[25] In 26 cases we were able to establish the entity owning and/or operating the website with a high probability. In nine cases we were able to establish the entity owning and/or operating the website with a lower probability. However, in 14 cases we were not able to establish who is behind the website at all. In conclusion, the owners of 28.6% of all researched websites are anonymous.

Website traffic data was provided by Similarweb.com. Financial data was obtained through publicly accessible databases (registeruz.sk, finstat.sk, Investigative Dashboard databases), self-reported data, and transparent accounts.

[20] Klingova, Katarina. “What Do We Know About Disinformation Websites in the Czech Republic and Slovakia?” GLOBSEC, 2018, available online at www.globsec.org/news/what-do-we-know-about-disinformation-websites-in-the-czech-republic-and-slovakia/ (accessed on 7 July 2019).

[21] The research was carried out using whois.com on 22 May 2019.

[22] ICANN. “About WHOIS”, available online at <https://whois.icann.org/en/about-whois> (accessed on 5 July 2019).

[23] Two websites were not included in this sample as they are subdomains on a blogging platform.

[24] Benčík, Ján. “Známy šarlatán „Bádateľ“, ktorý žije v Londýne, šíri nebezpečné bludy, nemá rád Kisku a faní Kotlebovi” (The well-known charlatan “Badateľ,” who lives in London, spreads dangerous hoaxes, doesn’t like Kiska and is a fan of Kotleba), available online at <https://dennikn.sk/blog/941178/znamy-sarlatan-badatel-ktory-zije-v-londyne-siri-nebezpecne-bludy-nema-rad-kisku-a-fandi-kotlebovi/> (accessed on 4 July 2019); Šnidl, Vladimír. “Kto zarába na hoaxoch o rakovine: obchodník z Prešova, ktorý predáva výživové doplnky za 50 eur” (Who earns from hoaxes about cancer: a trader from Presov who sells nutritional supplements for €50), available online at <https://dennikn.sk/1008402/kto-zaraba-na-hoaxoch-o-rakovine-obchodnik-z-presova-ktory-predava-vyzivove-doplanky-za-50-eur/> (accessed on 4 July 2019).

[25] Investigative Dashboard, available online at <https://investigativedashboard.org/> (accessed on 4 July 2019).

About the authors

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Alex Rusnák is a graduate student in the two-year MA Program in Political Science at Central European University (CEU) where he is specializing in political communication. Prior to enrolling at CEU, he earned a BA in Political Science with a focus on European Studies at Comenius University, Bratislava. During his undergraduate studies, Alex studied at the Institute of International Relations and Political Science at Vilnius University as a part of his Erasmus+ student mobility. He is generally interested in political campaigns, social media, big data and the impact of disinformation on politics. Alex has conducted several internships and has been working at the National Council of Slovak Republic, the Department of European Affairs.

About The Business of Misinformation project

The Business of Misinformation project is run by the Center for Media, Data and Society, mapping the individuals and companies that own misinformation websites and their links to institutions, parties and other individuals. It canvasses websites that systematically and methodically create and target false information to persuade audiences to adopt ideas and ways of thinking embraced by their original promoters or their sponsors, be those political, social, economic, health-related or else. It includes players in the misinformation industry consisting of locally run online portals that are presenting themselves and are perceived as independent voices.



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