



Monitoring of platform functionalities in relation to the 2023 Elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic

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Abstract

By virtue of its statutory powers and in the light of its experience with similar activities preceding the 2019 European Elections, the Council for Media Services (“CMS”) actively monitored the functionalities of Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube digital platforms throughout the campaign period leading up to the early elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic in 2023. The CMS’s analysis focused on potential breaches of the Act on Media Services (“AMS”), fulfilling the commitments under the Code of Practice on Disinformation (“Code”) and compliance with obligations under the Digital Services Act (“DSA”). This report provides an overview of activities from the preparatory phase, monitoring and data collection as such, evaluation of findings and identification of potential gaps.

In the preparatory phase, the CMS participated in bilateral meetings with representatives of Meta, Google and ByteDance in June 2023 and presented them with a set of requirements related to the elections. These requirements respected the current European and national legislation and took into account the commitments made by the platforms by means of the Code, namely:

- (1) increasing user awareness of electoral processes through reliable information sources;
- (2) obligation of the entities to observe the electoral silence period;
- (3) transparency of political advertising;
- (4) implementation of preventive and awareness-raising activities targeting the public;
- (5) efficient evaluation of alerts reported by the CMS.

During the preparatory phase, the CMS simultaneously coordinated with other relevant government authorities overseeing the conduct of the elections, such as the State Commission for Elections and Control of Funding of Political Parties.

The data collection took place from the start of the election campaign, launched with the announcement of the elections on 9 June 2023, until mid-November 2023. During this period, the CMS continuously monitored the platforms on its own initiative as well as in relation to alerts received from other government authorities. Furthermore, the CMS monitored the implementation of the requirements communicated to the platforms during the initial bilateral meetings. The CMS strengthened its monitoring activity from 25 to 29 September 2023, with an emphasis on political advertising on the platforms. After the end of the monitoring period, the CMS contacted the platforms with a questionnaire containing questions concerning meeting the requirements.

The above-mentioned activities of the CMS brought on the following **findings**:

- The CMS did not register any occurrences of content that would meet the criteria of illegal content as defined by the AMS.
- Similarly, in relation to the elections, the CMS did not receive any complaints from the members of the public regarding the coverage of the elections on social media.
- The platforms effectively complied with a part of the requirements under the Code. All three monitored platforms mostly met the requirement to increase user awareness of electoral processes through reliable information sources, with TikTok being the best-performing platform. Regarding the transparency of political advertising, Google mostly failed to meet the requirements and Meta mostly succeeded in meeting them, albeit with

minor reservations. Regarding the implementation of preventive and awareness-raising activities targeting the public, Meta and Google, in particular, are lagging behind. TikTok met the requirements in this area with only minor reservations. On the other hand, TikTok was the worst performer in terms of efficient evaluation of the CMS's alerts, a requirement that was mostly met by Google and Meta.

As a part of the monitoring of the platforms based on its own capacities and on reports from other government authorities during the election campaign, the **CMS identified the following gaps:**

- Meta Ad Library lacked translations into Slovak and Google Ads Transparency Center lacked advertisers' contact details.
- Upon examining the presentation of political advertising on the user interface, we identified absence of political advertising disclaimer for Meta and absence of marking of political advertising for Google.
- Particularly in case of Meta, we identified shortcomings in the identity verification process and the corresponding advertiser's disclaimer which were evaluated as insufficiently transparent.
- During the active monitoring exercise, the CMS identified several occurrences of content in the last phase of the election campaign which was created using artificial intelligence tools, known as "deepfake". After the content had been reported by the CMS, Google and TikTok responded promptly and removed most of the content without unnecessary delay. After reviewing the content, Meta assessed approximately half of the content as not violating the platform's rules, while a part of this content is still available online.

The results of the monitoring exercise constitute an overview of readiness of the assessed platforms for the parliamentary elections in Slovakia in 2023 and might serve as an inspiration for EU Member States. Simultaneously, they could provide feedback to the Code and its working groups, particularly in terms of evaluating its effectiveness at national and European level. Furthermore, these results can serve as a basis for future activities of the Digital Services Coordinator ("DSC") in Slovakia.

Foreword

In the context of the early elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic in September 2023, the Council for Media Services (“CMS”) followed up on the past monitoring activities for the 2019 European Elections, which were a part of the joint monitoring within the European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (“ERGA”), and updated the monitoring exercise in line with the revised Code of Practice on Disinformation of 2022 (“Code”).¹

The mission of the Council for Media Services is to promote the public interest in the exercise of the right to information, freedom of expression, and the rights of access to cultural values and education, as well as to perform state regulation in the areas of broadcasting, retransmission and the provision of on-demand audiovisual media services.²

In addition, the CMS uses its powers under the Act on Media Services (“AMS”) to cooperate with the most widely-used platforms in Slovakia. During the campaign period leading up to the 2023 early elections, the CMS actively monitored the functionalities of digital platforms. The CMS focused in particular on possible breaches of the AMS as well as on compliance with the commitments under the Code and the obligations under the Digital Services Act (“DSA”).³ It closely monitored the transparency of political advertisements on the platforms, information available to users in ad libraries, and measures increasing the users’ awareness of the electoral processes.

This report contains a detailed description of the monitoring process, including preparatory phases, active supervision and data collection over the period from the announcement of the elections to the election day. The data analysis conducted in November and December 2023 brought to light new findings, issues and gaps related to the implementation of applicable legal standards and commitments by digital platforms. This report provides a comprehensive overview of the conducted monitoring exercise and evaluates the CMS’s efforts in ensuring a transparent and fair digital media environment in the context of the 2023 early elections in Slovakia.

¹ The [Code of Practice on Disinformation](#) (“Code”) is the first tool of its kind used by multinational online companies since 2018 to commit to compliance with self-regulatory standards to eliminate the spread of disinformation. The original Code required a revision, coordinated by the ERGA working group lead by the former director of the Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission Ľ. Kukliš. In June 2022 a new text of the Code was presented, containing 44 commitments and 128 specific measures, including demonetization for purveyors of disinformation, transparency of political advertising, elimination of manipulative behaviour (e.g. fake accounts, use of bots and deepfake technology), empowerment of users, researchers and the community of independent fact-checkers. Furthermore, the Code has become a part of a broader regulatory framework formed by the DSA and the upcoming legislation governing transparency and targeting of political advertising.

² [Act No. 264/2022 Coll. on media services](#) (“AMS”).

³ [Regulation 2022/2065 of 19 October 2022 on a Single Market For Digital Services and amending Directive 2000/31/EC \(Digital Services Act\)](#).

1. Legal background and data collection procedure

The competences of the CMS as the Slovak national regulatory authority responsible for media oversight and enforcement of regulatory frameworks related to potentially illegal content on content-sharing platforms are established by the AMS.

Under the AMS, the CMS is entrusted with the responsibility and legal competence to prevent the dissemination of illegal content online. In this context, Article 151(2) of the AMS defines what constitutes illegal content online (the relevant definition deriving from Act 300/2005 Coll., i.e. the Penal Code).

For the purposes of the Act on Media Services, illegal content refers to content which:

- exhibits the characteristics of child pornography or extremist material,
- incites an act exhibiting the characteristics of any of the terrorist offences,
- approves of a conduct exhibiting the characteristics of any of the terrorist offences, or
- exhibits the characteristics of the criminal offence of denial and condoning of the Holocaust, crimes of political regimes and crimes against humanity, criminal offence of insult of the State, race and belief or criminal offence of incitement to national, racial or ethnic hatred.

Furthermore, under Article 110(3)(q) of the AMS the CMS is empowered to cooperate with online content-sharing platforms (“platforms”) on an efficient, proportionate and non-discriminatory application of the rules for the provision of their services. Based on this power, the CMS has established bilateral communication channels with representatives of the companies operating these platforms, which are actively used to communicate cases of illegal content or content potentially violating the rules for using the platforms.

Additionally, the CMS also serves as a contact point for communication between government authorities and operators of the most widely-used platforms in Slovakia (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok).⁴ In practice, this means that government authorities and institutions, which also carry out monitoring of social network content based on the competences conferred on them, report potentially problematic content⁵ to the CMS, which subsequently discusses this content or these systemic elements with the platform in question within its remit.

The CMS actively monitored and analysed functionalities of the platforms in relation to the 2023 Elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic for several reasons. Firstly, the CMS paid special attention to possible violations of the AMS and the dissemination of potentially illegal content on content-sharing platforms. Another reason underlying the monitoring was to examine the implementation of the obligations imposed on platforms by the Code as well as by the DSA, a part of which had become effective for very large platforms (“VLOPs”) and very large online

⁴ The level of popularity of the platforms in Slovakia was confirmed by the transparency reports under the DSA, published at the end of October 2023.

⁵ Potentially problematic content refers to content which is evaluated by the CMS as potentially violating terms and conditions (e.g. Community Standards, Terms of Use, etc.) of the platforms and which simultaneously does not exhibit the characteristics of illegal content as defined by the AMS. For such content, the CMS has no authority to initiate administrative proceedings or use other administrative tools to enforce the removal or restriction of the content.

search engines (“VLOSEs”) at the end of August 2023.⁶ The transparency of political advertising was also a key issue in this context. The CMS examined whether online platforms actively updated their ad libraries to include comprehensive information about political and issue advertisements, thereby ensuring transparency and accessibility of information to the public, in line with the applicable legislation (DSA) and the commitments under the Code. Last but not least, the CMS monitored the measures taken by the platforms to raise the citizens’ awareness of the electoral processes. The CMS focused on initiatives that aimed to provide the public with relevant and reliable information about the conduct of the elections or to warn them against the dissemination of false or manipulative information about electoral processes. The CMS’s role in monitoring the platforms was thus crucial, with a focus on potential violations of the AMS, the DSA and the platforms’ compliance with their commitments under the Code.

1.1 Data collection procedure

Monitoring of platform functionalities in relation to the 2023 Elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic was carried out in several phases, during which the CMS established contact with the platforms, carried out data collection and subsequently analysed the data and prepared the final report. The phases and activities were divided as follows:

1. Preparatory phase – May to June 2023.
2. Data collection – June to November 2023.
3. Data analysis and preparation of the final report – November to December 2023.

The following section presents a detailed description of the individual phases and the activities carried out within the respective phases.

1.1.1 Preparatory phase

Prior to launching the monitoring exercise, the CMS conducted an internal assessment of the past experience with election monitoring in the online environment, drawing on the ERGA experience outlined above. This informed the next course of action, which included communication with the operators of the platforms most-visited by users in Slovakia (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok)⁷ as well as with the relevant government authorities.

In the preparatory phase (May – June 2023), the CMS held bilateral meetings with representatives of the monitored platforms, presenting them with a set of requirements regarding the presentation of the elections on their services (see Chapter 2). Furthermore, during the preparatory phase the CMS coordinated with other relevant public bodies competent for oversight of the conduct of the elections. Based on the above-mentioned competences and the CMS’s previous experience with communicating with service providers, it was decided that the

⁶ According to the DSA, very large platforms and very large online search engines (“VLOPSEs”) shall analyse and mitigate the risks to European society posed by their design and operation. VLOPSEs are also required to increase transparency of their operations and introduce “due diligence” mechanisms, which refer to mechanisms primarily aimed at empowering the user in respect of these platforms. In the context of online advertising, VLOPSEs are required to clearly mark paid advertising and to ensure that the user is able to identify who is presenting the advertisement and who is paying for it. VLOPSEs are furthermore required to create and make publicly available an advertisement repository (“ad library”) containing all active advertisements.

⁷ One of the sections of the report also covers X (formerly Twitter) and Google Search.

CMS would gather input from the relevant national institutions and then actively communicate individual cases and systemic elements to the relevant platforms.

Furthermore, during the preparatory phase the CMS also initiated meetings between the State Commission for Elections and Control of Funding of Political Parties and representatives of the platforms. The State Commission for Elections and Control of Funding of Political Parties had been established as an independent body to control the financing of political parties and political movements, to manage elections and to ascertain the results of elections.⁸

The meetings with the platform representatives were aimed at facilitating contact in the interest of resolving potential crisis situations during the election campaign and the conduct of the elections, which fall under the competence of the State Commission for Elections (campaign financing, electoral silence period, etc.).

1.1.2 Data collection

The data collection took place from the start of the election campaign, launched with the announcement of the elections on 9 June 2023, until mid-November 2023. This phase included multiple activities, elaborated on in the outputs of Chapters 2 and 3 and Annex 1.

Firstly, the CMS carried out ongoing monitoring of the above-mentioned platforms in cases when it had received an alert from other government authorities concerning dissemination of content violating the rules for using the platforms, e.g. disseminating false information about the electoral process or inciting hatred against population groups with protected characteristics. Specific cases are described in more detail in Chapter 3.4.

Further activity primarily focused on the week prior to the elections, with the election campaign at its peak and a large amount of political advertising expected on the monitored platforms. Specifically, targeted monitoring of all selected platforms and their different user interfaces (e.g. presentation on a PC, smartphone, etc.) took place from 25 to 29 September 2023. The CMS focused on and mapped how transparently the platforms mark political advertising and whether the average user is provided with sufficient information about the political advertising they are shown. The findings and conclusions of this activity are described in detail in Chapter 3.

The final activity of this phase was the monitoring of compliance with the requirements presented by the CMS to the monitored platforms in June 2023. The implementation of these requirements was monitored on an ongoing basis across all platforms, as well as on the basis of information proactively provided to CMS by some platforms (e.g. information about the launch of information panels). As the CMS can often access only the information visible to the general user, it contacted the selected platforms in October 2023 with a questionnaire to find out to what extent they were meeting the requirements. The questionnaires provided additional data directly from the platforms (e.g. information about how many interactions were generated by the media and information literacy campaign run by the service provider of a particular platform during the monitoring period). In addition to the platforms, the questionnaire was also sent to organisations and individuals with whom the platforms collaborated on various campaigns during the

⁸ [The State Commission for Elections and Control of Funding of Political Parties.](#)

monitoring period. The aim was to get an alternative perspective on the platforms' course of action. The process and outputs are presented in detail in Chapter 2.

1.1.3 Data analysis and preparation of the final report

In November and December 2023, an internal analysis of all collected data and outputs was conducted. A separate section was dedicated to describing the ad libraries and how quickly the average user can access transparent information about political advertising on each of the platforms (see Chapter 3 and Annex 1). In light of the experience with the misuse of AI technology during the pre-election period, the CMS described these events and the platforms' responses in a separate section of the report (Chapter 3.4). In addition, an analysis of the questionnaire replies from the platforms and an evaluation of the requirements set out by the CMS at the outset were carried out (Chapter 2). The report thus presents a comprehensive overview of the relevant areas and clearly defines the related identified problems and gaps.

2. Requirements for the platforms and evaluation of functionalities and media literacy campaigns

Based on the above-mentioned competences and the CMS's experience in monitoring and Code-related activities, the CMS drafted a set of requirements for the monitored platforms in June 2023. These requirements respected the current European and national legislation and reflected the platforms' obligations under the self-regulatory mechanism constituted by the Code.

2.1 Description of the requirements for the monitored platforms

The CMS formulated a total of 5 requirements covering several areas, which were communicated to Meta (Facebook and Instagram platforms), Google (YouTube platform) and ByteDance (TikTok platform).⁹

The first requirement was to **increase user awareness of electoral processes through reliable information sources**. Under the Code (Commitment 21), the platforms made a general commitment to strengthen the users' ability to identify disinformation. To this end, platforms also use information panels as a part of the user environment of these services. The CMS therefore called on the platforms, within the limits of their possibilities and capacities, to raise awareness of their users by making visible the official source of information about the elections and their conduct – the website of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic.¹⁰

The second requirement referred to the **obligation of the entities to respect the electoral silence period**, defined by law as a period of 48 hours before the opening of the polling stations.¹¹ During this period, any political advertising or publication of election polls is prohibited. As most platforms offer the possibility of paid promotion of online content, the CMS deemed it necessary to bring this to the attention of the platforms.

The third requirement, also based on the Code, emphasised compliance with the commitments made by the platforms, with a particular focus on the **transparency of political advertising**. A total of eight commitments of the Code address the transparency of online political advertising in terms of definition of this type of advertising as such, transparent marking of political advertising, verification of information about the sponsor of political advertising, and the availability of information about political advertising to the average user (e.g. in an ad library).¹² In addition, the obligation for VLOPSEs to establish advertisement repositories is also based on the DSA, which has been effective for VLOPSEs since the end of August 2023.

The CMS's fourth requirement for the platforms concerned the **implementation of preventive and awareness-raising activities targeting the public**¹³. The CMS called on the platforms to cooperate with NGOs on media literacy campaigns during the elections, in order to implement

⁹ Due to its limited relevance and the fact that Twitter Ltd. withdrew from the Code in respect of its service X, the CMS focused its monitoring on X solely if urgently necessary due to an emerging crisis situation (see Chapter 3.4).

¹⁰ [2023 Elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic](#).

¹¹ [Act No. 181/2014 Coll. on election campaign](#).

¹² Commitments 4 to 11.

¹³ Commitment 17.

activities that are specifically designed for and target the Slovak society and the local context. Through the *Mediálna gramotnosť+* platform¹⁴, the CMS has at its disposal a database with contact information of relevant organisations and experts active in this field in Slovakia.

The final, fifth requirement was a **uniform, transparent and rapid communication with the competent government authorities in relation to the evaluation of complaints**, including those from the Ministry of Interior and the State Commission for Elections and Control of Funding of Political Parties. The CMS urged the platforms to prioritise and efficiently review alerts related to the dissemination of false information about electoral processes that could compromise the integrity of elections, and content that incites hatred against groups with protected characteristics¹⁵. Furthermore, the CMS called for an increased emphasis on content moderation and strengthening the capacity of independent fact-checkers.

In respect of the above points, the CMS also requested that the platforms report transparently and in a timely manner all the activities that they would undertake in the interest of meeting the communicated requirements, so that the CMS staff can monitor the actual steps being taken by the platforms to comply with these requirements.

REQUIREMENTS FOR PLATFORMS			
	META	GOOGLE	TIKTOK
Increasing user awareness	✓	✓	✓
Obligation to observe the electoral silence period	✗	✗	✗
Transparency of political advertising	✓	✓	✗
Awareness-raising activities targeting the public	✓	✓	✓
Efficient communication with government authorities in frame of evaluation of complaints	✓	✓	✓

2.2 Communicating requirements to the platforms

After sending out informational emails inviting platform representatives to face-to-face or online meetings and including a list of requirements, several meetings were held with representatives of Meta, Google and ByteDance. In general, the CMS received a positive response from the platforms to the constructive requirements, with all companies demonstrating willingness to implement activities aimed at increasing user awareness of the electoral processes, to cooperate with Slovak organisations on media literacy campaigns, as well as to increase capacity for content moderation, and were open to the possibility of increasing the number of independent fact-checkers.

¹⁴ *Mediálna gramotnosť+* is an informal group coordinated by the CMS. See more details on the [CMS's website](#).

¹⁵ E.g. false information about the conduct of the elections, the date and place of the elections, the method of voting, etc.

In response to the second request, which focused on respecting the electoral silence period and the placement of political advertising online, Meta¹⁶ and Google¹⁷ stated that full responsibility for the placement of content is left to the advertiser. ByteDance stated that it does not allow political advertising on its TikTok platform.¹⁸

During the monitoring period, the CMS interacted with all monitored platforms, either to report problematic content through the available channels or to obtain information about the measures taken by the platforms to comply with the requirements.

2.3 Evaluation of requirements

In order to carry out a comprehensive evaluation of the activities carried out by the platforms in connection with the early elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic, the CMS prepared a single questionnaire that examined qualitative and quantitative aspects of the platforms' activities. The questionnaire covered the requirements that the CMS presented to the platforms and the concrete steps resulting in their compliance. The CMS also distributed the questionnaire to organisations and individuals the platforms in Slovakia claimed to cooperate with in the implementation of media literacy campaigns and other awareness-raising activities.

The assessment of the compliance with the requirements was carried out by five CMS analysts with expertise in different areas (e.g. media literacy, problematic content, etc.). The areas assessed were divided into five categories that reflected the specified requirements. The evaluation method combined the analysis of data provided by the platforms and the findings from monitoring the election campaign (e.g. response time the platforms needed for reporting problematic content). A four-point scale was used¹⁹, complemented by verbal comments from the assessor. The result constitutes a comprehensive scoreboard that provides an overview of the extent to which the platforms met the CMS's requirements, expanded verbal comments on individual cases.

¹⁶ [Political advertising on Meta's services.](#)

¹⁷ [Political advertising via Google Ads](#) (applies to Google products, including YouTube).

¹⁸ [Prohibition of paid political advertising on TikTok.](#)

¹⁹ The applied scale consisted of four levels of compliance with requirements: not met – mostly not met – mostly met – fully met. Also, a value of N/A ("not applicable") was added where the platform is not responsible for meeting the requirement but transfers this responsibility on to the user.

Evaluation of requirements

COMPANY/PLATFORM	META	TIKTOK	GOOGLE
INCREASING USER AWARENESS OF ELECTORAL PROCESSES THROUGH RELIABLE INFORMATION SOURCES	Mostly met	Met ✓	Mostly met
OBLIGATION OF THE ENTITIES TO OBSERVE THE ELECTORAL SILENCE PERIOD	N/A	N/A	N/A
TRANSPARENCY OF POLITICAL ADVERTISING	Mostly met	N/A	Mostly not met !
IMPLEMENTATION OF PREVENTIVE AND AWARENESS-RAISING ACTIVITIES TARGETING THE PUBLIC	Mostly not met !	Mostly met	Mostly met
EFFICIENT EVALUATION OF ALERTS REPORTED BY THE CMS	Mostly met	Mostly not met !	Mostly met

2.3.1 Increasing user awareness of electoral processes through reliable information sources

The requirements for platforms concerning increasing user awareness were evaluated as “mostly met” to “fully met”. With the exception of Instagram, all platforms informed their users in one way or another about the elections, the electoral processes or the results, providing a link to the official information source (the website of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic²⁰).

Outputs from TikTok, where information panels were available for more than a month and covered the period both before and after the parliamentary elections, were evaluated as meeting this requirement.²¹ Information was clear, easily accessible to the user and included an educational aspect thanks to the cooperation with the NGO digiQ (see more details in Chapter 2.3.4). TikTok provided specific data on the traffic of the Election Hub, which had approximately 46,000 unique visitors during its operation.

²⁰ [Official website of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic.](#)

²¹ All awareness-raising activities were available to users of the platform from 4 September 2023 to 6 October 2023.

Žiadna SIM 9:56

Parlamentné voľby 2023



Do volieb zostáva: **3** dní
30. septembra

Parlamentné voľby 2023

Predčasné parlamentné voľby do Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky sa budú konať 30. 9. 2023. Vo voľbách si občania zvolia 150 členov – zástupcov politických strán (poslancov), volených pomerným volebným systémom, v rámci jedného volebného obvodu (celé Slovensko).

Volebné miestnosti budú otvorené od 7:00 do 22:00.

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2023 Parliamentary Elections

Days until the elections: **3**

30 September

2023 Parliamentary Elections

The early elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic in 2023 will take place on 30 September 2023. In these elections the citizens will elect 150 members – political party representatives (Members of Parliament) elected based on a proportional voting system within a single constituency (the entire territory of the Slovak Republic).

The polling stations will be open from 7.00 to 22.00.

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Information about the elections

Verify information about the elections and voting instructions through reliable sources.

More information

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How good is the Slovak Prime Minister candidates' English?

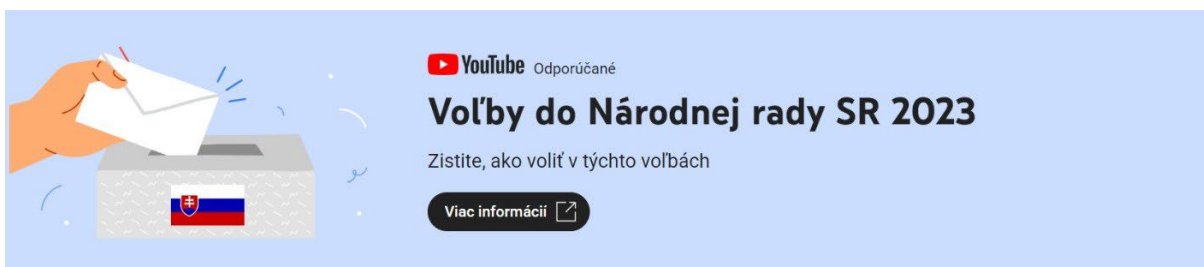
Slovakia has a lot to look forward to!

#elections

Final pre-election debate

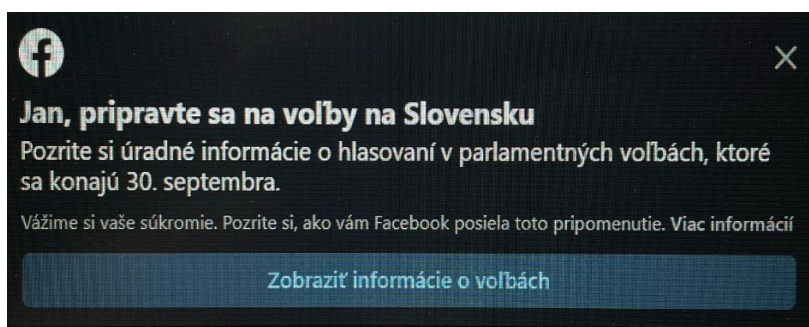
#elections2023

Measures of Google, namely YouTube and Google Search, were evaluated as meeting this requirement. Both services introduced information panels that provided users with information about the elections, including the possibility to vote from abroad by postal voting, using a link to the website of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs which provided the voters with information necessary to exercise their right to vote outside the territory of the Slovak Republic. However, Google did not indicate how many users viewed or interacted with this information and therefore it was impossible to assess its impact.



YouTube Recommended
2023 Elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic
 Find out how to vote in the elections
More information

Lastly, Meta integrated several information panels into the Facebook platform – namely a notification displayed one week before the upcoming election date and a notification displayed on election day itself. However, Meta did not implement any awareness-raising activities targeting users of its second largest platform – Instagram. Meta provided information about the number of users to whom the information was presented, showing that it reached about two thirds of Facebook users in Slovakia.²² However, according to the experience of the CMS analysts, this notification was only shown to the user once and disappeared as soon as the user refreshed the page, which is why its actual impact is arguable and the requirements were evaluated as mostly met.



Jan, get ready for the Slovak elections
 Read the official information about voting in the parliamentary elections taking place on 30 September.
 We value your privacy. Find out how Facebook is sharing this reminder. **More information**
Read more about the elections

2.3.2 Obligation of entities to respect electoral silence period

The platforms which allow the placement of paid political advertising (Meta and Google), while respecting the electoral silence period (prohibition of publishing any information about the candidates during the 48 hours preceding the opening of polling stations), state that the individual registered political advertisers are responsible for ensuring compliance with the law on the application of the electoral silence period. This is because paid political advertising to promote political candidates is only a part of the broader landscape of political advertisements and advertisements related to social events (a category including also other awareness-raising campaigns and general information about the elections, such as sponsored information about the place and time of elections, etc.) and, according to the platforms, it is not possible to filter

²² According to Meta, the notification displayed one week before the elections and the notification displayed on election day were shown to 2.31 million users and 2.12 million users respectively.

out solely the advertisements promoting specific candidates from this landscape. Therefore, this requirement was evaluated as not applicable for all monitored platforms.

In this context, Meta indicated that it had offered consultations and workshops to all political entities to explain the rules and principles of placing paid political advertising on its services.²³

Supervision of compliance with the electoral silence period falls under the competence of the State Commission for Elections and Control of Funding of Political Parties, which handles individual cases of violation of the legislation regulating the rules for elections and related processes within its remit.

2.3.3 Transparency of political advertising

The third group of questions in the questionnaire addressed possible violations in the area of transparency of political advertising on the platforms. The CMS inquired about the number of breaches of transparency rules, as well as the number of advertisements which were presented without identifying the sponsor of the advertisement, and the reported time period from the placement of the advertisement to its publication on the platform and in the ad library. Other aspects of political advertising on the monitored platforms and its transparency are addressed in Chapter 3 and Annex 1.

For TikTok, the issue of transparency of political advertising is irrelevant, as ByteDance does not allow publication of politically themed advertisements or advertisements promoting entities running in elections on its service. Therefore, this requirement was also evaluated as not applicable.

Only the entities meeting the requirements of the verification process for sponsors of political advertisement are allowed to place paid political advertisements on Google's platforms in the EU. Political advertising on Google's services should always be accompanied by a disclaimer indicating who sponsored the content. Also, any changes and modifications to published political advertisements should be visible within 48 to 72 hours in Google Ads Transparency Center. No specific data was provided in reply to the questions about specific data regarding measures taken by Google in the context of the elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic to tackle political advertisements violating the conditions for the publication of political advertisements. This requirement was therefore evaluated as mostly not met.

Paid political advertising published on Meta's platforms should always be accompanied by a disclaimer indicating that the content in question has been sponsored by a particular sponsor. Any changes and modifications of the published political advertisement should also be visible within 24 hours in Meta Ad Library. No specific data was provided in reply to the questions about specific data regarding measures taken by Meta in the context of the elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic to tackle political advertisements violating the conditions for the publication of political advertisements, other than general data covering information from

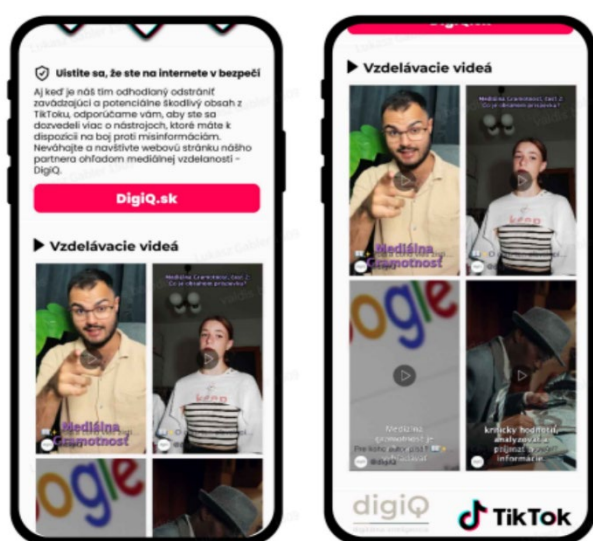
²³ Meta reported having held a meeting intended for all Slovak political parties in May 2023 to instruct them on the rules of a responsible, safe and transparent campaigning on Meta's platforms and available support channels.

across Europe, published by Meta in its Transparency Report under the Code.²⁴ In the light of the results of the CMS’s monitoring exercise and the fact that at least partial data was provided, this requirement was evaluated as “mostly met”.

2.3.4 Implementation of preventive and awareness-raising activities targeting the public

As a part of the evaluation of the platforms, the CMS also focused on the area of media literacy, inquiring whether the platforms implemented media literacy campaigns and other awareness-raising activities (e.g. warning against the spread of disinformation or focusing on internet safety) targeting the Slovak public immediately before the early parliamentary elections. All three monitored platforms reported having carried out such campaigns prior to the parliamentary elections and provided details of their cooperation with local actors as well as the impact of these campaigns.

Based on the responses, it can be generally concluded that the requirements were mostly met by TikTok. Its activities were concentrated in the period leading up to the elections. To this end, TikTok created the Election Hub gathering relevant information from official sources related to the elections in Slovak language, directly linked to the website of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic (see Chapter 2.3.1). Simultaneously, it cooperated with the Slovak organisation digiQ, which had the opportunity to shape the content of the campaign according to its own ideas. This campaign aimed at promoting media literacy consisted of a series of educational videos in Slovak language. The videos were available on the organisation’s account as well as at the end of the Election Hub. As the organisation’s account was set up just before the campaign, the reach of the videos was minimal (the most popular video in terms of viewing figures had only 142 views as of early December). In terms of media literacy, we welcome the clear message that it is important to rely on verified sources, which often need to be sought outside of social networks. However, as it was short-term activity, it is difficult to assess its real impact.



Make sure you stay safe online
Even though our team is determined to remove any misleading and potentially harmful content from TikTok, we advise you to learn more about the tools at your disposal to fight against disinformation. Do not hesitate to visit the website of our partner DigiQ dedicated to media literacy.
DigiQ.sk
Educational videos

²⁴ [Transparency report published by Meta in September 2023](#) as a part of its commitments under the Code of Practice on Disinformation.

Google did not engage in any specific election-related activities in the period immediately before the elections, which is perceived as a shortcoming. Its questionnaire reply also described features of Google Search, namely “this result” and “content notifications” which are intended for increasing information literacy. The CMS does not consider such tools to be sufficient, and the CMS analysts were unable to identify the added value of these tools in their testing. On the other hand, Google has established a long-term cooperation with a number of domestic actors in Slovakia (e.g. Memo 98²⁵) and launched the “*Hrdinovia internetu*” (Internet Heroes) project in cooperation with Teach for Slovakia.²⁶ Regarding media literacy, long-term projects are preferable, which is why this requirement was evaluated as mostly met. In 2022 and 2023, YouTube ran a campaign aimed at critical thinking entitled “*Dajte si pauzu*” (Hit Pause).²⁷ This campaign did not target only Slovakia and the context of the Slovak elections but was implemented across the European Economic Area. For all the campaigns implemented, limited information is available about their impact or evaluation of their performance, which is to some extent considered a barrier to meeting the requirement of efficient support for media literacy activities.

As for Meta’s compliance, the requirements were evaluated as mostly not met. In July 2023, Meta launched the “Facts in Focus” campaign in collaboration with local artists, aimed at fact-checking and promoting critical thinking and targeting the general population. In addition to Slovakia, the campaign was also implemented in Lithuania and Bulgaria.²⁸ According to the information provided by two artists who were involved in the campaign and responded to the CMS’s questionnaire, the participating artists were given a free hand in the creation of the content.²⁹ A problematic element of the campaign is the fact that some of the texts under the posts were in English, which might be incomprehensible to Slovak users. According to the information provided by the artists, Meta did not make any investments into increasing the reach of the posts created in this context, which thus reached only a limited audience.³⁰ The second awareness-raising campaign of Meta during the election campaign period was run in collaboration with the Slovak organisation digiQ and included a short video on how to detect disinformation.³¹ According to the information provided by digiQ, the impact on the editing of the visuals or the campaign as a whole was insignificant. Meta did not provide any further details about either this campaign or the other campaign launched during this period which aimed to address misconceptions about

²⁵ [MEMO 98, Transitions a Google posilňujú mediálnu gramotnosť seniorov \(MEMO 98, Transitions and Google are increasing media literacy of seniors\)](#).

²⁶ [“Hrdinovia internetu” \(Internet Heroes\) programme](#).

²⁷ [“Dajte si pauzu” \(Hit Pause\) YouTube campaign](#).

²⁸ [Meta’s “Facts in Focus” campaign](#).

²⁹ This is illustrated by the content on the accounts of [bessaillustration](#) and [dokety](#).

³⁰ In its questionnaire reply, Meta only reported the number of interactions for the whole campaign, including Lithuania and Bulgaria. In Slovakia, the number of these interactions allegedly reached 4.2 million and the campaign was viewed by 706,000 users.

³¹ [Video by digiQ](#) which was a part of Meta’s campaign. According to the information provided in Meta’s questionnaire reply, the campaign was launched at the end of August 2023 and allegedly ran until 30 September 2023. The campaign reportedly reached 1.9 million users and generated 8.5 million interactions. The CMS was unable to find any evidence of the campaign other than the video shared by digiQ. Therefore, it is impossible to verify the data on the number of interactions with the campaign.

the moderation of Meta's content in Slovakia and to promote general messages of media literacy.³²

2.3.5 Efficient evaluation of alerts reported by the CMS

It can be concluded that all three evaluated companies only complied with a part of the requirements for moderating content during the early elections in Slovakia, as defined by the CMS. This evaluation is relevant for Meta, Google and TikTok, with the requirements being mostly met by Meta and Google and mostly not met by TikTok.

One of the evaluated aspects was the quality of the data provided by the platforms as requested in the CMS's questionnaire. While TikTok effectively provided data that was detailed, country-specific as well as closely covering the required period, Meta and Google generally referred to the data provided in their transparency reports published in the context of the DSA and the Code.

TikTok was reasonably effective in reporting data in its questionnaire reply, managing to provide some of the required data and to meet a part of the requirements set by the CMS. TikTok provided specific data for the third quarter of 2023 coinciding with the pre-election campaign period in Slovakia, and its response contained relatively detailed information about content moderation in Slovakia. For example, it reported on the removal of a network of 69 accounts operating and targeting users in Slovakia. This network was responsible for misleading users and for attempting to promote anti-Western and pro-Russian narratives in Slovakia. It had 2,216 followers.³³

Although Google provided relatively detailed data, it lacks specificity in its focus on Slovakia. The provided data was primarily EU-wide and did not cover the examined period.

Meta's questionnaire reply contained insufficient data, specifically data published in its transparency reports in the context of the DSA and the Code. However, data from these reports does not cover the period the CMS inquired about and thus cannot be further analysed or compared. This general data included, for example, information about the number of escalations that Meta received through the escalation channel from the CMS. However, this data covered the period from January to mid-August and, as the regulator records this data as well, did not provide any added value.

The main aspect of the evaluation was the practical readiness of the platforms in the peak period of the election campaign. Based on observation and the data available to the CMS, it can be concluded that platforms responded relatively promptly to the regulator's calls and escalations of problematic content, with all companies responding to flagged content in less than 24 hours.

Regarding TikTok and the practical readiness of its capacities, it can be concluded that the platform removed or limited content in all 45 cases escalated by the CMS. In 10 cases, there was no official response from the platform. However, several hours later, none of the escalated content was available on the platform. Similarly, the response time was less than 24 hours. The

³² The Office of CMS contacted Meta on 4 December 2023 requesting additional information about the campaigns it had reported. As of the date of finalisation of this report, Meta had not provided the requested information.

³³ This information was provided to the CMS by ByteDance in its questionnaire reply. More information is expected to be published in TikTok's quarterly [Community Guidelines Enforcement Report](#).

platform indicated that it had not expanded the capacity of independent fact-checkers during the elections, and was using the services of LeadStories. This company did not respond to our queries, which is why the extent of its involvement cannot be confirmed. In light of these facts and the non-transparent reporting on content moderation, the requirements were evaluated as mostly not met.

Google, specifically YouTube, responded relatively quickly to escalations of problematic content during the monitoring period, with the response time not exceeding 24 hours. Specifically, the CMS escalated 3 cases of content, all of which was removed. Regarding cooperation with independent fact-checkers, the company stated that it did not increase its capacity in any way. Based on its approach to content moderation and transparent communication, the requirements were evaluated as mostly met.

In terms of the efficiency of content moderation during the election campaign and the related capacities, it can be concluded that Meta complied with the requirements imposed by the CMS relatively effectively. In terms of the practical readiness of Meta's capacity for the Slovak elections, the company responded to the 53 escalated cases of manipulation of the elections in September and October in less than 24 hours on average. On the other hand, the response was relatively inconsistent, with content being removed in some cases while slightly modified versions of the same content, conveying the same information and narratives in terms of content and meaning, were not removed. Similarly, certain content was assessed by the platform as not violating the platform's rules but was subsequently removed or made unavailable. Regarding the capacity of independent fact-checkers, the platform reported having involved several organisations, which was also confirmed by third parties (e.g. Demagog CZ and SK). As Meta was very quick to respond to escalated cases and to establish cooperation with independent fact-checkers, these requirements were evaluated as mostly met.

To conclude this section, none of the companies reported the exact number of independent fact-checkers involved in the election campaign in Slovakia.

3. Problematic aspects of political advertising on the platforms and inauthentic videos created using artificial intelligence tools

In the course of the monitoring activities carried out in connection with the early elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic on 30 September 2023 and the pre-election campaign, **the CMS did not record any cases of content that would meet the definition criteria of illegal content. Similarly, in relation to the elections, the CMS did not record any complaints from the public regarding the coverage of the elections on the platforms.**

The following chapter addresses issues the CMS encountered during the monitoring of the platforms based on its own capacities as well as on reports from other government institutions during the election campaign. The individual cases concern aspects observed in ad libraries (presentation of advertisements on platforms depending on the type of user interfaces, inconsistent verification of the identity of the advertiser) as well as the dissemination of inauthentic videos (so-called deepfake videos) created using artificial intelligence (AI) tools.

The basic requirements for platforms in the context of transparency of political advertising³⁴ are set out in the DSA and the Code. In the relevant sections, the CMS also describes the context of the Proposal for a Regulation on the transparency and targeting of political advertising³⁵, which is foreseen to enter into force before the European elections in spring 2024.

3.1 Ad libraries

Ad libraries of the selected platforms served primarily as a tool for marketers to verify and evaluate the performance of their campaigns. They also serve as transparency hubs where users can obtain additional information about the advertisements appearing on the platforms. Despite pressure from regulators, these libraries have so far only been created to mitigate reputational risks. In the absence of legislation which would oblige platforms to create and maintain uniform and standardised ad libraries, it has been impossible to efficiently compare and examine the advertisements in each platform's ad libraries.

In terms of regulating the online environment, the Code can be seen as the first major milestone formalising the platforms' commitment to create and maintain repositories of political advertisements. Under Commitment 10, the Code's signatories commit to maintain repositories containing accurate records (in as close to real time as possible, particularly during election periods) of all political and issue advertisements served, including the advertised content as such. For each advertisement, information should be available on, among other, identification of the sponsor; the dates the advertisement ran for; the total amount spent on the advertisement; the number of impressions delivered; the audience criteria used to determine recipients; the

³⁴ A platform's user should be able to easily access the identity of the payer of the advertisement, whether a natural or a legal person. These transparency requirements are provided for by Article 26 of the DSA as well as by Measure 6.2 of the Code. In addition, Article 7 of the forthcoming Regulation on the transparency and targeting of political advertising requires that the marking or labelling remains in place in the event the political advertisement is further disseminated. The same Article defines in detail what information is to be included in the transparency notice which must be included in every political advertisement.

³⁵ [Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the transparency and targeting of political advertising.](#)

demographics and number of recipients who saw the advertisement; and the geographical areas the advertisement was seen in.

While the Code constitutes a sector-specific self-regulation (i.e. the signatories have voluntarily chosen to be regulated in the given area), the DSA is a horizontal regulation targeting all VLOPSEs equally, as designated by the Commission. According to Article 39 of the DSA, all VLOPSEs shall compile and make publicly available in a specific section of their online interface a repository of advertisements that have been published on the service, i.e. not only political and issue advertisements. The library should include the content of the advertisement, including the name of the product, service or brand and the subject matter of the advertisement; the natural or legal person on whose behalf the advertisement is presented; the natural or legal person who paid for the advertisement; the period during which the advertisement was presented; whether the advertisement was intended to be presented specifically to one or more particular groups of recipients of the service and if so, the main parameters used for that purpose; the commercial communications; the total number of recipients of the service (broken down by Member State or the groups of recipients that the advertisement specifically targeted). According to the DSA, ad libraries must contain information about each advertisement for the entire period during which the advertisement was presented and until one year after the advertisement was presented.

Through the transparency provided by publicly available ad libraries, the DSA facilitates oversight and examination of the risks associated with the distribution of online advertising, such as illegal advertising or manipulation techniques. The following chapter presents issues related to the presentation of political advertisements in Meta's and Google's ad libraries. A detailed description of the presentation of advertisements on different interfaces of each platform and the identified shortcomings can be found in Annex 1.

3.1.1 Meta Ad Library

The results of the monitoring exercise showed that the Meta Ad Library provides a catalogue of all sponsored content that enables the user to filter out political advertisements. These can then be further filtered based on attributes selected by the user. The individual pages and relevant subpages and windows that show the user the requested advertisements and information about specific advertisements are available in Slovak language. Detailed information about the characteristics and individual attributes of the advertisements (metrics used to determine audience size, number of impressions, ad targeting, etc.) is available via the "More Information" links. These links redirect users to the relevant pages from Meta Transparency Center and Meta Business Help Center, which, however, are not always available in Slovak. These are: *Metrics and estimates using Accounts Center accounts/About Estimated Audience Size/Metrics and estimates using Accounts Center accounts/About estimated, in-development metrics and third-party metrics/About Estimated Audience Size/Meta Business Help Center, Amount Spent/Meta Business Help Center, Impressions.*

My name is Štefan Gašparovič and I am a candidate No. 30 for the Elections to National Council of the Slovak Republic. For three terms I have been the mayor of Slovenský Grob. I trust in Peter Pellegrini and HLAS – sociálna demokracia. Vote for Hlas, vote for No. 17.

Advertiser: HLAS – sociálna demokracia, (address)

The link entitled “About Facebook Ads” opens six scrollable windows in both Slovak and English. These contain, among others, a link in English saying “we are working on transparency and integrity of election process”. Clicking on the link opens a new window in English “PREPARING FOR THE ELECTIONS”.

O reklamách na Facebooku

Let's talk about ads, together. Learn more about how data is used to show you ads without advertisers learning who you are, the controls you have to help determine what ads you get, why you're seeing a particular ad and more FAQs below.



About advertising on Facebook

Based on these findings, the CMS considers that the unavailability of detailed information about the characteristics and attributes of advertisements (such as advertisement targeting, etc.) in Slovak language may be perceived as an issue from the user’s point of view. Furthermore, the CMS considers that in terms of user accessibility, the multi-layered layout of information in individual tabs and windows may not be very intuitive, or it may be impossible to retrieve individual information comprehensively and easily without browsing multiple windows simultaneously and switching between different windows and tabs.

3.1.2 Google Ads Transparency Center

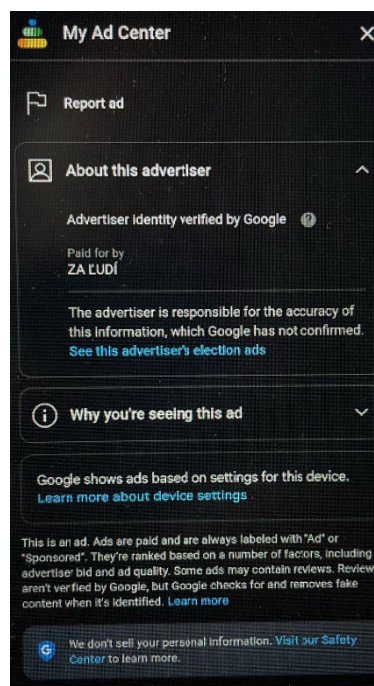
Other than a general statement that the identity of the advertiser had been verified, our monitoring of Google Ads Transparency Center and specific advertisements on YouTube did not identify any information about the advertiser's contact details. The advertisement is accompanied by a link to stranazaludi.sk which, however, does not indicate who the payer of the political advertisement is. A platform's user should be able to easily access the identity of the payer of the advertisement, whether a natural or a legal person. These transparency requirements are provided for by Article 26 of the DSA as well as by Measure 6.2 of the Code. The CMS considers that such presentation on the platform does not meet the required standards.

Detected advertisement:



We've turned off the caps for the oligarchs!
Playing (k)
stranazaludi.sk
EUR 200 million.
Video will be played after the ads

Advertisement details:



Detailed information about the advertiser is only available to the user in the ad library. Therefore, transparent information is more likely to be accessed by a motivated user of the platform, rather than by a regular user who is presented with the advertisement while watching another video, for example.

Advertisement in the ad library:

The screenshot shows the Google Ads Transparency Center interface. At the top, it says "Google Ads Transparency Center" and "Political advertising in European Union > ZA ĽUDÍ". Below this, there are filters for "Any time", "Shown in Slovakia", and "All formats". A search bar contains "Political ads" and "Search ads by advertiser". The advertiser name "ZA ĽUDÍ" is prominently displayed, along with the location "European Union" and a note that the advertiser has verified their identity.

Below the advertiser information, there are two tabs: "Ads" and "Insights". Under the "Ads" tab, there is a search bar for "Search ads by candidate name" and filters for "Number of times shown" and "Amount spent". A dropdown menu is set to "Most recent".

Four advertisement thumbnails are displayed in a grid, each with its own statistics:

- Thumbnail 1:** Shows a woman in a red jacket. Statistics: Shown 175K - 200K times, From Sep 21 - 27, 2023 (7 days), Spent €1.5K - €2K.
- Thumbnail 2:** Shows a woman in a grey jacket. Statistics: Shown 225K - 250K times, From Sep 21 - 27, 2023 (7 days), Spent €2K - €2.5K.
- Thumbnail 3:** Shows a group of people. Statistics: Shown 90K - 100K times, From Sep 20 - 27, 2023 (7 days), Spent €400 - €450.
- Thumbnail 4:** Shows a group of people. Statistics: Shown 350K - 400K times, From Sep 20 - 27, 2023 (8 days), Spent €1.5K - €2K.

Details of the advertisement:

The screenshot shows the Google Centrum transparentnosti reklám interface. The URL is "adstransparency.google.com/advertiser/AR14474182174275796993/creative/CR1613641206775293569?region=SK&topic=political". The page title is "Google Centrum transparentnosti reklám". The breadcrumb trail is "Domov > Politická reklama v regióne Európska únia > ZA ĽUDÍ > Podrobnosti o reklame".

The main content area shows the advertiser "INZERENT ZA ĽUDÍ" and a "Nahlásenie reklamy" button. Below this, there is a note: "Dostupné informácie o tejto reklame sa môžu v rôznych oblastiach líšiť". A filter is set to "Zobrazené v oblasti: Slovensko".

The advertisement details are as follows:

- Prvýkrát zobrazené:** 20. 9. 2023
- Čas zobrazenia:** 7 dní, nonconsecutively
- Téma (označená Googlom):** Politika
- Naposledy zobrazené:** 27. 9. 2023
- Formát:** Video

At the bottom, there is a video player showing a thumbnail with the text "Krúzkujte čestných odborníkov..." and a "Visit advertiser" button.

Home - Political advertising in European Union - ZA ĽUDÍ - Ad details
ADVERTISER ZA ĽUDÍ – Report this ad
 The information available about this ad may vary by location -
Shown in the European Union
First shown: Sep 20, 2023
Ran for: 7 days, nonconsecutively
Topic (labelled by Google): Political
Last shown: Sep 27, 2023
Format: Video

3.2 Political advertisements on the user interface

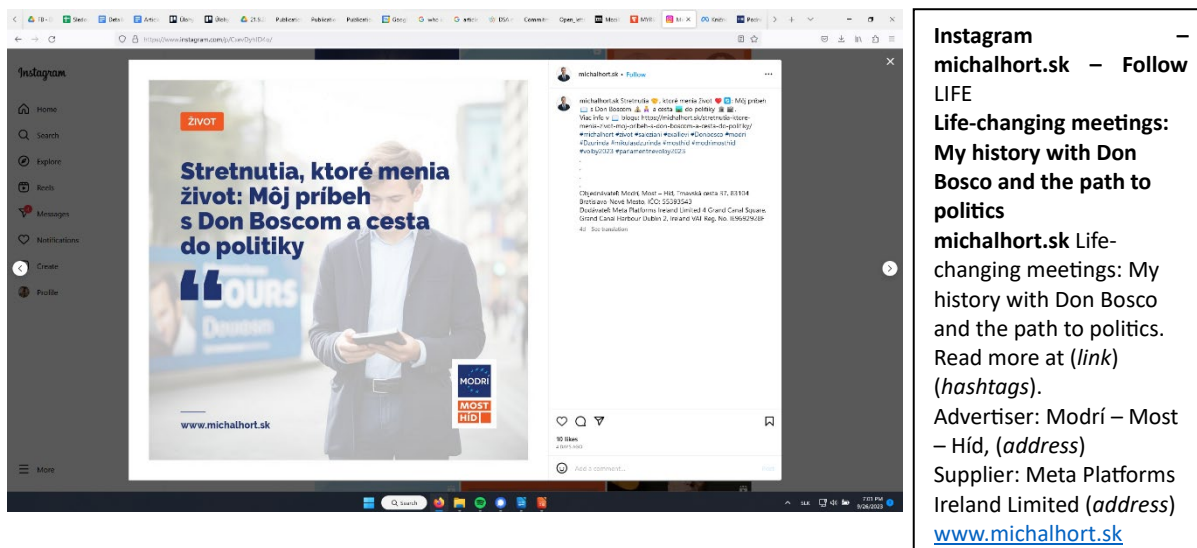
The following section briefly describes the presentation of political advertisements on individual services and their interfaces (e.g. PC, smartphone, etc.). It also describes limitations identified for each interface. A description of all monitored interfaces is provided in Annex 1.

3.2.1 Meta

In case of Meta, the monitoring exercise targeted two platforms – Facebook and Instagram. As different interfaces and parts of the platforms provide a different user experience in terms of viewing content, we focused on all features and interfaces available³⁶. The following section addresses the areas where the CMS observed certain limitations.

Instagram PC interface – Feed

Regarding the examined posts, it is impossible to conclude with certainty whether the content presented to our analyst during the monitoring exercise based on recommendations and virality rate constituted political advertisements or regular content, as these posts did not contain so-called disclaimers³⁷. Information about the payer of the advertisement was included in the text accompanying content, however, including such information in the wording of a post is entirely at the discretion of the author/submitter of the post. However, upon examining Meta Ad Library, it was found that the post in question was also registered as a paid political advertisement, which was, at the time, active on both Facebook and Instagram.



Instagram – Follow
michalhort.sk – Follow
LIFE
Life-changing meetings: My history with Don Bosco and the path to politics
michalhort.sk Life-changing meetings: My history with Don Bosco and the path to politics. Read more at (*link*) (*hashtags*).
Advertiser: Modrí – Most – Híd, (*address*)
Supplier: Meta Platforms Ireland Limited (*address*)
www.michalhort.sk

³⁶ Monitoring of Facebook focused on the following interfaces: smartphone (feed, video interaction elements, reels) and PC (feed, video interaction elements, reels). For Instagram, the examined interfaces included smartphone (feed, stories, reels) and PC (feed, stories, reels).

³⁷ “Disclaimer” refers to information that indicates to the user that the content is a paid political advertisement. In the context of the monitored platforms operated by Meta and Google, the political advertising disclaimer both formally states that the content is “sponsored” and indicates who the payer of the sponsored content is, i. e. this public information about the identity of the payer serves as an identifier of paid political advertising.

3.2.2 Google

In case of Google, only YouTube was monitored. However, the placement of advertising on Google's services generally falls under Google Ads. During the monitoring exercise, the CMS analysts encountered non-transparent marking of a political advertisement on YouTube viewed on TV interface.

YouTube TV interface - Video

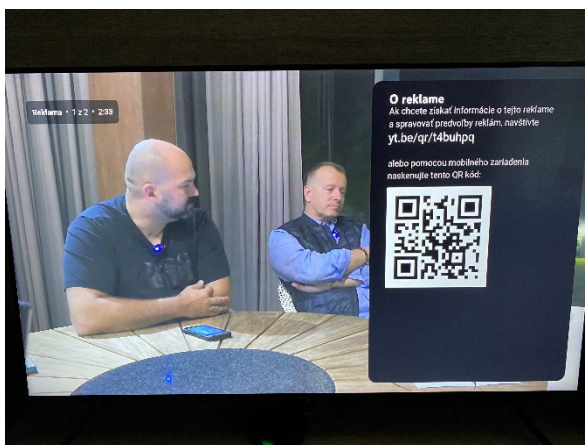
Non-transparent marking of political advertising was detected in form of a video advertisement that plays before or during a video watched by a user on YouTube. The top left corner includes a statement, e.g. "Ad 1 of 2 0:05" and the bottom right corner includes a statement "About ad (i)". Clicking on (i) opens the About Ads window containing a link or a QR code the user can use to learn more about the advertisement in the Google Ads Transparency Center.

Video advertisement:



Ad 1 of 2 2:28
About Ad (i)
Skip ads

Details of the video advertisement:



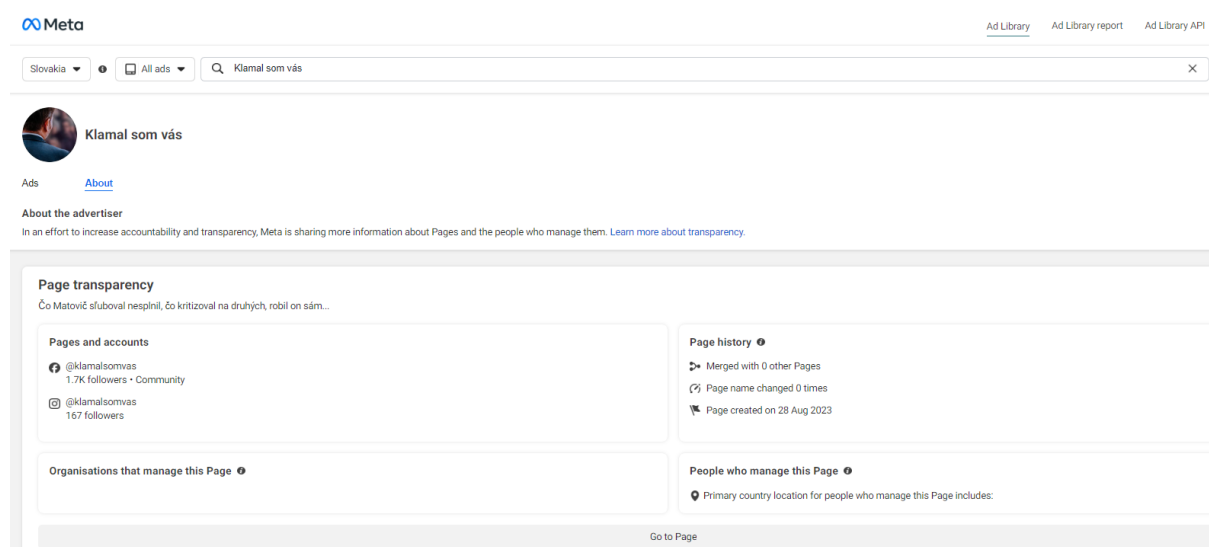
Ad 1 of 2
2:33
About Ad
To learn more about this ad and manage your ad preferences, click on (*link*) or scan this QR code with your mobile device (*QR code*)

There is no clear indication in the video advertisement informing the user that this sponsored content is a political advertisement, and there is no information about who the advertiser is. The CMS considers that a political advertisement presented in this manner does not meet the required standards of transparency.

3.3 Issues related to verification of the advertiser's identity

During the election campaign period, Facebook, operated by Meta, showed a sponsored political advertisement intended as an anti-campaign against the candidate Igor Matovič, chairman of the *OBYČAJNÍ ĽUDIA A NEZÁVISLÉ OSOBNOSTI* ("OLANO")³⁸ party. The sponsor of the political advertisement in question, appearing under the name "Klamal som vás" (I lied to you), was duly registered as a verified sponsor of political advertisements under the registration mechanisms. Simultaneously, national media reported on the appearance and circumstances of this political advertisement and their investigation later revealed the identity of the originator of this sponsored political anti-campaign³⁹.

The advertisements in the ad library of "Klamal som vás":



The screenshot shows the Meta Ad Library interface for the advertiser "Klamal som vás". At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Meta logo and links for "Ad Library", "Ad Library report", and "Ad Library API". Below this is a search bar with "Slovakia" selected for the region, "All ads" for the filter, and "Klamal som vás" in the search field. The advertiser's profile is shown with a circular profile picture and the name "Klamal som vás". There are links for "Ads" and "About". A section titled "About the advertiser" contains the text: "In an effort to increase accountability and transparency, Meta is sharing more information about Pages and the people who manage them. [Learn more about transparency.](#)" Below this is a "Page transparency" section with a warning: "Čo Matovič sľuboval nesplnil, čo kritizoval na druhých, robil on sám...". This section is divided into four panels: "Pages and accounts" (listing @klamalsomvas with 1.7K followers and 167 followers), "Page history" (listing "Merged with 0 other Pages", "Page name changed 0 times", and "Page created on 28 Aug 2023"), "Organisations that manage this Page" (empty), and "People who manage this Page" (with a note about primary country location). A "Go to Page" link is at the bottom.

³⁸ At the end of October 2023, the party's name changed to "*hnutie Slovensko*" (the Slovakia movement), see [RTVS news portal](#) for more details.

³⁹ This anti-campaign was covered by several media outlets, such as [Aktuality.sk](#) and the [RTVS news portal](#).

Meta Ad Library Ad Library report Ad Library API Branded content

Summary data

6 ad versions Library ID: 1659225724577640 X

Library ID: 1659225724577640

Inactive

15 Sep 2023 - 26 Sep 2023

Platforms

Categories

Estimated audience size: 10K-50K

Amount spent (EUR): <€100

Impressions: <1K

Klamal som vás

Sponsored • Paid for by matovic.sk

Library ID: 1659225724577640

Zákony vraj musia platiť pre každého, presviedčal nás roky šéf OĽaNO. Lenže po parlamentných voľbách vyšlo najavo, že s rodinou v Trnave býva v novom neskolaudovanom dome. Za to, že Matovičovi bývajú naibierno, im hrozila až 30-tisícová pokuta. Dostali omnoho nižšiu. Iba 500 eur.

Igor Matovič nás oklamal. www.matovic.sk

MATOVIČOVE KLAMSTVÁ A NESPLNENÉ SLUBY

NOVÝ DOM

MATOVIČ

Matovič tvrdí, že zákony sa musia dodržiavať.

About the disclaimer

When an advertiser categorises their ad as being about social issues, elections or politics, they are required to disclose who paid for the ad. [Learn more](#)

Information from the advertiser

This information was submitted by the advertiser.

Submitted on 30 Aug 2023

- Disclaimer: matovic.sk
- Phone number: +421905203480
- Email address: rado@matovic.sk
- Website: https://www.matovic.sk/
- Address: Bratislava, Slovakia

Visit the Help Centre to learn about what we require from advertisers to run ads about social issues, elections or politics. [Learn more](#)

Ad audience

The chairman of OĽaNO has been claiming for years that the law must apply to everyone. But after the parliamentary elections it turned out that he and his family live in a new house in Trnava that has not passed the final inspection. The Matovič family were threatened with a fine of up to 30,000 euro for illegal housing. The fine they received was much lower. Only 500 euro.

The political advertisement in question is classified by Meta as falling under the Social Issues, Elections or Politics category, according to the conditions specified for that category: “made by, on behalf of or about a candidate for public office”⁴⁰ (these pages are unavailable in Slovak). In order to publish an advertisement belonging to this category, the advertiser must complete the authorization process for their advertisements and provide a so-called disclaimer. As a part of Meta’s rules and guidelines for publishing political advertisements, Meta Business Help Center⁴¹ provides that a political advertising disclaimer is required if the sponsored content relates to or constitutes, for example, advocacy for a politician, candidate or a political party; the name of a political figure, politician or candidate for public office; or their image or mentions the title of a political figure (e.g.: “Governor”, “MP” or “Minister”). Political figures include officials appointed by politicians.

To authorize advertisements about social issues, elections or politics⁴², Meta requires verification of the advertiser’s identity and completion of a disclaimer (see Step 3: Manage disclaimers). As a government authority, we are not in a position to validate the identity verification process. We focused on the content of the disclaimer, which is publicly available for the content concerned in Meta Ad Library⁴³ and is shown in the image above in this report. Meta’s terms and conditions provide:

⁴⁰ [Meta Business Help Center: Ads about social issues, elections or politics.](#)

⁴¹ [How ads about social issues, elections or politics are reviewed \(with examples\).](#)

⁴² [Authorization process for advertising on social issues, elections or politics.](#)

⁴³ [An example of a political advertisement from “Klamal som vás” anti-campaign in Meta Ad Library.](#)

Step 3: Manage disclaimers

1. Every advertisement about social issues, elections or politics must include a disclaimer. You need to create a disclaimer for each advertising account you add, including information about the person or entity paying for the advertisements.
2. To complete the disclaimer, click on *Select name*. Select your name as it appears in official documents or select the name of the page (recently created pages may not be included in the list). Alternatively, you can select *+ Other name* to create your own name (additional verification is needed for this option).
3. If you select a page or another name, you need to complete the verification process. You need to provide the associated phone number, the organization's address, an email address, and your own web domain. If you do not meet these requirements, you will not be able to complete the verification process.
4. Make sure the address you provide is accurate. If the address is rejected, check the exact location with a search engine or a mapping service.
5. If you use a page name in the disclaimer, you will not be allowed to change the name of your page while the disclaimer exists.
6. After you provide this information (name, phone number, organization address, email address, web domain), it will be verified and publicly available in the Ad Library for 7 years. This information can be looked up by members of the public when a person identifies a specific advertisement in the Ad Library, clicks on "View details" and then clicks on "Advertiser details" from the drop-down menu. Only sites for which you are an administrator are available in your disclaimer.

Based on these conditions, in this case the advertiser clearly chose the option of entering the name of a page or another name. To use this option, the rules require that the organisation's details, including full address, are provided. In the CMS's opinion, the provided address "Bratislava, Slovakia" does not meet the accuracy requirement under Meta's rules. In spite of that, the advertiser was allowed to complete the verification process. The CMS considers that the desired transparency was thus not achieved.

Furthermore, our analysis drew on the DSA, whose Article 39(2) requires, among other criteria for additional transparency of online advertising, that the repository includes "at least all of the following information:

- (a) the content of the advertisement, including the name of the product, service or brand and the subject matter of the advertisement;
- (b) the natural or legal person on whose behalf the advertisement is presented;
- (c) the natural or legal person who paid for the advertisement, if that person is different from the person referred to in point (b)⁴⁴; etc.

However, it is not clear from the information provided in this disclaimer whether the advertisement was commissioned by a legal or natural person, as implicitly required by the DSA. The identity elements to be displayed in the repository are determined by whether it is a legal person or a natural person.

⁴⁴ [Regulation 2022/2065 of 19 October 2022 on a Single Market For Digital Services and amending Directive 2000/31/EC \(Digital Services Act\)](#).

Similarly, our analysis was inspired by the aspiring proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the transparency and targeting of political advertising. According to Article 7(1)(b) of the draft Regulation⁴⁵, in the context of the provision of political advertising services, each political advertisement shall be made available with the following information provided in a clear, salient and unambiguous way: the identity of the sponsor of the political advertisement and the entity ultimately controlling the sponsor. Article 7(2)(a) provides that the transparency notice shall be included in each political advertisement (or be easily retrievable from it), and shall include information about the identity of the sponsor and contact details. Article 7(3) provides that political advertising publishers shall make reasonable efforts to ensure that the information referred to in paragraph 1 and 2 is complete, and where they find this is not the case, they shall not make available the political advertisement.

As a result of our analysis of Meta's conditions, the DSA and the proposal for Regulation on the transparency and targeting of political advertising, the CMS concludes that based on the information provided in the disclaimer it is impossible to determine whether the advertiser is a legal or natural person. Furthermore, we do not consider that the indicated registered office "Bratislava, Slovakia" sufficiently reflects the requirement for an exact contact address, making it impossible to identify the entity as an existing individual or organisation. In our view, the desired transparency is thus not achieved and verification of the identity of the sponsor of a political advertisement against this background may in practice pose a systemic risk to the transparency of the publication of political advertising.

However, as the form of this content did not meet the criteria of the illegal content definition and did not conflict with the principles for publishing content on the service, the CMS did not formally contact the platform in relation to the circumstances of this content.

⁴⁵ [Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the transparency and targeting of political advertising.](#)

3.4 Deepfake videos created using AI technology

Throughout the monitoring of the election campaign on the platforms, the CMS did not receive any complaints from the public. However, the CMS identified and actively consulted with platforms in the event of the occurrence of so-called deepfake content created using artificial intelligence (AI) technology, both through its own monitoring capabilities and based on reports from other government institutions.

The first deepfake videos related to the Slovak political scene using AI were detected in the last week of the election campaign, i.e. from 25 September 2023 to the election day – 30 September 2023. This content (media) went viral and cyclically appeared on all monitored platforms (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, X/Twitter).

The content in question detected by monitoring capacities was simultaneously covered by the media⁴⁶, which informed the general public about the emergence of deepfake videos. These contained deceptive statements in voices that were indistinguishable to the average listener from the real voices of the President of the Slovak Republic, Zuzana Čaputová, and other publicly well-known political candidates and journalists. Typical technical features of these videos included unnatural speech diction and accents as well as audible cuts in the sound track. The fact that the videos in question contained false information was in some cases supported by follow-up statements by the Police Force⁴⁷ and independent fact-checkers contracted by the platforms to verify the authenticity of published information⁴⁸.

Following the publication of so-called debunking (the refutation of false claims and information supported by relevant sources), Facebook began to apply an information label to such content (referred to as labelling, i.e. informing users of the platform that the video contains false information). In spite of that, the platform still allows users to view, interact with (“like”), comment on and even share and disseminate such content.

At the same time, various mutations of the content in question began to appear (clips from videos, videos with embedded subtitles, screenshots of videos with subtitles).

3.4.1 Detected deepfake videos – deceptive content disseminated on the platforms

The following section presents a timeline of the dissemination of problematic videos using AI on YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and X/Twitter⁴⁹. The terms of use of all the above-mentioned platforms include rules prohibiting the dissemination of artificially created or manipulated media on the platform (e.g., photos, videos and recordings) under certain conditions.

⁴⁶ Proliferation of deepfake videos was covered by several media outlets, such as [Denník N](#).

⁴⁷ [Official Facebook page of the Slovak Police Force](#) informed about the proliferation of disinformation and manipulative videos and audio recordings related to the elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic.

⁴⁸ [Communication by AFP independent fact-checkers](#).

⁴⁹ X was generally not monitored by CMS in the context of the election campaign. However, the CMS was informed by a government authority about the dissemination of problematic content on this platform. Being in touch with X, the CMS used its powers and escalated the content to the platform.

Google has a rule **for YouTube** that falls under a broader category of rules designed to prevent the deliberate publishing of false information.⁵⁰ This rule explicitly instructs users not to “post content on YouTube that has been technically manipulated or doctored in a way that misleads users (usually beyond clips taken out of context) and may pose a serious risk of egregious harm”.

Meta has a rule **for Facebook and Instagram** that falls under a broader category of misinformation and manipulated media.⁵¹ Specifically, this rule provides that “media can be edited in a variety of ways. In many cases, these changes are benign, such as content being cropped or shortened for artistic reasons or music being added. In other cases, the manipulation is not apparent and could mislead, particularly in the case of video content. We remove this content because it can quickly go viral, and experts advise that false opinions regarding manipulated media often cannot be corrected by further discussion. We remove videos under this policy if specific criteria are met:

1. the video has been edited or synthesized beyond editing for clarity or quality in a manner that is not obvious to an ordinary person and that would be likely to mislead an ordinary person into believing that the subject in the video said words that he did not say; and
2. the video is the product of artificial intelligence or machine learning, including deep learning techniques (e.g., a technical deepfake), that merges, combines, replaces, and/or superimposes content onto a video, creating a video that appears authentic.”

TikTok also clearly defines media whose distribution is prohibited on the platform – “synthetic media is content created or modified by AI technology. It includes highly realistic digitally-created (fake) content of real people, such as a video of a real person speaking but their words have been modified or changed. [...] It is not allowed to share synthetic media that contains the likeness (visual or audio) of a real person, including [...] an adult public figure when used for political or commercial endorsements, or if it violates any other policy. Material that has been edited, spliced, or combined (such as video and audio) in a way that may mislead a person about real-world events” is equally not allowed⁵².

Similarly, **X** has a rule that prohibits sharing of manipulated content – “In order for content to be labelled or removed under this policy, we must have reason to believe that media are significantly and deceptively altered, manipulated, or fabricated. Synthetic and manipulated media take many different forms and people can employ a wide range of technologies to produce these media. Some of the factors we consider include:

- whether media have been substantially edited or post-processed in a manner that fundamentally alters their composition, sequence, timing, or framing and distorts their meaning;
- whether there are any visual or auditory information (such as new video frames, overdubbed audio, or modified subtitles) that has been added, edited, or removed that fundamentally changes the understanding, meaning, or context of the media;
- whether media have been created, edited, or post-processed with enhancements or use of filters that fundamentally changes the understanding, meaning, or context of the content; and

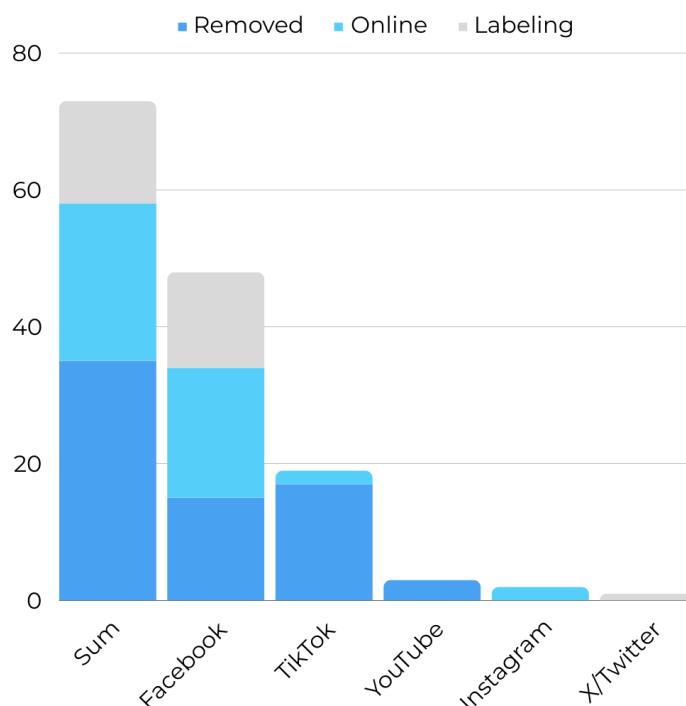
⁵⁰ [YouTube Transparency Centre](#).

⁵¹ [Facebook Transparency Center, Section IV. Manipulated Media](#) (version valid as of 11 December 2023).

⁵² [TikTok Community Guidelines: Synthetic and Manipulated Media](#).

- whether media depicting a real person have been fabricated or simulated, especially through use of artificial intelligence algorithms⁵³.

Based on these rules and terms of use of the above-mentioned platforms, among others, the CMS reported the problematic content to the platforms. Information about the number of cases flagged by the CMS and the response from the platforms was updated on 24 October 2023⁵⁴.



1. Election-related video promoting *Republika*

On 25 September 2023, as part of a paid political advertisement on the profile of Milan Uhrík (the chairman of the candidate political party *Republika*), a video was posted **on Instagram** featuring a voice that was indistinguishable to the average listener from that of the President of the Slovak Republic, Zuzana Čaputová. The voice stated in this spot that there was no need to blindly follow the progressive herd and that it was necessary to wake up and vote for *Republika*. The voice further stated that it was artificially created and could resemble real voices of real persons. This was followed by the representatives of *Republika*, Milan Uhrík and Milan Mazurek, urging the viewers of the video to go and vote for *Republika*.

⁵³ [X Platform Guidelines: Synthetic and manipulated media policy.](#)

⁵⁴ In addition to the CMS, dissemination of problematic AI videos on platforms was also addressed by other institutions and NGOs. For example, the [“Vol'by 2023 a dezinformácie: Analýza šírenia klamlivého obsahu súvisiaceho s voľbami do Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky 2023”](#) (2023 Elections and Disinformation: Analysis of the dissemination of deceptive content related to the 2023 Elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic) report published by the Centre for Countering Hybrid Threats of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, or the [“Deepfake video, ktoré zasiahlo do predvolebnej kampane, širili Harabin aj Marček. Bolo súčasťou väčšieho plánu?”](#) (The deepfake video that affected the election campaign was disseminated by both Harabin and Marček. Was it a part of a bigger plan?) report published by the Investigative Center of Jan Kuciak.

The video and its context were reported to Meta, which operates Instagram, as problematic content on the same day. On 28 September 2023, the CMS received a response that the video had been reviewed and no breaches of Instagram’s platform terms of use had been identified. Therefore, the video remained available on the platform. Based on the data available in Meta Ad Library, the content in question was available as paid political advertising from 25 to 27 September 2023, with the advertiser spending from EUR 100 to EUR 199 on this advertisement and the number of impressions ranging from 45,000 to 50,000.⁵⁵ The content in question remains available on Instagram.

On 26 September 2023, the same video was detected as a paid political advertisement on the profile of *Republika* on **YouTube**. The video and its context were reported as problematic content to Google, which operates YouTube, on the same day and the video was removed from the platform by Google on the same day, as the content in question was assessed as violating YouTube’s terms of use. Based on the data available in Google Ads Transparency Center, the content in question was available from 25 to 26 September 2023, with the advertiser spending from EUR 150 to EUR 200 on this advertisement and the number of impressions ranging from 35,000 to 40,000.⁵⁶

On 27 September 2023, the same video was detected on Milan Uhrík’s profile **on TikTok**. The video and its context were reported to ByteDance, which operates TikTok, on the same day, and on 28 September 2023 the CMS was informed that the video had been removed from the platform by ByteDance, as the content in question was assessed as violating the terms of use of TikTok.

2. Election-related video promoting *Republika* (second variant)

On 26 September 2023, as part of a paid political advertisement on the profile of *Republika* **on YouTube**, a video was detected featuring a voice that was indistinguishable to the average listener from that of the chairman of the *Progresívne Slovensko* (“PS”) party, Michal Šimečka. The voice in the video claimed that his name was Michal and that he used to be a progressive and believed in seventy different genders and pregnant men, but eventually came to his senses and would vote for *Republika*. The video included a statement that the voice was synthesized and may resemble voices of other people. The end of the video also featured representatives of *Republika*, Milan Uhrík and Milan Mazurek, calling on the viewer to vote for *Republika*.

The video and its context were reported as problematic content to Google, which operates YouTube, on the same day, and the video was removed from the platform by Google on the same day, as the content in question was assessed as violating YouTube’s terms of use. Based on the data available in Google Ads Transparency Center, the content in question was available from 25 to 26 September 2023, with the advertiser spending from EUR 150 to EUR 200 on this advertisement and the number of impressions ranging from 35,000 to 40,000.⁵⁷

On 29 September 2023, the same video was detected on a private profile **on TikTok**. The video and its context were reported to ByteDance which operates TikTok on the same day, and the

⁵⁵ [Information about paid political advertising in Meta Ad Library.](#)

⁵⁶ [Information about paid political advertising in Google Ads Transparency Center.](#)

⁵⁷ [Information about paid political advertising in Google Ads Transparency Center.](#)

video was removed from the platform by ByteDance, as the content in question was assessed as violating the terms of use of this platform.

3. Video about increasing beer prices

On 28 September 2023, a total of three videos was detected on private accounts **on TikTok** (the video track featuring a collage of a glass of beer and a photograph of the chairman of PS, Michal Šimečka), with the audio track featuring a voice that was indistinguishable to the average listener from that of the chairman of PS, Michal Šimečka. The voice in the video claimed that PS would radically increase the price of beer after the elections as part of their progressive fight against alcoholism. The video had been circulating on social networks for several days and had already been covered by the media⁵⁸, with Michal Šimečka⁵⁹ and the representatives of the Police Force of the Slovak Republic⁶⁰ providing a statement on the deceptive content.

All three occurrences of the content and its context were reported to ByteDance which operates TikTok on the same day, and on 28 September 2023 the CMS was informed by ByteDance that the video had been removed from the platform, as the content in question was assessed as violating the terms of use of this platform.

4. Video expressing the President's support for *Republika*

On 28 September 2023, a video was posted on a private profile **on TikTok** (the video track featuring archive footage of the President of the Slovak Republic Zuzana Čaputová in the studio of the Slovak Radio), with the audio track featuring a voice that was indistinguishable to the average listener from that of Zuzana Čaputová, including noises reminiscent of a radio broadcast. The voice in the video stated that she had recently started listening to *Kulturblog*, which made her change her mind and vote for Milan Mazurek and *Republika* in the elections. The video's description claimed that it was a leaked speech by Zuzana Čaputová that was not supposed to have been made publicly available.

The video and its context were reported as problematic content to ByteDance, which operates TikTok, on the same day, and the video was removed from the platform by ByteDance, as the content in question was assessed as violating the terms of use of this platform.

On 29 September 2023, the same video was detected on a private profile **on Instagram**. The video and its context were reported to Meta, which operates Instagram, on the same day. On 30 September 2023, the CMS received a response that the video had been reviewed and no violations of Instagram's terms of use had been identified, which is why the video remained available on the platform.

⁵⁸ [SITA Report](#) of 27 September 2023 on the recording circulated on social media, featuring a voice resembling that of Michal Šimečka and falsely informing about his intention to drastically increase beer prices if his party wins the elections.

⁵⁹ [Statement](#) by Michal Šimečka on the manipulated recording of 27 September 2023 on his official Facebook profile.

⁶⁰ [Post](#) of 28 September 2023 on the official Facebook page of the Police Force of the Slovak Republic, warning against detected cases of artificial intelligence tools being misused to create videos related to the Slovak parliamentary elections.

5. Video avatar of Peter Pellegrini and Michal Šimečka

On 28 September 2023, a video was posted on a private profile **on TikTok** [the image featured a computer-generated male face with predominant facial features of Peter Pellegrini, the chairman of the *Hlas – sociálna demokracia* (“Hlas-SD”) party, combined with the facial features of Michal Šimečka, the chairman of PS], with the audio track featuring a voice indistinguishable to the average listener from that of Peter Pellegrini, speaking mockingly about the importance of voting for such parties. The end of the video showed a collage of the logos of PS and Hlas-SD.

The video and its context were reported to ByteDance, which operates TikTok, on the same day, and the video was removed from the platform by ByteDance, as the content in question was assessed as violating the terms of use of TikTok.

6. Video avatar of Richard Sulík and Michal Šimečka

On 28 September 2023, a video was published on a private profile **on TikTok** [the image component consisted of a computer-generated male face with predominant facial features of Richard Sulík, the chairman of the *Sloboda a solidarita* (“SASKA”/“SaS”) party, combined with the facial features of Michal Šimečka, the chairman of PS], with the audio track featuring a voice indistinguishable to the average listener from that of Richard Sulík, speaking mockingly about the importance of voting for such parties. The end of the video shows a collage of the logos of SaS and PS.

The video and its context were reported to ByteDance, which operates TikTok, on the same day, and the video was removed from the platform by ByteDance, as the content in question was assessed as violating the terms of use of TikTok.

7. Video interview with Michal Šimečka and Monika Tódová

This video was first detected on 28 September 2023 on TikTok in frame of the CMS’s monitoring activities, and subsequently reappeared cyclically in various sources on **all monitored platforms**. Simultaneously, variations of the video, videos with embedded subtitles, video clips, screenshots with quotes from the video, etc. began to spread.

The image of the video consisted of a collage featuring photographs of Michal Šimečka, the chairman of PS, and Monika Tódová, a well-known journalist of *Denník N*. The audio track featured an allegedly leaked telephone conversation between the two actors, in which Šimečka informs Tódová about having prepared and bought electoral commissions in some districts, and having bought votes in Roma settlements. Tódová responds by urging him to be cautious and points out the many districts that cannot be bought. These voices, indistinguishable to the average listener from those of Michal Šimečka and Monika Tódová, spoke with unnatural diction and accents, and cuts in the audio track were audible in the video.

The fact that the videos in question contained false information was in this case supported by follow-up statements of the Police Force⁶¹ and independent fact-checkers contracted by the platforms to verify the authenticity of published information⁶².

On 28 September 2023, the CMS detected a total of eight such videos **on TikTok**. The videos and their context were reported to and deleted by ByteDance, which operates TikTok, on the same day. On 29 September 2023, the CMS detected a total of two such videos on TikTok. The videos and their context were reported to and deleted by ByteDance, which operates TikTok, on the same day.

On 29 September 2023, the CMS detected one occurrence of the video **on YouTube**. The video and its context were reported to and deleted by Google, which operates YouTube, on the same day.

On 29 September 2023, the CMS detected one occurrence of the video **on X (formerly Twitter)**. As of the date of the report, the CMS did not receive any official response to the reported content. However, upon re-examination, the CMS noted that the content was accompanied by a notice on the bottom bar indicating that the information contained in the video was not true, as well as by a “Learn more” link which opens a page describing X’s rules of use in English⁶³. However, access to, interaction with and sharing of the content is not restricted in any way.

On 28 September 2023, the CMS detected a total of six such videos **on Facebook**. The videos and their context were reported to Meta, which operates the platform, and were subsequently removed from the platform one by one by Meta between 29 and 30 September 2023. Following the publication of so-called debunking (the refutation of false claims and information supported by relevant sources), Facebook began to apply an information label to such content (referred to as labelling, i.e. informing users of the platform that the video in question contains false information). In spite of that, the platform still allows users to view, interact with (“like”), comment on and even share and disseminate such content.

On 29 September 2023, the CMS detected a total of 27 such videos **on Facebook**. The videos and their context were reported to Meta, which operates Facebook, on the same day. As of 24 October 2023, Meta, having reviewed the flagged content, concluded that in 7 out of all cases reported in this manner the content did not violate the terms of use of the platform and remained available online. In 11 instances, the monitored content was labelled to indicate that the information was false (however, this content is still available and can be interacted with and shared). In 9 cases, the content in question was flagged as violating the platform’s terms of use and was therefore removed from the platform.

On 30 September 2023, the CMS detected a total of 15 such videos, or modified videos and screenshots of the video in question, **on Facebook**. This content was reported to Meta, which operates Facebook, on the same day. As of 24 October 2023, Meta, having reviewed the flagged

⁶¹ [Post](#) of 28 September 2023 on the official Facebook page of the Police Force of the Slovak Republic, warning against detected cases of artificial intelligence tools being misused to create videos related to the Slovak parliamentary elections.

⁶² [Article by AFP](#), Meta’s independent fact-checking contractor.

⁶³ [X’s page explaining the platform’s rules](#) that prohibit the sharing of synthesized or manipulated media (e.g. photos, videos, recordings, etc.).

content, concluded that in 15 out of all cases reported in this manner the content did not violate the terms of use of the platform and remained available online. In two cases, the content was labelled to indicate that the information was false. However, it remained available and can be interacted with and shared.

8. Post questioning the legitimacy of elections based on the deepfake video with Michal Šimeček and Monika Tódová

On 29 September 2023, a post was published on a private profile **on TikTok** containing information from the above-mentioned recording, which stated that it did not matter whether the recording in question was manipulated or not, and that the mere existence of the recording allegedly showed that the PS would undoubtedly try to manipulate the elections. The post and its context were reported to and deleted by ByteDance, which operates TikTok, on the same day.

Conclusions

By virtue of its statutory powers provided for in the AMS, the CMS closely monitored Facebook, TikTok and YouTube throughout the campaign period leading up to the early elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic in 2023. Focusing on potential breaches of the AMS, fulfilling the commitments under the Code and compliance with the obligations under the DSA, the CMS actively engaged in the preparatory phase, in the monitoring itself and in the data collection procedure. During the preparatory phase, the CMS was in contact with representatives of Meta, Google and ByteDance and presented them with a set of requirements aimed at compliance with European and national legislation, as well as compliance with their obligations under the Code, including increasing user awareness and transparency of political advertising.

The evaluation of the findings showed that the CMS did not receive any complaints from the public regarding the coverage of elections on social media. The requirements were partially met by the platforms, with variations in the areas of the transparency of political advertising and the implementation of preventive activities targeting the public. The identified shortcomings included the absence of translations into Slovak, missing advertiser data and, in some cases, insufficient transparency of political advertising. The conclusions of the monitoring also include identified deepfake content and the response of platforms to its dissemination.

In the context of monitoring the platforms' compliance with the provisions of the DSA, this report can be considered as one of the first trial evaluations of the DSA, whose conclusions may significantly impact the way forward in the area of compliance and implementation of the DSA, both at national and European level. Taking into account the findings regarding the transparency of political advertising, the CMS considers that the monitored platforms failed to implement and comply with all the obligations concerning the transparency of political advertising under Articles 26 and 39 of the DSA in a consistent manner. Potential breaches of the DSA include the absence of the political advertising disclaimer on Meta's platform and the absence of the political advertising label on Google's platform. Furthermore, the authors of the report see the design and functioning of the ad libraries of different platforms as an issue – for example, they are often only available in English, which has a significant negative impact on users' effective access to information.

The conclusions presented in this report provide a unique overview of the readiness of platforms for the Slovak elections in 2023 and can serve as an inspiration for other EU Member States. The authors recommend leveraging the results of this report to assess the effectiveness of the Code and to provide feedback at European level, for example on the DSA, which is already being implemented, or the forthcoming European legislation – the Regulation on the transparency and targeting of political advertising, which is expected to enter into force before the European Parliament elections in 2024.

Annex 1:

1. Results of monitoring of ad libraries of Meta, Google and ByteDance

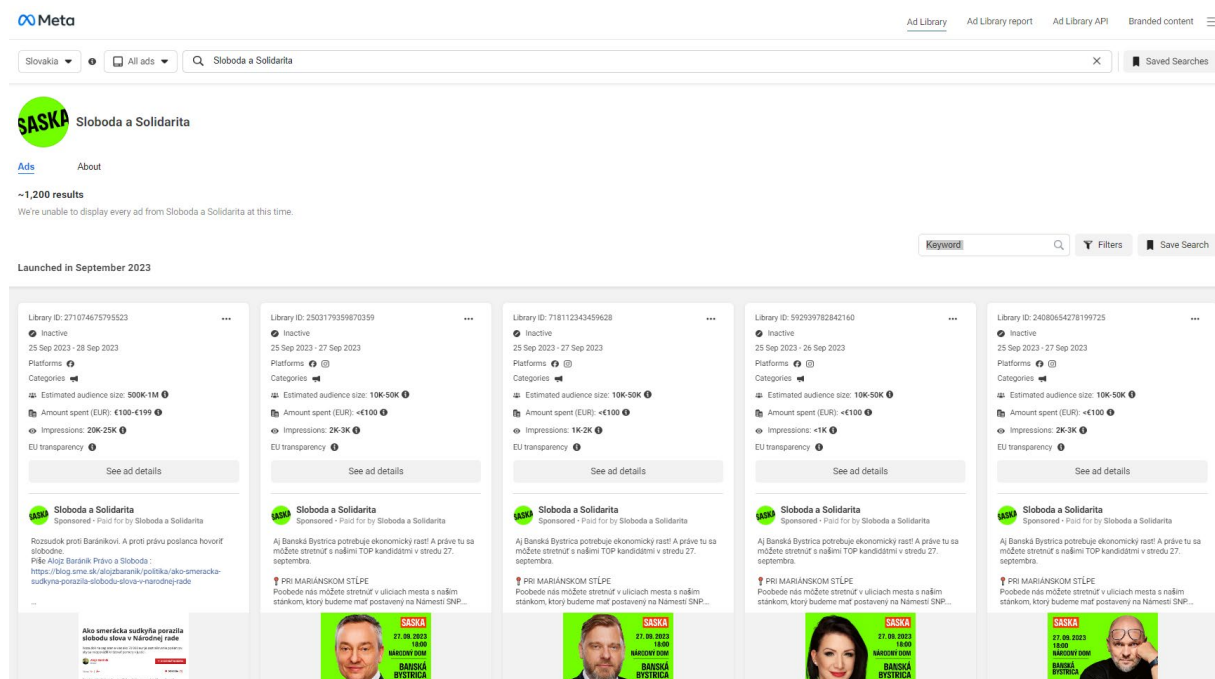
The following chapter introduces and describes in detail the environment of ad libraries of Meta, Google and TikTok, taking into account the specificities of paid political advertising.

1.1 Meta Ad Library

Meta Ad Library contains a catalogue of all sponsored content published on Meta's services (Facebook, Instagram, Messenger, Audience network).⁶⁴ The library also enables the user to save selected search attributes for potential future use of the library.

The library user has the option to search by country (default current location – Slovakia), by advertisement category (All ads/Issues, elections or politics/Properties/Employment/Credit), by keyword or by advertiser (e.g. name of a political party, name of a candidate).

After selecting the attributes (Country + Issues, elections or politics + Keyword or Advertiser), a page with relevant information about the advertiser is displayed.



Advertisements section: contains a list of the advertiser's advertisements which can be further filtered by language, region, type of advertisement (image, video, text, etc.), activity status, number of impressions, presence of a disclaimer, etc. After selecting an advertisement, a separate window with detailed information about this advertisement opens (date of publication, activity/ranges of impressions reached and amount spent, information about targeting of the advertisement, etc.).

⁶⁴ [Meta Ad Library](#).

Information section contains information about the page, e.g. “the official website of the political party”. This section also includes published pages and profiles on Facebook and Instagram affiliated with this page, or organisations and persons who completed the authorisation process for managing this page. Furthermore, it contains information about the date the page was created on, whether, how and when it was renamed, or when and which pages it was merged with in the past. This section also lists the amounts spent on placing political advertisements.

Audience section: information about the audience of the page's advertisements (age structure, demographic structure, gender, etc.) and the attributes of targeting political advertisements of the page.

All above-mentioned pages and subpages are available to users in Slovak language. More details about the characteristics and different attributes of the advertisements (audience size metrics, number of impressions, ad targeting, etc.) are available via “More information” links that direct users to the relevant pages from Meta Transparency Center⁶⁵ and Meta Business Help Center⁶⁶, which are not always available in Slovak.

1.2 Google Ads Transparency Center⁶⁷

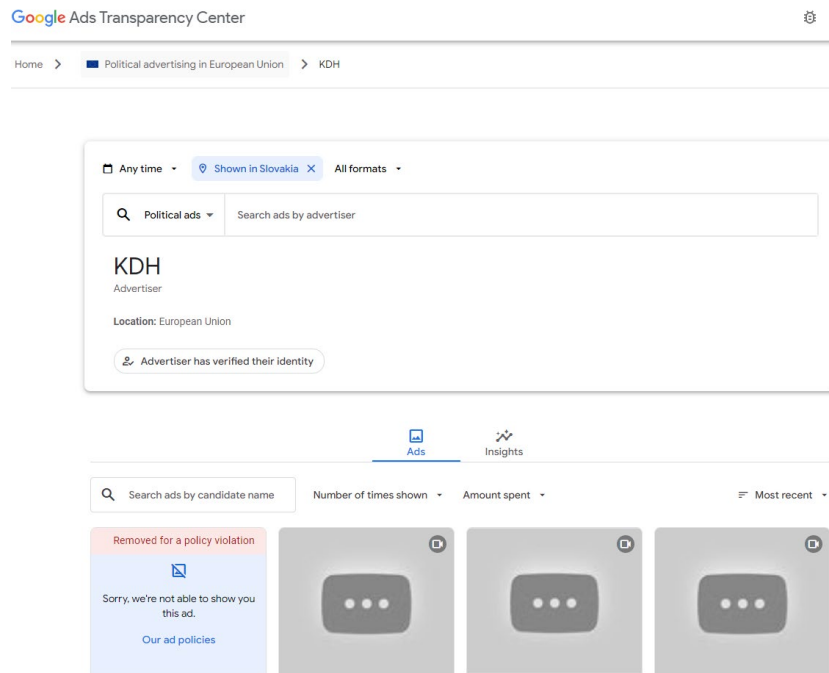
The Google Ads Transparency Center is a comprehensive catalogue of all sponsored content – all advertisements published on Google's online services. This catalogue can be filtered and searched by date, region/country (default setting – Slovakia), format (video, image, text), type (all advertising, political advertising) and by advertiser (in case of political advertising by name of the political party).

After selecting an advertiser (sponsor of the advertisement), a message is displayed indicating that identity of this advertiser has been verified.

⁶⁵ [Meta Transparency Center](#).

⁶⁶ [Meta Business Help Center](#).

⁶⁷ [Google Ads Transparency Center](#).



Advertisements section: contains a list of all advertisements of a given advertiser with information about each of them (number of impressions over a certain period, amount spent – all data is provided in an approximate range, e.g. 1 million – 1.25 million impressions, EUR 6,000 – 7,000 spent on the advertisement). These can be filtered by number of views (impressions, amount spent per advertisement, dates, etc.). After selecting a specific advertisement, a separate page with information about the selected advertisement is displayed – targeted based on criteria selected or excluded by the advertiser, such as demographics, age or gender. However, basic statistical insights about the advertisement are again provided only in an approximate range.

Statistics section: indicates the total amounts spent by the advertiser on advertising and the total number of advertisements and graphic percentage representation (video, image, text).

The contact details of the advertiser – the sponsor of the advertisement – are missing. The only information available is the statement that the identity of the advertiser had been verified, without any further details.

1.3 TikTok Ad Library⁶⁸

Similar to the catalogues of the above-mentioned companies, ByteDance's advertisement repository enables the user to browse all sponsored content available on the TikTok platform's user interface through a multi-criteria query-based search. This repository can be filtered and searched by date, region/country (default setting – Slovakia), type of the advertisement and advertiser's name or keywords.

However, according to TikTok's terms of use, advertisers are not allowed to publish any political advertising⁶⁹. Therefore, TikTok is not covered by this report. In spite of this explicit prohibition of political advertising, it is clear that TikTok had been misused in the past to disseminate

⁶⁸ [TikTok Ad Library](#).

⁶⁹ [Prohibition of paid political advertising on TikTok](#).

unmarked political advertising. According to the first detailed monitoring reports under the Code, TikTok allows so-called cause-based advertising (issue advertising).⁷⁰ However, this type of advertising is not defined in TikTok's terms of use. According to a research report published by the Irish and German-Austrian EDMO Hub, a member of the international research consortium of the European Digital Media Observatory ("EDMO"), TikTok is unable to efficiently distinguish political advertising from cause-based advertising, especially when such advertising is disseminated via accounts of members of political parties⁷¹.

2. Description of political advertisements in different interfaces/platforms/types of advertisements

In frame of monitoring the presentation of political advertisements on each of the monitored platforms, we focused on covering as wide a range of user interfaces as possible. The following descriptions represent the presented political advertisement from the point of view of the average user, i.e. how the user is shown the message indicating that the advertisement in question is a political advertisement.

2.1. Meta

Facebook smartphone interface – Feed

There is a statement under the name of a page or a profile, such as: "Paid for by Modrí, Most – Híd." In the upper right corner of the advertisement, there is an "i" icon or "Learn more about this Ad". Clicking on this icon displays the information "Who pays for this advertisement" (contact details of the sponsor of the advertisement) and a link to find out more about the advertisement in Meta Ad Library.



Progresívne Slovensko
Sponsored – Paid for by Progresívne Slovensko
I'll vote for the future – and take my +1 with me! On Saturday 30 September it will be decided whether we'll see the history repeat itself and the chaos continue or we'll finally....
This week: Saturday at 7:00
I'll vote for the future – and take my +1 with me!
Slovak Republic
Interested

⁷⁰ [Transparency Centre established under the Code of Practice on Disinformation: reports of signatories.](#)

⁷¹ Research reports of the [Irish-German EDMO Hub](#) and the [Mozilla Foundation](#).



Who pays for this ad?

This ad on the page of Progressívne Slovensko is paid for by Progressívne Slovensko

When the advertiser classifies their advertisement as related to social issues, elections or politics, they are obliged to disclose who the ad was paid for by. **Learn more**

This information was provided by the advertiser.

(phone number)

(email)

(link)

If you'd like to know how much money has been spent on this ad and who the ad has been shown to, see more details about this ad in **Meta Ad Library**.

Facebook smartphone interface – Video interaction elements

There is a statement under the name of a page or a profile: “Sponsored”. The following horizontal layer indicates, for example, “Paid for by Demokrati”. Clicking on the (i) icon – see above.



Day D for Slovakia and democracy
 Andrea Letanovská – Demokrati
 Sponsored
 Paid by Demokrati
 The elections on 30 September will
 decide...*more*
 Comment

Facebook smartphone interface – Reels

No political advertising was detected.

Facebook PC interface – Feed

There is a statement under the name of a page or a profile, such as: “Sponsored – Paid for by Sme rodina”. In the upper right corner of the advertisement, there is an “i” icon or “Learn more about this Ad”. Clicking on this icon opens a message about “Who pays for this advertisement” (contact details of the advertiser) and a link to learn more about the advertisement in Meta Ad Library (comprehensive information about the advertisement, date of activity, amount spent, targeting, number of impressions, i.e. the number of views and interactions with the content).



Arpád Sárközi – ĽS Naše Slovensko

Sponsored – Paid for by Kotlebovci – ĽS Naše Slovensko

During both lockdowns, the 37 Brewery was a synonym of revolt and rebellion. Today, many know there was no threat. So it's weird you didn't join in. When I'm too weak for something, I've got to downplay it to hide my cowardice. Nothing's changed despite the two court proceedings I've won. The "leaders" of this country can't allow an individual to win over the fascist machinery. That's why, after some time, I was contacted by the Public Health Authority imposing a EUR 5,000 fee...**See more**

37 – Arpád Sárközi

The owner of 37 Brewery in Banská Bystrica which was open during lockdowns, subject to many police raids, two court proceedings, and one foreseen court proceeding with the Public Health Authority which is attempting to bring him to financial ruin.

Fight for yourself and for others!

21 Kotlebovci – ĽS Naše Slovensko

Facebook PC interface – Video interaction elements

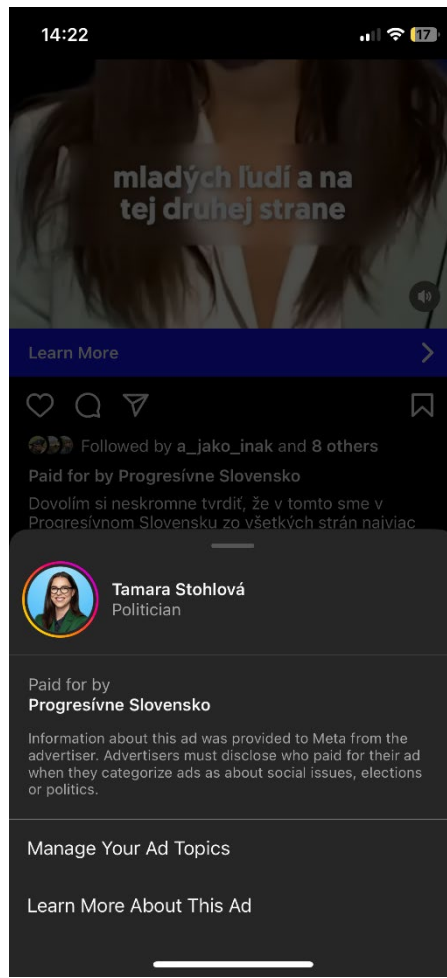
No political advertising was detected.

Facebook PC interface – Reels

No political advertising was detected.

Instagram smartphone interface – Feed

There is a statement under the name of a page or a profile: "Sponsored". Under the advertisement, there is a panel with the phrase "learn more" in English (link to the subject of the advertisement or to the website of the political party, etc.). Under this title, there are elements such as the number of viewers and interaction options (like, share, send as a message), followed by information in English, e.g. "Paid for by Progresívne Slovensko." After clicking on the identification of the payer, a window opens with information in English about who paid for the advertisement and the options "Manage your Ads Topics" and "Learn more about this Ad". Clicking on "Learn more about this Ad" opens the Meta Ad Library window with comprehensive information about the advertisement.



Instagram on smartphone, Stories feature

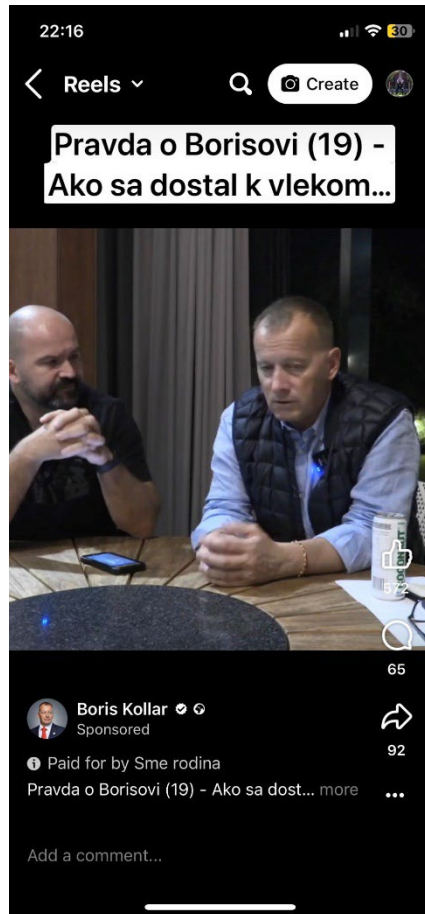
There is a statement under the name of a page or a profile: “Sponsored”. Under the advertisement itself, there is a panel indicating “learn more” in English (“more information” – link to the subject of the advertisement or to the website of the political party, etc.), followed by more information in English, e.g. “Paid for by Modrí, Most – Híd.” After clicking on the identification of the payer, a window opens with information in English about who paid for the advertisement and the options “Manage your Ads Topics” and “Learn more about this Ad”. Clicking on “Learn more about this Ad” opens a window with the advertiser’s contact information from Meta Ad Library with comprehensive information about the advertisement.



Michal Hort
 Sponsored
 LIFE
Don Bosco Pupils Association:
An alliance for a better future
for Slovakia
www.michalhort.sk

Instagram smartphone interface - Reels

There is a statement under the name of a page or a profile, followed by "Sponsored" in English. This is followed by the text of the advertisement, under which there is more information in English, e.g.: "(i) Paid for by *OBYČAJNÍ ĽUDIA (OLANO, NEZÁVISLÍ KANDIDÁTI (NEKA), NOVA, SLOBODNÍ A ZODPOVEDNÍ, PAČIVALE ROMA, MAGYAR SZÍVEK*". After clicking on the identification of the payer, a window opens with information in English about who paid for the advertisement and the options "Manage your Ads Topics" and "Learn more about this Ad". Clicking on "Learn more about this Ad" opens a window from the Meta Ad Library with comprehensive information about the advertisement.



The truth about Boris (19) – His path to ski lifts

Instagram PC interface – Feed

Regarding the posts monitored by the CMS, it cannot be concluded with certainty whether they constitute political advertisements, as they were presented without a disclaimer (information about the sponsor of the advertisement is included in the accompanying text of the advertisement, however, including this information in the text is entirely up to the discretion of the author/originator of the post). However, upon examination of Meta Ad Library, it was found that the post in question is registered as a paid political advertisement that was active on Facebook and Instagram at the time.



Instagram – michalhort.sk – Follow LIFE
Life-changing meetings: My history with Don Bosco and the path to politics
michalhort.sk Life-changing meetings: My history with Don Bosco and the path to politics. Read more at (*link*) (*hashtags*).
 Advertiser: Modrí – Most – Híd, (*address*)
 Supplier: Meta Platforms Ireland Limited (*address*)
www.michalhort.sk

Instagram PC interface – Stories

No political advertising was detected in the course of the monitoring exercise.

Instagram PC interface – Reels

No political advertising was detected in the course of the monitoring exercise.

2.2 Google

Google Search PC interface

No political advertising was detected in the course of the monitoring exercise.

Google Search smartphone interface

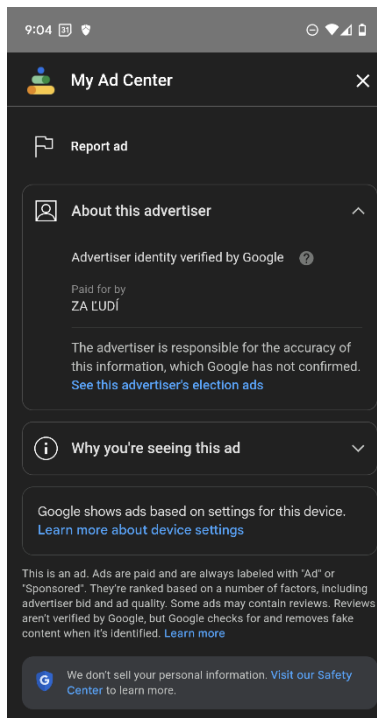
No political advertising was detected in the course of the monitoring exercise.

YouTube smartphone interface – Video

There is a message in the bottom left corner of the video advertisement, e.g.: “Ad 2 of 2 · 3:27 (i)”. Under the video advertisement is the name of the page or profile that submitted the video advertisement, as well as an “Ad” icon and an icon consisting of three vertical dots. Clicking on the “Ad” icon opens a window with information in English about the advertiser and a link that redirects the user to Google Ad Transparency Center containing the advertiser's advertisements.

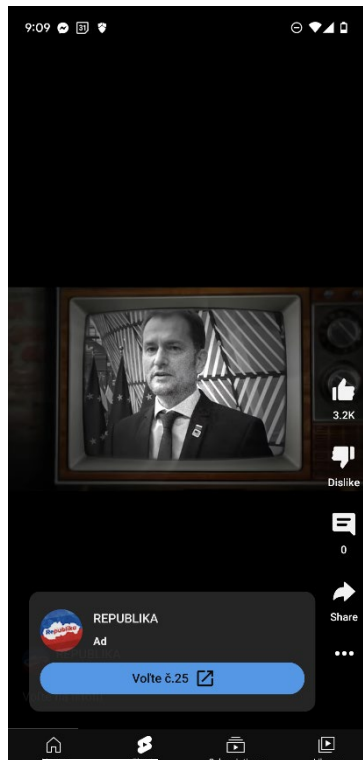


Pre-election FINAL debate – 2023 Elections – TV Markiza

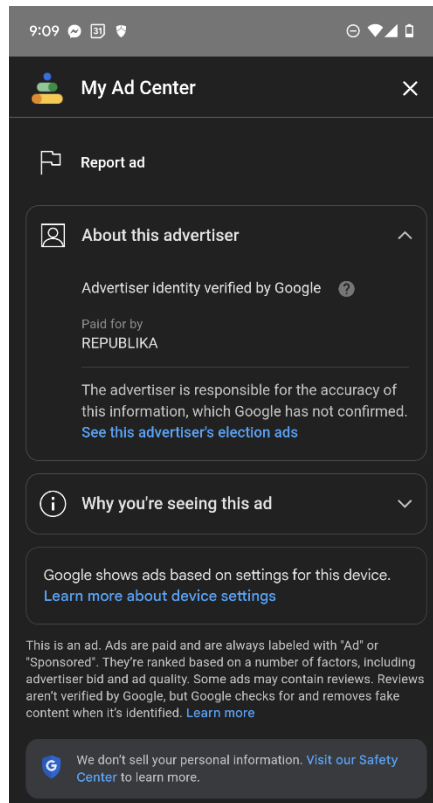


YouTube TV smartphone interface – Shorts

There is a message under the short, e.g.: “REPUBLICA Ad vote No. 25 (link to the political party's website)”. Clicking on the “Ad” icon opens a window with information about the advertiser in English with a link that redirects the user to Google Ad Transparency Center containing the advertiser's advertisements.



Vote No. 25



YouTube PC interface – Video

A video advertisement that plays before the requested video itself is played on YouTube. The bottom left corner of the video advertisement contains a message, e.g.: “Ad 2 of 2 0:10 (i) stranazaludi.sk”. Clicking on the “Ad” icon opens a window with information about the advertiser in English with a link that redirects the user to Google Ad Transparency Center containing the advertiser's advertisements.



We've turned off the caps for the oligarchs!
 Playing (k) stranazaludi.sk
 EUR 200 million.
 Video will be played after the advertisements

YouTube PC interface – Shorts

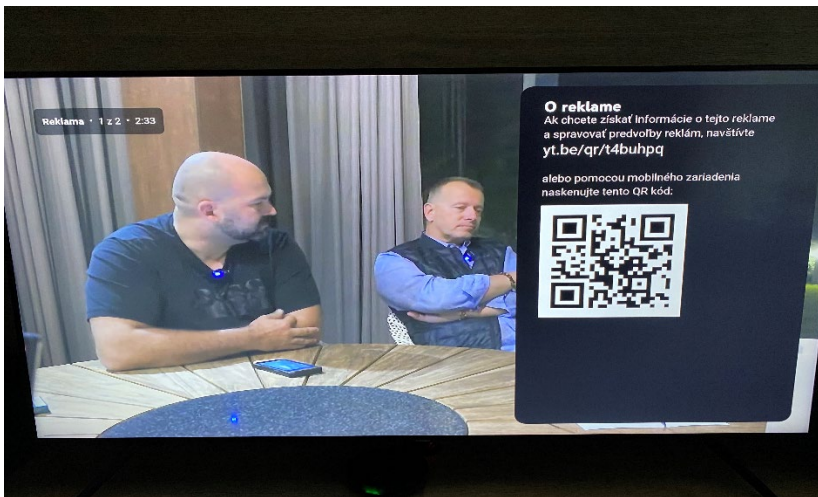
No political advertising was detected in the course of the monitoring exercise.

YouTube TV interface - Video

A video advertisement that plays before the requested video itself or while the requested video is played on YouTube. The top left corner of the video contains a message, for example: "Ad 1 of 2 0:05", and, in the bottom right corner, for example "About Ads (i)". Clicking on (i) opens the About Ads window containing a link or a QR code the user can use to learn more about the advertisement from Google Ads Transparency Center.



Ad 1 of 2 2:28
About Ad (i)
Skip ads



Ad 1 of 2
2:33
About Ad
To learn more about this ad and manage your ad preferences, click on (*link*) or scan this QR code with your mobile device (*QR code*)

YouTube TV interface - Shorts

No political advertising was detected in the course of the monitoring exercise.

Overview of presentation of political advertisements in different types of media and user interfaces on the platforms.

Media	Platform	User interface	Number of clicks needed for user to reach the ad library from the moment the advertisement is presented
Smartphone	Facebook	Reels	–
		Feed	3
		Video interaction elements	3
	Instagram	Reels	3
		Feed	3
		Stories	3
	Google	Search	–
	YouTube	Video	2
		Shorts	2
PC	Facebook	Reels	–
		Feed	3
		Video interaction elements	–
	Instagram	Reels	–
		Feed	–
		Stories	–
	Google	Search	–
	YouTube	Video	2
		Shorts	–
TV	YouTube	Video	2
		Shorts	–