



Council for Media Services

**Online disinformation narratives
during the Slovak presidential
elections 2024**

**Council for Media Services
April 2024**

Introduction

By virtue of its statutory powers and its prior experience with similar activities preceding the 2023 elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic, 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 2024 presidential elections in the Slovak Republic. **This report aims to highlight identified disinformation narratives on selected very large online platforms (VLOPs) and examine the platforms' reactions to the reporting of such content.**

Presidential elections in Slovakia are held in two rounds. If no candidate obtains a majority of valid votes in the first round, a second round is held within 14 days, to which the two candidates with the highest number of votes from the first round advance. In 2024, the first round of the presidential election was held on March 23, and the second round took place on April 6 with two candidates Ivan Korčok and Peter Pellegrini.

CMS started gathering data on March 18, the week before the first round of elections, at the campaign's peak and continued monitoring until the second round on April 6. Throughout this period, the CMS continuously monitored the platforms both on its own initiative and in response to alerts received from other government authorities. **From March 27 to April 6, 2024, the CMS intensified its monitoring activities in response to the dissemination of narratives regarding the alleged rigging of the first election round and dissemination of potential disinformation about presidential candidates.**

Under Article 110(3)(q) of the Media Service Act (“MSA”), **the CMS is authorised to cooperate with online content-sharing platforms to ensure the efficient, proportionate, and non-discriminatory application of the rules governing the provision of their services.** Leveraging this authority, the CMS determined that the content mentioned above might constitute a potential violation of the terms of service on all monitored VLOPs. Consequently, the CMS reported selected contents to the respective VLOPs and requested an urgent contextual review of the reported content.

Reported cases

Meta

According to the Meta Transparency Centre (section on Misinformation Policies, under Tier III: Voter or Census Interference¹), Meta endeavours to uphold election and census integrity by removing misinformation that poses a direct risk of interfering with people's participation in these processes. This includes misinformation about the dates, locations, times and methods for voting, voter registration or census participation and misinformation about who can vote, qualifications for voting, whether a vote will be counted and what information or materials must be provided in order to vote.

As part of its monitoring activities, CMS identified **88 cases of potential violations of the terms of use** of Meta's services (all potentially problematic content was published on Facebook), which were thematically related to the 2024 presidential elections. Meta **sent the majority (51 cases, i.e. 58%) of the reported content to independent fact-checkers for verification.** Of this number of content, it subsequently responded by adding a label warning of false information to **a fraction of the cases (9 out of 51).** Meta **had not responded** to a large proportion **(34%) of all reported**

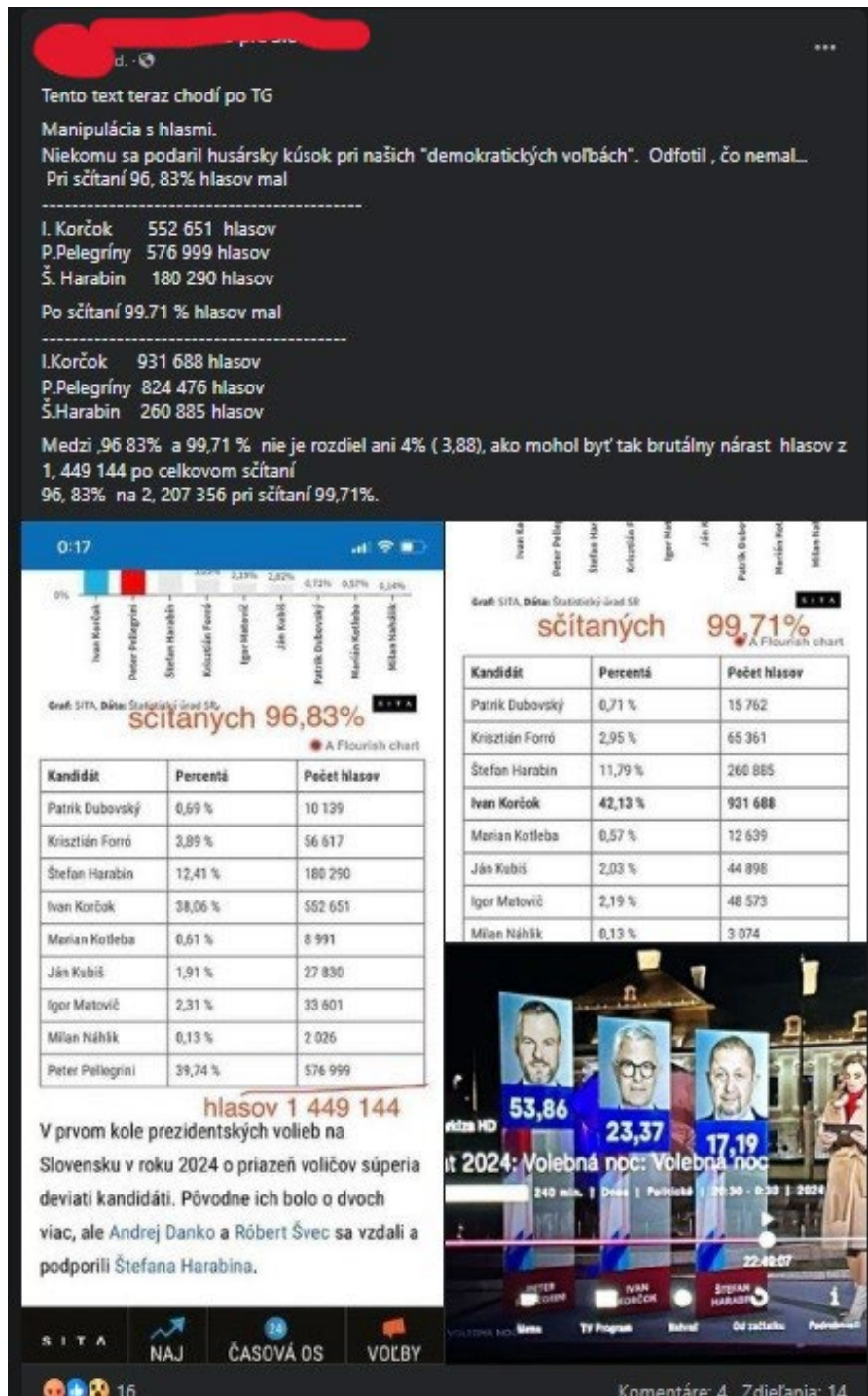
¹ [Meta Transparency Center](#)

content by April 8, 2024 (elections concluded on April 6, 2024, by 22:00), **and had removed a small percentage of content (8%) of the total reported content.**

Meta (Facebook), in total 88 (100%) reported cases 27/3/2024 - 6/4/2024		
Removed	7	8%
Send to 3PFC	51	58%
No reply	30	34%

- **Narrative about rigging the results of the first round:**

Between March 27, 2024, and the second round of elections on April 6, 2024, a narrative circulated among Facebook users alleging a rigged vote count in the first round of the presidential election, purportedly aiming to secure the victory of candidate Ivan Korčok. This narrative appeared in various forms, including textual content, tables, images, or combinations thereof, shared by users. Some iterations of this content implicated the ESET, a cybersecurity company, alleging its involvement in the activity. It drew parallels to similar practices observed during presidential elections in the USA and the Czech Republic. Throughout these variations, the consistent element was the claim of evidence suggesting a manipulated vote count that was supposed to happen in the final hours of vote counting.



"This message is now on TG. Votes manipulation. Someone managed to flip a coin during our "democratic elections" and took a photo of something that was not supposed to be photographed... After counting 96.83% of all votes I. Korčok 552,651 votes, P. Pelegríny 576,999 votes, Š. Harabin 180,290 votes.

After counting 99.71% of all votes I. Korčok 931,688 votes, P. Pelegríny 824,476 votes, Š. Harabin 260,885 votes.

The deduction between 96.83% and 99.71% is not even 4% (3,88), how is the rapid increase of votes from 1,449,144 by counted 96.83% to 2,207,356 by counted 99,71% even possible."

Upon receiving reports, Meta forwarded the flagged content to independent third-party fact-checkers (“3PFC”) partnered with the platform to authenticate the accuracy of the information. On March 28, 2024, Demagog.sk², one of the independent fact-checkers organizations working with Meta, published a debunking (a refutation of false claims supported by relevant sources)³ of the alleged vote counting manipulation in the first round of the presidential elections. Following this verification, on March 29, 2024, CMS noticed Meta's implementation of labelling—informing platform users that the content contains false information. However, despite being labelled as false, users retain the ability to view, comment on, and further distribute and engage by giving a “like” to such content on the platform.

25. marec o 15:21

Manipulácia s hlasmi.
Niekomu sa podaril husársky kúsok pri našich "demokratických voľbách". Odfotil, čo nemal...
Pri sčítaní 96, 83% hlasov mal

I. Korčok 552 651 hlasov
P. Pelegríny 576 999 hlasov
Š. Harabín 180 290 hlasov

Po sčítaní 99,71 % hlasov mal

I. Korčok 931 688 hlasov
P. Pelegríny 824 476 hlasov
Š. Harabín 260 885 hlasov

Medzi 96 83% a 99,71 % nie je rozdiel ani 4% (3,88), ako mohol byť tak brutálny nárast hlasov z 1, 449 144 po celkovom sčítaní 96, 83% na 2, 207 356 pri sčítaní 99,71%.

To môže byť asi len pre negramotných , ktorí nevedia ani základné počty, uvažujme ved pri čísle 1,4 miliona by to muselo byť nejakých 50% sčítaných hlasov a nie 96% ????

No ESET urobil čo mohol, už sa nemohol dopustiť takej chyby ako pri parlamentných voľbách (ved šéfa esetu to stálo život).

No niet sa čo čudovať, takto dopadli voľby v USA? v Česku, ale aj posledné voľby kedy sme získali ženu za prezidentku na Slovensku a zaujímavé, že v 1. kole má víťazný kandidát vždy 42, ...% no a v druhom to bude tých 57% a ničto 😊

No takto funguje systém Dominion a ani Trump sa nedovoľoval pravdy v USA .
My sa dovoľáme?... sami bez pomoci asi nie.

Graf: SITA, Dáta: Štatistický úrad SR.

sčítaných 96,83%

Kandidát	Percentá	Počet hlasov
Patrik Dubovský	0,69 %	10 139
Krisztián Forró	3,89 %	56 617
Štefan Harabín	12,41 %	180 290
Ivan Korčok	38,06 %	552 651
Marian Kotleba	0,61 %	8 991
Ján Kubiš	1,91 %	27 830
Igor Matovič	2,31 %	33 601
Milan Náhlík	0,13 %	2 026
Peter Pellegrini	39,74 %	576 999

hlasov 1 449 144

V prvom kole prezidentských volieb na Slovensku v roku 2024 o priazeň voličov súperia deviatimi kandidátmi. Pôvodne ich bolo o dvoch

15 Komentáre: 8 Zdieľania: 217

6 d.

Manipulácia s hlasmi.
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hlasov 1 449 144

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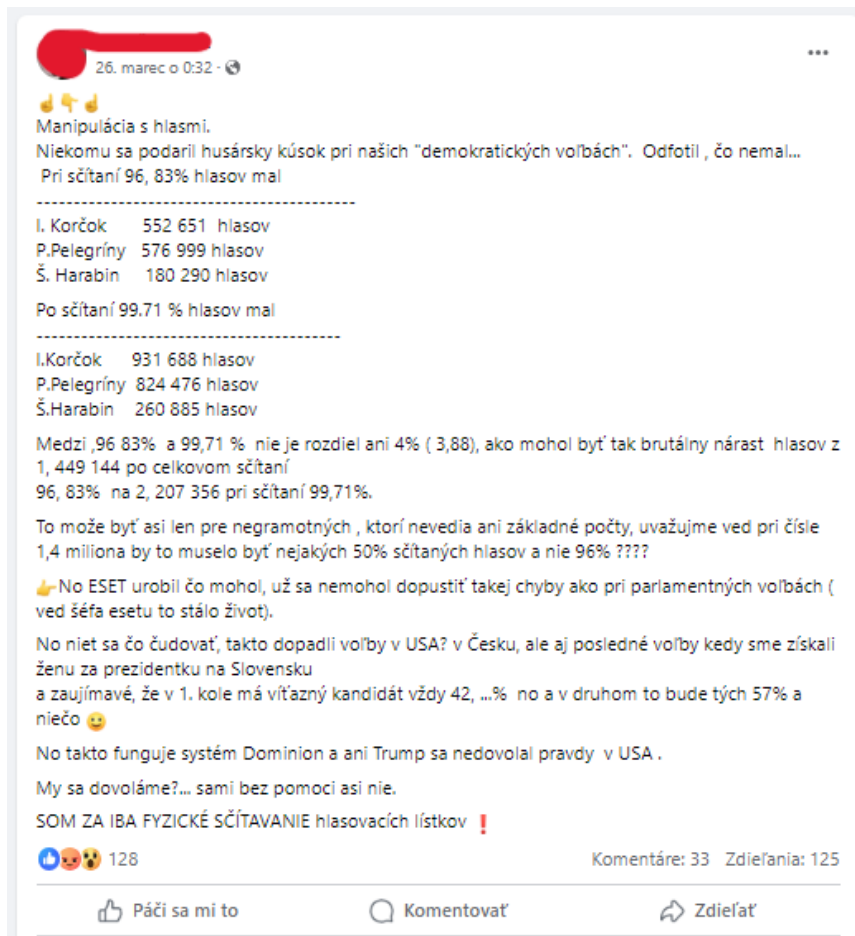
4 1 komentár Zdieľania: 13

Nepravdivé informácie Rovnaké informácie boli v inom príspevku skontrolované nezávislými overovateľmi faktov.
Zobraziť dôvod

² [Demagog.sk](https://demagog.sk)

³ [Presidential elections were not rigged, the false surge in vote by the end of the counting was proven to be false](#), an article published by Demagog.sk regarding the topic.

CMS further notes that Meta did not respond to misinformation in the form of a text post, even though this type of information was identified as misinformation by 3PFC just as much as the image content. As can be seen in the screenshots below, unlike the image posts, no labelling or other functional method was applied to the textual content to inform users of the service that the information has no factual basis.



Furthermore, in this process, CMS observed a situation in which the service did not label the image content in question, which had been published in the comments section under other posts. Identical images were labelled when they were published as separate content.

6 d. · 🌐

Manipulácia s hlasmi.
Niekomu sa podaril husársky kúsok pri našich "demokratických voľbách". Odfotil, čo nemal...
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1 komentár

👍 Páči sa mi to 💬 Komentovať ➦ Zdieľať

6 d. · 🌐

2024 - Voľby za prezidenta SR

Pri sčítaní 96,83% hlasov mal:

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Spolu:	1 309 940 hlasov

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Š. Harabin	260 885 hlasov
Spolu:	2 017 049 hlasov

99,71% - 96,83% = 2,88% rozdiel
Rozdiel hlasov je 707 109,00

Kde ESSET urobil chybu?

6 d. Páči sa mi to Odpovedať

Napíšte komentár...

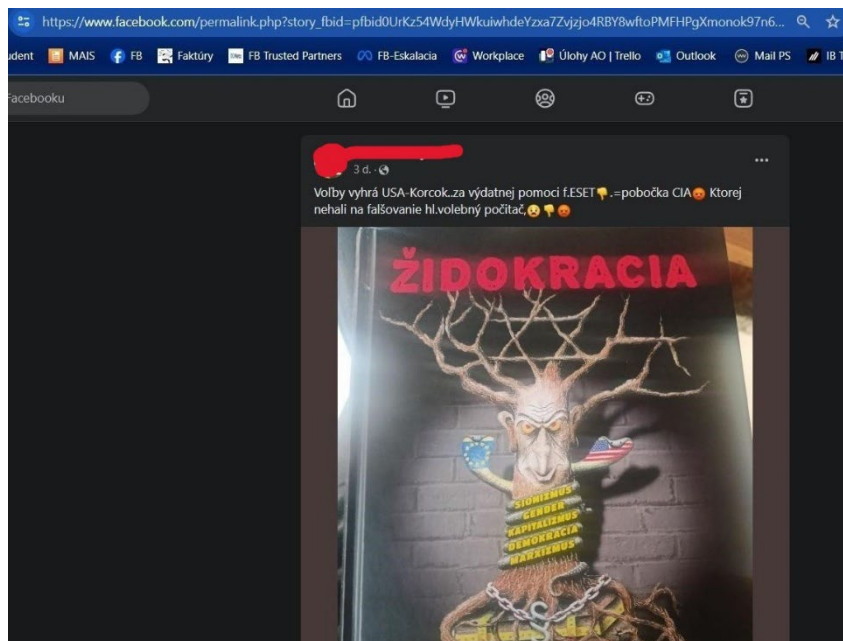
Within a monitoring of the services operated by Meta:

- CMS asserts a higher prevalence of publication and dissemination of narratives undermining the integrity of the elections and the officially certified results of the presidential election compared to other monitored platforms (refer below; all of the problematic content was reported exclusively on Facebook).
- Concurrently, these narratives were promptly debunked and refuted by certified fact-checkers within a relatively short timeframe.
- In this regard, the CMS highlights inconsistencies in Meta's responses to content conveying similar narratives questioning the integrity of the electoral process. Specifically, there is a disparity in the application of labelling as a tool to inform users of the presence of misleading content lacking factual basis; identical posts may be labelled inconsistently.
- Furthermore, the CMS notes discrepancies in responding to content published as stand-alone posts versus identical content posted as comments within the comment section.

In light of the aforementioned observations, the CMS additionally highlights inconsistencies regarding Meta's adherence to its own principles, particularly concerning narratives questioning the integrity of the electoral process. This inconsistency echoes similar instances noted during the 2023 elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic, such as the publication of deep fake videos. These specific aspects have been extensively detailed within the CMS monitoring report *Monitoring of platform functionalities in relation to the 2023 Elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic* in section 3.4. *Deepfake videos created using AI technology* (page 32).⁴

- **Narrative about rigging the results of the first round in combination with hate speech/potential extremist material:**

On March 27, 2024, text content surfaced on the Facebook platform, alleging the manipulation of the electoral process by the ESET company, which was purportedly associated with the CIA. This content was accompanied by an image of the publication "Jewocracy," authored by Marián Magát, who is currently facing prosecution for extremist criminal activity. The graphic reproduction of this publication could potentially be interpreted as disseminating hate speech or extremist content.



At the time of processing the report about the content in question, it was found that it had already been removed from the service and therefore it was not purposeful for CMS to notify Meta of the existence of the content in question.

- **Sponsored content about the alleged lawsuit against candidate Ivan Korčok**

On April 4, 2024, sponsored content was identified on Facebook, presenting sensational tabloid-style headlines ("Explosive news for the TV industry! Get ready for an incredible twist that will change everything!" and "IVAN KORČOK YOU SHOULD NOT HAVE SAID THIS IN PUBLIC"). These posts purported to reveal shocking information about presidential candidate Ivan Korčok. Clicking on the content redirected users to a separate website closely mimicking the layout of the well-known Slovak media outlet aktuality.sk, albeit incorporating the logo of another Slovak

⁴ [Monitoring of platform functionalities in relation to the 2023 Elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic](#)

media outlet, startitup.sk. The fake article, dated February 7, 2024, falsely claimed that the National Bank of Slovakia was suing Ivan Korčok over comments made during a live television broadcast. Subsequent investigation revealed that the URL of the content did not correspond to aktuality.sk's legitimate website and a retrospective check confirmed that no such article was ever published on the news website. Moreover, it was discovered that the sponsored article originated from a Facebook page named TravelFure, which purported to be a travel magazine. However, this page, although resembling the official page of the media outlet, was relatively new and exclusively published sponsored content targeting Ivan Korčok.



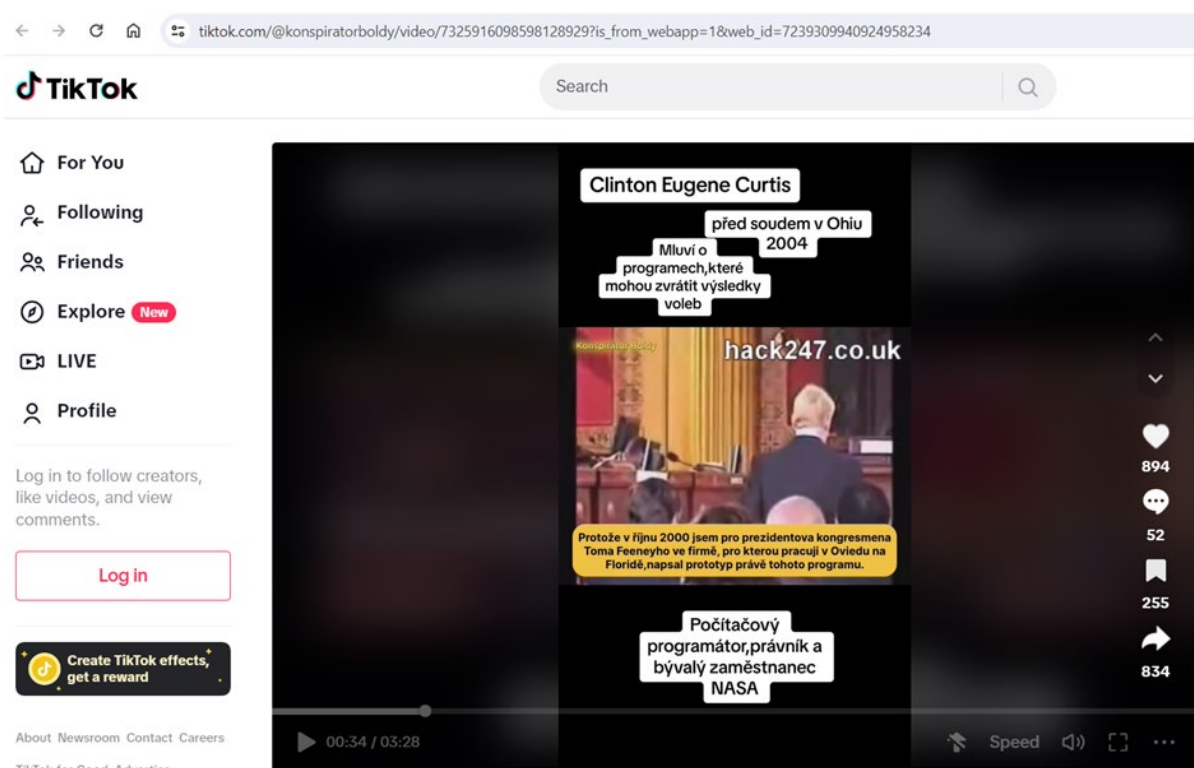
After reporting the content to Meta, the platform responded on April 4, 2024, stating that the sponsored content on the page violated Facebook's terms of use and was subsequently deleted.

ByteDance

For the TikTok platform, ByteDance states in the Community guidelines (section Integrity and Authenticity - Civic and Election Integrity⁵) that it is not allowed to disseminate misinformation about civic and electoral processes, regardless of intent, including misinformation about how to vote, registering to vote, eligibility requirements of candidates, the processes to count ballots and certify elections, and the final outcome of an election.

- **Narrative of global influence on election results and influence on the current presidential election in Slovakia**

On March 27, 2024, a video with English narration and Czech subtitles was noticed on the TikTok platform operated by ByteDance. According to the accompanying text, the video purported to contain authentic footage of a programmer testifying in an American court regarding the development and utilization of software to manipulate election results. The text further alleges that similar manipulation tactics are being employed in the current elections in Slovakia.



At the same time, the video in question has also been shared from the TikTok platform to other platforms such as Facebook. Following the reporting of the content in question to ByteDance, CMS was notified on 3 April 2024 that the content in question had been removed from TikTok, which also resulted in the removal of this content in the form of shared content on other platforms.

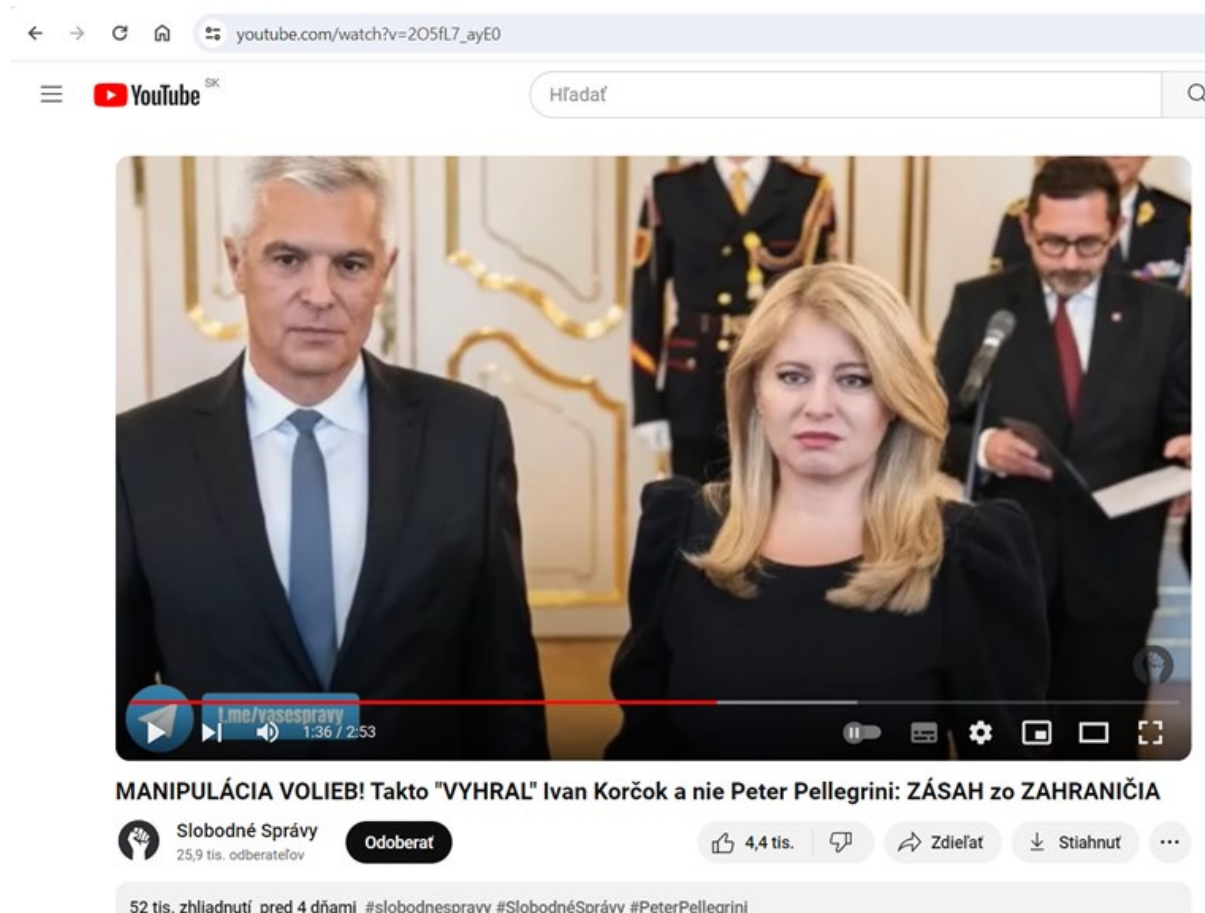
⁵ [ByteDance Community guidelines](#)

Google

Google's Transparency Centre (section Misinformation policies - Elections misinformation policies⁶) states that users are not allowed to publish content advancing false claims that widespread fraud, errors, or glitches occurred in certain past elections to determine heads of government, or content that claims that the certified results of those elections were false. Based on these facts, RpMS reported the following content to Google.

- **Narrative about the manipulation of the presidential election from abroad**

On March 28, 2024, a video was noticed on the YouTube platform containing allegations of manipulation of the official results of the first round of the presidential elections in favour of candidate Ivan Korčok. The video also suggests that such manipulation of election results would serve the interests of Western countries.



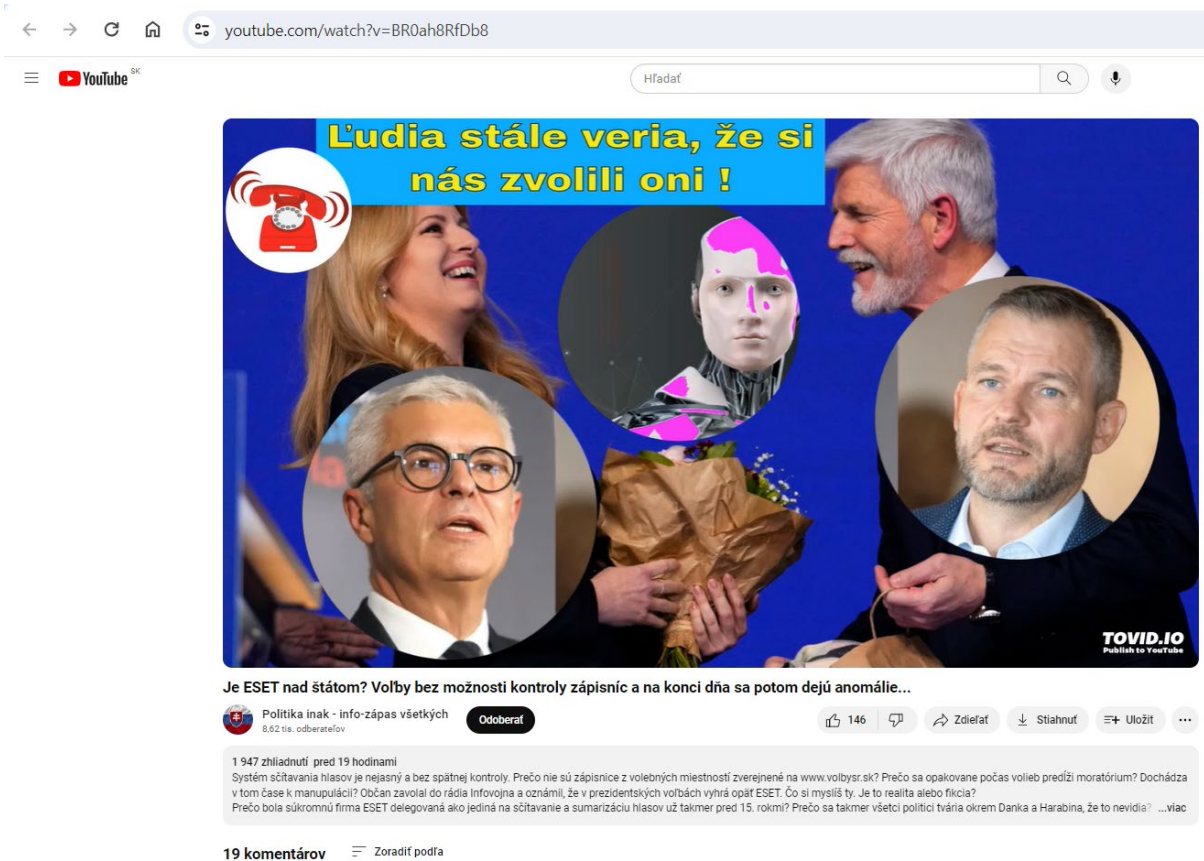
On March 30, 2024 Google replied that in the course of the review, the entire profile was found to be in breach of YouTube's terms of use and was therefore deleted, which also resulted in the deletion of the video in question.

- **Narrative of election rigging at the level of individual electoral commissions**

On April 4, 2024, a video was uploaded to the YouTube platform, containing claims regarding the absence of control mechanisms for vote counting and actual voter turnout in individual polling

⁶ [Google Transparency Center](#)

stations. According to the information presented in the video, this lack of oversight will purportedly be exploited by ESET to manipulate the electoral results.



After reporting the content in question to Google on April 4, 2024, Google removed the entire channel that published the content in question on the same day after checking it for violation of YouTube's terms of use.

* * *

Between March 27, 2024, and April 6, 2024, the period preceding the second round of elections, CMS observed a prevalence of content potentially violating the Terms of Service across monitored VLOPs. As a result, CMS reported 91 cases to the respective platforms (reported cases were found on Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube). The specifics and corresponding numbers stem from CMS's monitoring activities and reports received from other institutions.

Provider	VLOPS	No. of cases	Removed	3PFC	No reply
Meta	Facebook	88	7 (8%)	51 (58%)	30 (34%)
Google	YouTube	2	2 (100%)	-	-
ByteDance	TikTok	1	1 (100%)	-	-