



Central European
Digital Media
Observatory

Disinformation Narratives in Slovakia

CEDMO Special Brief

June 2023



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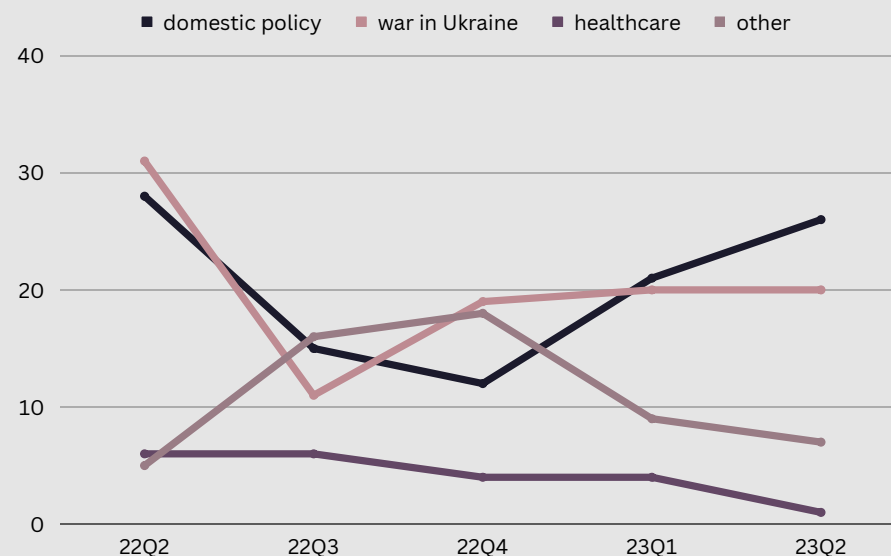
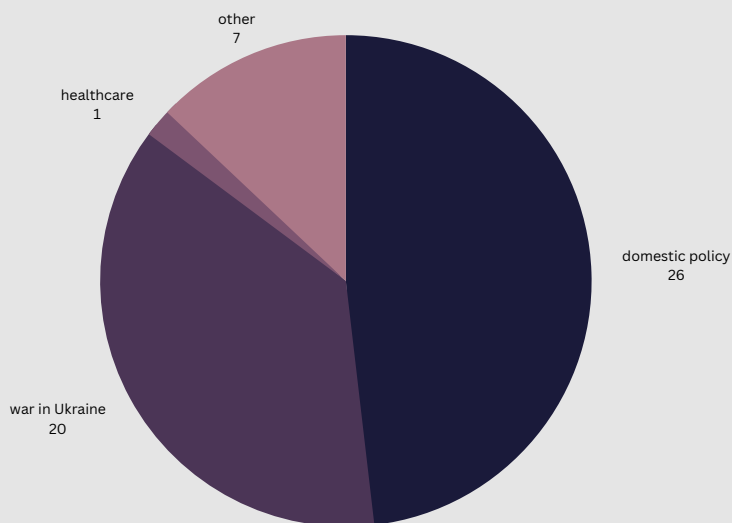
Trends in Disinformation Narratives

Main trends and disinformation narratives in spring 2023

In Q2 2023, the war in Ukraine was frequently discussed in Slovak online spaces, especially due to the ammunition depot explosion which was used to spread fabricated reports about a radiation leak. However, the turbulent political situation has also contributed to a higher number of fact-checks on domestic politics. During this quarter, CEDMO fact-checking organizations published 54 Slovak fact-checks, out of which 20 concerned either the situation in Ukraine or domestic events related to Ukraine. As many as 26 texts pertained to the domestic policy of Slovakia. In a single article, fact-checkers focused on healthcare.

Fact-check topics frequency

April – June 2023

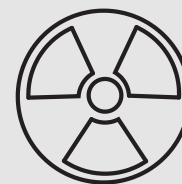


Note: Some fact-checks concerned multiple topics.

Main Narratives in Slovakia

Radiation leak after ammunition depot explosion in Ukraine

In May and June, news spread in Slovak online spaces claiming that radiation was released into the air after an ammunition depot explosion in the Ukrainian town of Khmelnytskyi. According to the false news, the radiation had supposedly spread not only over Slovakia, but also over Poland, where elevated radiation levels were recorded. In reality, however, there was no radiation leak. Polish, Slovak and Ukrainian authorities and the International Atomic Energy Agency have stated that the recorded radiation levels are common for the time of year and that the radiation situation in Europe is normal. The false reports were spread, amongst others, by the Russian embassy and some Slovak politicians.



War in Ukraine developments

“Russia is winning in Ukraine and most Russian armed forces are intact. This was announced by General Christopher Savoli, head of the United States Army Europe and Africa command,” Facebook posts in May 2023 claimed. However, in the attached video, the American general spoke about increased Russian activity in the Atlantic Ocean, not about the war in Ukraine. To the contrary, in his testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee, the General spoke about the successes of the Ukrainian military in its fight against the Russian invasion.

China’s peace plan

During a discussion on the V Politike programme, Slovak MP Milan Uhrík mentioned China’s “peace plan” for Ukraine, which he believes could be used to make peace between Russia and Ukraine. However, China’s document titled “China’s Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis” presents no specific steps towards peace, it only calls for restarting a dialogue between the two parties. The proposal also doesn’t call on the Russian forces to withdraw from the invaded territories.



Main Narratives in Slovakia

Politics

Mazurek on the digital euro

In his Facebook post, Slovak National Council member Milan Mazurek warned against the proposal of a so-called digital euro. He mentioned that EU elites want to use the digital currency project, which is allegedly in its implementation stage, to “control what we eat, when we eat it, how we live, where we travel, what car we own etc.” He added: “If we disobey their orders, they’ll simply take away, or turn off, our money!” According to [Infosecurity.sk](#), the EU is still debating the digital euro and it is unclear what the final form of the digital currency should be.

Fico on Čaputová

In a TV debate, Robert Fico stated that he had never called President Čaputová an American agent. However, as [Demagog.sk](#) proves in its article, Fico has repeatedly made such statements about the President. At a press conference in June 2022, for example, he said that “Madam President is an American agent and she can sue me all she wants. She does nothing but follow orders and promote foreign interests in Slovak territory.” Slovak courts have addressed a similar statement by Fico’s fellow party member Ľuboš Blaha. They determined that “even in politics, freedom of speech is not absolute and cannot be used to protect blatant lies and insults”.

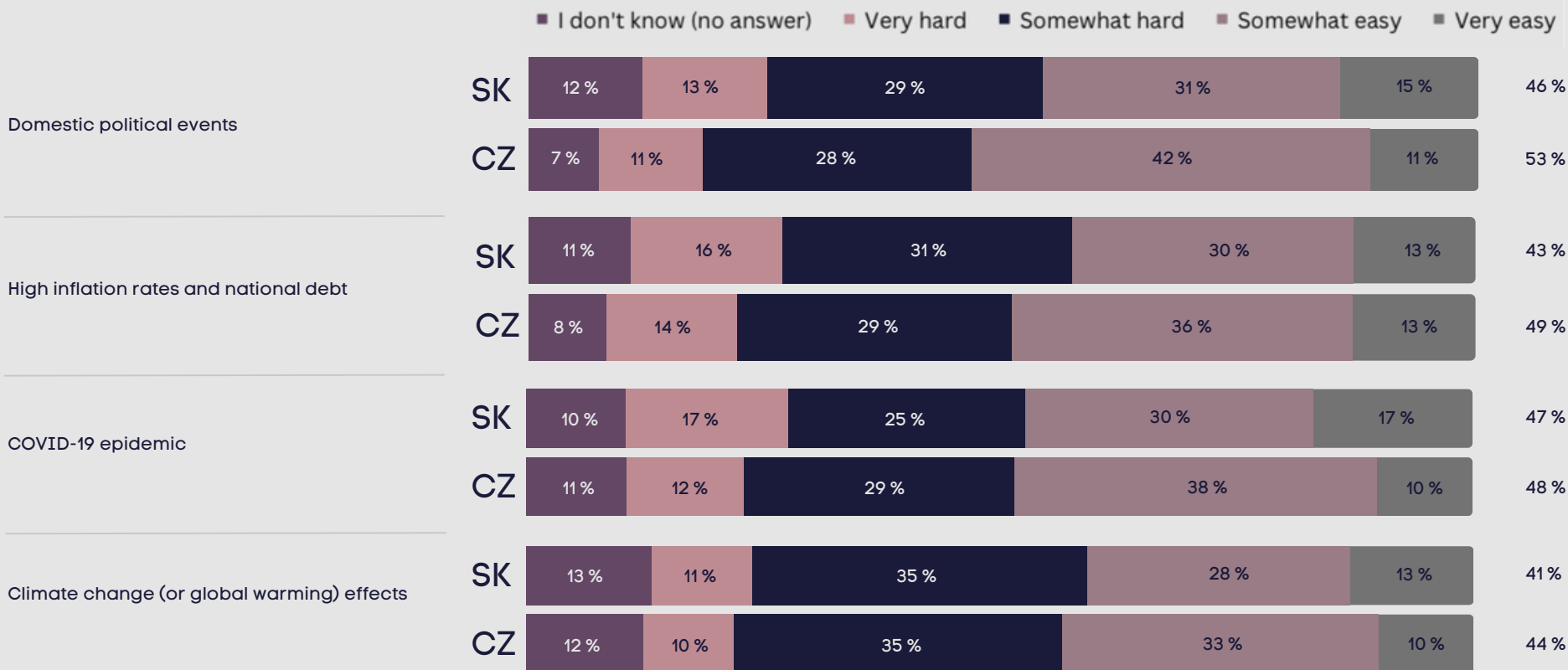
Response to the Ján Kuciak murder verdict

Special Criminal Court in Pezinok acquitted Marian Kočner of the charges of ordering the murder of Ján Kuciak and Martina Kušnírová. As [Infosecurity.sk](#) describes, some SMER party politicians immediately responded to the ruling, saying the trial had been politically abused. Rober Fico and his colleagues have been commenting on the case for a long time and trying to cast doubt on the investigation, but they do so without any evidence.

Information truthfulness determination rates

The research, which was carried out in parallel in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, mapped the rates of determining the truthfulness of information and attitudes towards selected countries and international institutions.

Question: When you hear news/information about the following topics, how hard do you find it to determine their degree of truthfulness?

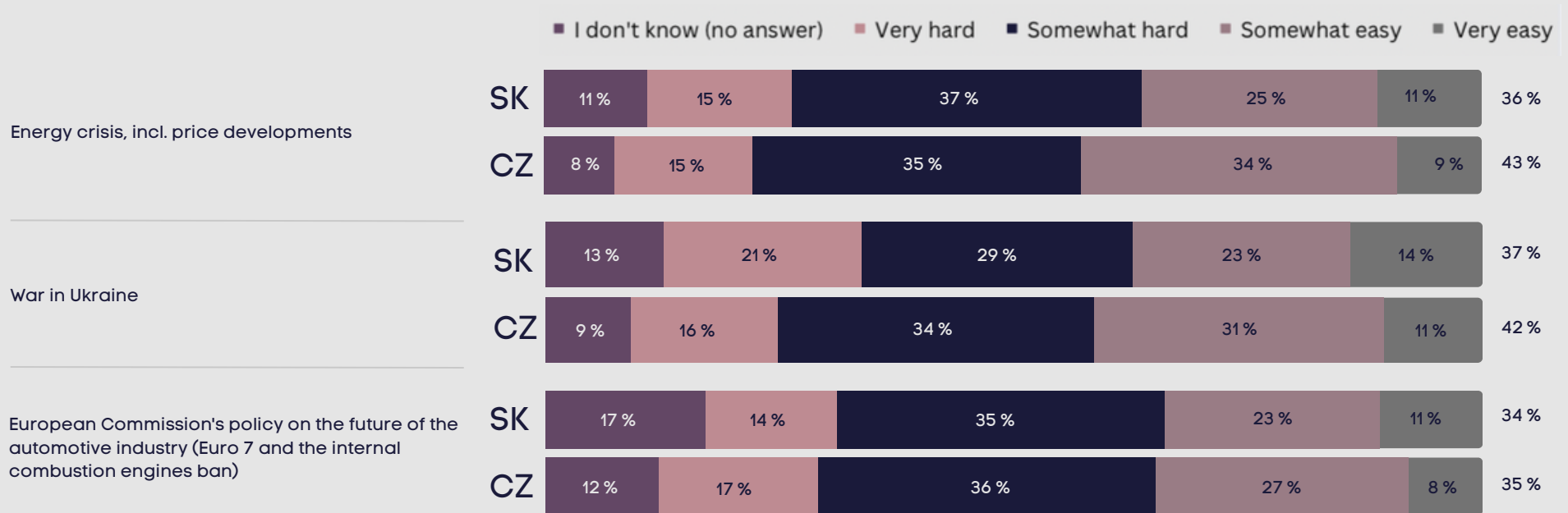


Base: CZ n=1047; SK n=1004

Information truthfulness determination rates

Both Czechs and Slovaks report that it is easiest for them to determine the truthfulness of information regarding high inflation and the national debt and the covid-19 epidemic. Compared to Slovaks, Czechs also often mentioned domestic political events. For both Czechs and Slovaks, the most difficult thing to determine is the truthfulness of information regarding the energy crisis, the war in Ukraine and the European Commission's policy on the future of the automotive industry.

Question: When you hear news/information about the following topics, how hard do you find it to determine their degree of truthfulness?



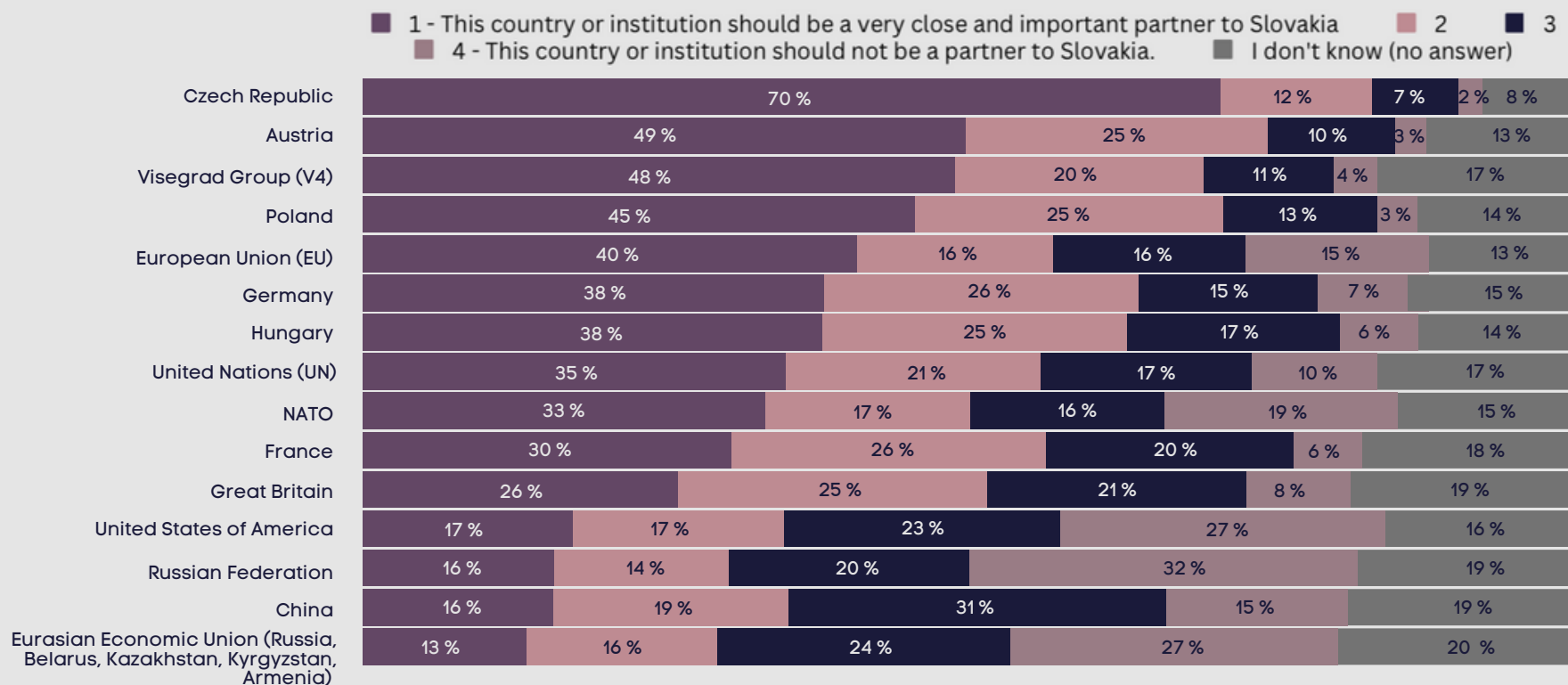
Base: CZ n=1047; SK n=1004

Closest partners of the Slovak Republic

Slovaks consider the countries and institutions that should be Slovakia's close and important partners to be mainly the Czech Republic, just as Czechs consider Slovakia. Almost half of the population also considers Austria or the Visegrad Group to be very close and important partners. 45% chose Poland and 38% would welcome Hungary as a close partner.

On the other hand, almost a third of Slovak citizens say that the country or international institution that should not be their partner is the Russian Federation. Many also rejected the Eurasian Economic Union (27%), the USA (27%), and NATO (19%).

Question: To what extent do you believe that the following countries and international institutions should be Slovakia's closest partner?



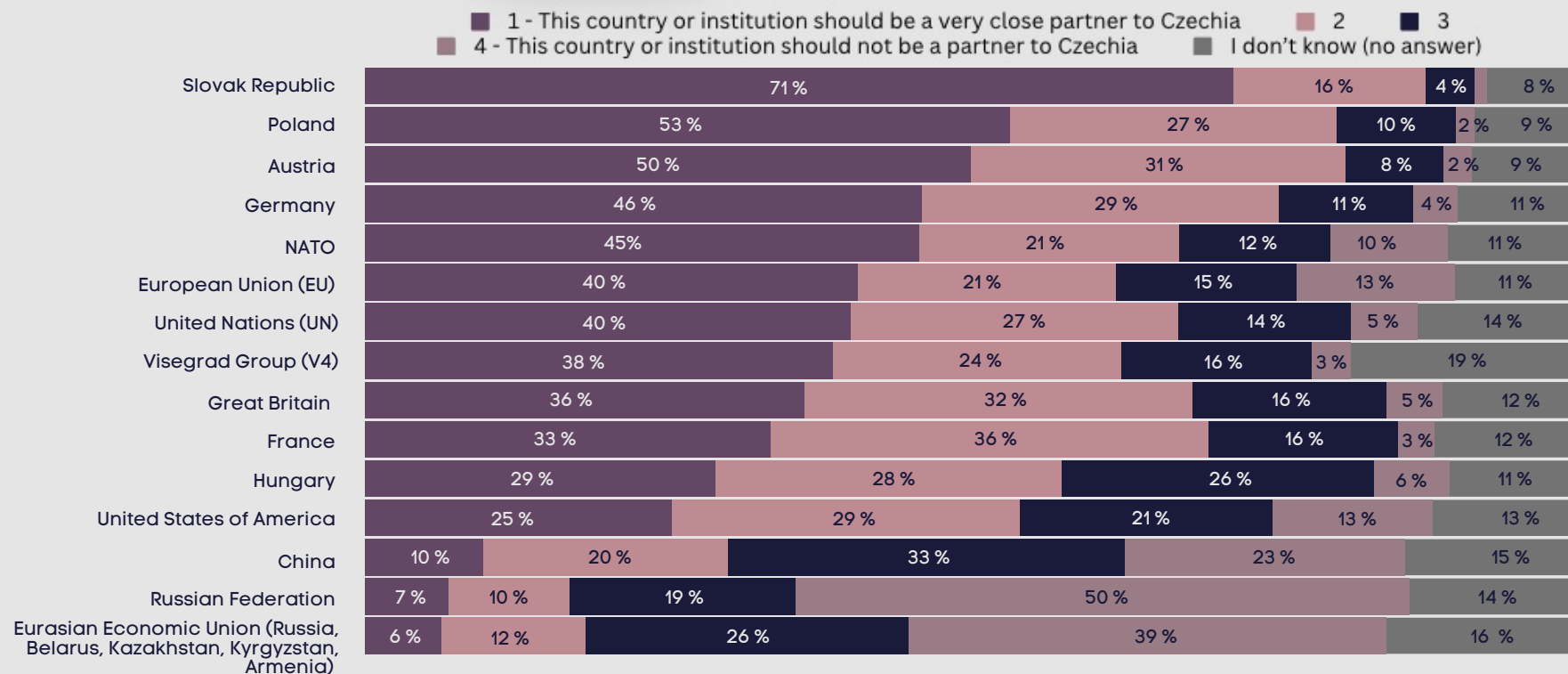
Base: Total SK n=1004

Closest partners of the Czech Republic

According to the Czech population, the Czech Republic's closest partners should be mainly its neighbouring countries, followed by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union.

On the other hand, half of the population considers the Russian Federation to be a country that should not be a partner of the Czech Republic. The Eurasian Economic Union (39%) and China (23%) were also among the rejected states and international institutions.

Question: To what extent do you believe that the following countries and international institutions should be Czechia's closest partner?



Base: Total CZ n=1047

Research method

Sample size	1004 respondents in Slovakia, 1047 in Czechia
Survey date	May 16 – June 16, 2023
Survey method	the CASI method was used, utilizing the Populace.cz and Populacia.sk online panels.
Representativity	quota sampling (quotas for gender, education, region, size of town, age, and economic status) the survey is representative for the general population aged 18 or older
Contracted and carried out by	survey conducted by Ipsos (member of SAVA and SIMAR) exclusively for the Charles University – CEDMO

This publication summarizes the work of selected CEDMO fact-checking organizations (AFP, Demagog.sk, and Infosecurity.sk) up to June 2023.

The URLs of all fact-checks referenced in this publication can be found HERE.

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