

EUROPEAN INTEGRATION OF UKRAINE AND ELECTIONS IN EU COUNTRIES

INFORMATION ASPECT



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The following experts contributed
to the report's creation:

Volodymyr Solovian

PhD, Head of Hybrid Warfare Analytical Group
at Ukraine Crisis Media Center

Viktoriia Odusanvo

analyst at the Hybrid Warfare Analytical Group

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Introduction

For a long time, Russia has been actively waging a hybrid war against the democratic world, including Europe. Disinformation is one of the main tools of Moscow's influence on European societies.

At the same time, the key goal of Russia's external information influence is to discredit the idea of the European Union enlargement.

The Kremlin attaches a special role to Ukraine's European integration. Economically successful and integrated into the European environment, Ukraine is an existential challenge for Putin's regime. Therefore, the Russian leadership does not give up its attempts to ruin the European vector of Ukraine's development.

Moscow is focusing considerable attention on attempts to undermine Ukraine's bilateral ties with its neighbors. To this end, the Kremlin provides information fueling for the activities of far-right and radical Eurosceptic groups in the EU, manipulating the topics of historical memory and economic rivalry. By influencing public opinion in European societies, Moscow seeks to weaken the resolve of EU governments to support Ukraine.

Given the hybrid nature of Russia's foreign policy strategy towards Europe, elections in the EU are periods of increased vulnerability in the information sphere. As is well known, election campaigns in democracies are characterized by accelerating dynamics of news and media content on socially and politically significant topics. In such circumstances, external disreputable actors expand their arsenal of influence on voters.

This year, the risks are most relevant in light of the elections in Poland, Romania, and the Czech Republic. Thus, in May 2025, presidential elections will be held in Poland and Romania, and in the fall, a new parliament will be elected in the Czech Republic.

In this regard, this analytical note provides an assessment of the political situation in Poland, Romania, and the Czech Republic in the context of the electoral prospects of political forces that are skeptical about Ukraine and its European integration. The study also analyzes the role of political actors in each of the three countries in the context of spreading anti-Ukrainian propaganda. The study examines the state of information penetration of pro-Russian narratives in the media environment of Poland, Romania, and the Czech Republic as of March 2025. In addition, the study includes a survey of experts to assess the state of coverage of the topic of Ukraine's European integration in election campaigning in Poland, Romania, and the Czech Republic.

2025: a landmark year in EU-Ukraine relations?

EU membership would mean not only strengthening the economy and security of post-war Ukraine, but also enhancing the EU's global role. This prospect, of course, does not suit Russia, whose imperial ambitions are aimed at territorial and political expansion. That is why one of Moscow's key goals is to reduce the level of support for Ukraine's European integration among the EU citizens and discredit European political forces and governments that support the course of support and assistance to Ukraine.

Ukraine's accession to the EU is supported by the overwhelming majority of Ukrainians, and the public consensus sees European integration as an important component of protecting the state from Russian expansion. Thus, the issue of EU membership is relevant for Ukraine's progressive development.

This year may mark a turning point in the history of EU-Ukraine relations. Ukraine is expected to open the first cluster in its EU accession negotiations soon. Kyiv's ambitious goal, announced by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, is to open all negotiating clusters with the EU this year.

According to the government, Ukraine has already completed the process of screening legislation within the first cluster ("Fundamentals") and received an EU report with recommendations that have been implemented in roadmaps in the areas of the rule of law, public administration reform, and the functioning of democratic institutions. According to the European Commissioner for Enlargement, Martha Kos, the EU can open all the negotiation clusters by the end of 2025. Plans to meet these deadlines were also recently confirmed by the EU Ambassador to Ukraine Katarina Mathernova.



Joint meeting of the Government of Ukraine and the European Commission in Kyiv, February 2025

Four dimensions of support for Ukraine

Poland, Romania, and the Czech Republic are important allies of Kyiv on its European integration path. These countries also occupy key positions in the architecture of international support for Ukraine's defense capabilities.

Military and technical dimension. Since the start of the full-scale invasion, military assistance to Ukraine from the three countries has included the transfer of weapons and military equipment, ammunition, and supplies. According to the official website of the President of Poland, military aid to Ukraine amounts to about 15 billion zlotys (approx. 4 billion USD.) Indeed, Poland was the first country to supply significant amounts of heavy weapons and transfer combat aircraft. It is also worth noting that Ukraine has received almost 29,500 Starlink kits from Poland. These systems play a key role in ensuring communications in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. At the same time, on the eve of the third anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion, Polish Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz noted that Poland had trained about a third of the total number of Ukrainian military personnel who had been trained under EU initiatives and would continue to conduct training on its territory.

Romania became one of the countries where Ukrainian pilots were trained to equip the Ukrainian Air Force with F-16 fighters. In October 2024, Bucharest approved the opening of a training center for Ukrainian marines, which, according to the preliminary plan, should operate for the next two years. In addition, last fall, Romania handed over a Patriot air defense missile system to Ukraine, which is extremely important for the protection of civilian and energy infrastructure. It is also worth noting that in order to maintain the "regime of silence," a significant portion of Romania's military assistance was provided non-publicly.



Patriot air defense missile system in Romania,
Source: [defence-ua](https://defence-ua.com).

At the same time, Poland and Romania are of key geographical importance for providing logistical routes for the supply of weapons. For example, approximately 90% of all international military aid to Ukraine is delivered through the hub at Poland's Jasionka airport.

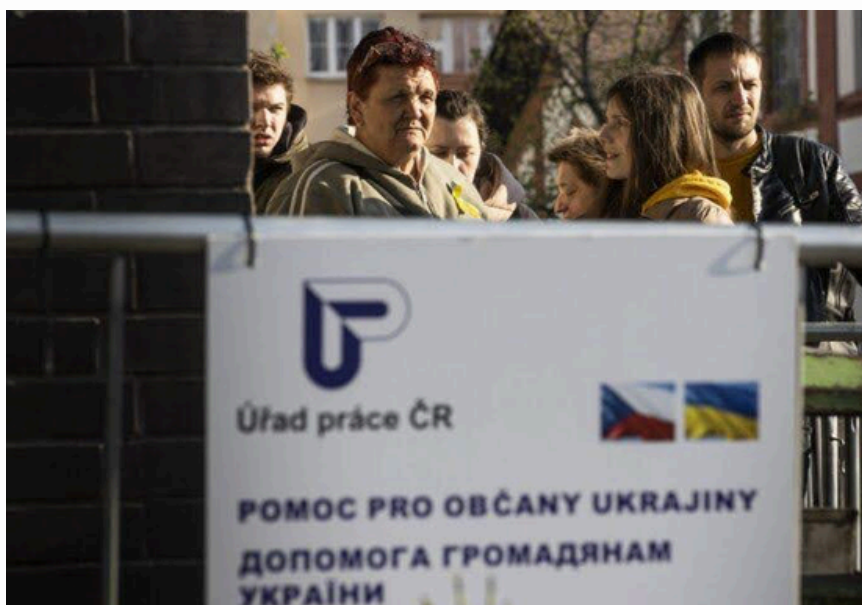
The Czech Republic, in turn, plays a key role in supplying the Ukrainian Armed Forces with ammunition. Within the framework of the "coalition of ammunition "coordinated by Prague, 1.6 million shells were delivered to Ukraine. The program of searching for and purchasing ammunition was continued this year. Moreover, Czech Defense Minister Jana Cernochova recently noted that over the three years of Russian aggression, Prague has allocated 7.3 billion CZK (approx. 0.33 billion USD) for the purchase of military materials for Ukraine. In addition, with the assistance of the Czech Republic, more than 7,000 Ukrainian soldiers were trained in the EU.

The economic dimension. In addition to military assistance, all three countries provide economic and logistical support to Ukraine. For example, during Russia's blockade of Ukrainian ports, Bucharest opened up the possibility for Kyiv to transit grain through the port of Constanța, which has become the main alternative route for Ukrainian grain since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion.

According to an infographic published by the Office of the President of Poland, in 2022-24, the aid provided by Warsaw to Ukraine amounted to 4.91% of the country's GDP. The majority of this aid (4.2%) was directed to support Ukrainian refugees.

Since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Czech government has spent 62.5 billion CZK (approx. 2.84 billion USD) on humanitarian aid to Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees. In addition, Czech citizens have made charitable contributions from their own savings in the amount of close to 300 million euros.

Assistance to refugees. According to statistics from the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), as of the beginning of 2025, 998 thousand Ukrainians live in Poland and 398 thousand in the Czech Republic, who were forced to seek refuge from the fighting abroad. Thus, both countries are among the three European countries that have received the largest number of Ukrainian refugees. Romania provides temporary protection to approximately 181 thousand Ukrainian refugees (January 2025). Thus, Romania is among the top five EU countries in terms of the number of asylum seekers from Ukraine.



Source: gromada.cz

At the same time, Warsaw and Prague are actively encouraging Ukrainians to join local labor markets. In Poland, the share of refugees, most of whom are women, who are employed or actively looking for work has exceeded 67%. The government plans to allow Ukrainians to exchange temporary protection for a three-year residence permit. In the Czech Republic, 152.7 thousand Ukrainians are officially employed (i.e. approximately two-thirds of the working age population).

Support for the European integration course. Poland, Romania, and the Czech Republic have a consistent favorable position on Ukraine's European integration course.

Poland is known as a longtime advocate of Ukraine's EU membership. Naturally, this issue has become one of Warsaw's priorities under its presidency of the EU Council. According to Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk, "the Polish presidency will break the deadlock that has developed in recent months on the issue of Ukraine's integration. Poland will work together with Ukraine and its European partners to accelerate the accession process." In particular, Warsaw is making efforts to overcome Hungary's resistance. Poland's position is that the issues of bilateral Hungarian-Ukrainian relations cannot block the discussion on the first cluster.

Romania's support for Ukraine's European integration also remains unchanged. For Bucharest, Kyiv's success on the European integration track is important given the impact of the situation in Ukraine on the positions of pro-European forces in Moldova. Thus, at the end of March, during a meeting with Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski, Romanian Foreign Minister Emil Hurezeanu said that "special emphasis was placed on supporting progress towards European integration of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova by opening the first phase of negotiations this half of the year." It is worth noting that this issue is particularly relevant given the upcoming parliamentary elections to be held in Moldova this fall.



President of Moldova Maia Sandu and President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy

Promoting European integration is one of the most important pillars of Prague's foreign policy under the government of Petr Fiala. At the end of January, it became known that the Czech Republic had prepared a "plan" for Ukraine and Moldova to join the EU's common market. The initiative states that further economic integration of Ukraine and Moldova through the expansion of free trade agreements will significantly help these countries "resist the harmful influence of Russia." The key areas of integration emphasized by the authors of the document are energy, digital technologies, agriculture, ecology, and entrepreneurship. This approach can facilitate the introduction of legislation at the EU level that would bring the economies of both countries closer to the bloc by expanding market access, security, and cooperation in various fields.

Threatening Trends: Perception of Ukraine and Skepticism toward its European integration in Poland, Romania, and the Czech Republic

Despite the fact that all three countries help Ukraine repel Kremlin aggression and support its European integration course, domestic political trends affect the perception of Ukraine in the societies of Poland, Romania, and the Czech Republic.

The activity of Eurosceptic political forces creates a favorable environment for the spread of pro-Russian narratives. In recent years, anti-Ukrainian protests organized by far-right political forces in the EU's neighboring countries have been the most telling illustrations of these trends.

One of the most significant was the protests of farmers and transporters in Poland, Romania, and Slovakia in 2023-2024. The global reason for the protests was the EU's long-term policy of taxes and duties on agricultural products, which significantly affected the profits of European farmers. However, the "spark" that ignited the wave of protests was Brussels' decision to extend the temporary abolition of duties for Ukraine.

After this decision was made, some farmers in Poland and Romania protested at the border with Ukraine, blocking the entry and exit of Ukrainian trucks and sometimes even trains.

Despite the fact that the reasons for the protests were of a domestic political nature (the factor of the Polish elections) and were partly caused by the EU leadership's policy and Kyiv's lack of preventive steps, Moscow took advantage of the situation. Ukraine's trade and export misunderstandings with its western neighbors became an additional opportunity to destabilize interstate relations. For example, during the protests in Poland, the Russian network Doppelgänger, which creates disinformation campaigns on social media, spread fake news about the protests on the border.

Another example of how Moscow's propaganda can influence public sentiment in EU countries is the case of protests against the "harm" allegedly caused to European countries by Ukrainian refugees. For example, last November, a rally was held in Prague near the Czech National Museum, during which people with posters reading "Czech Republic comes first" and "Czech Republic is being turned into Ukraine" demanded that the Ukrainian flag, which was raised in 2022 as a sign of support, be removed from the building.



Fake Polityka page created as part of the Doppelgänger campaign.
Source: Demagog / raport alliance4europe

One of the "inspirations" for this action was the Russian narrative that the "influx" of Ukrainian refugees to the Czech Republic threatens to erase the cultural identity of Czech citizens and their social and economic security.

Among the latest political upheavals in Romania is the disqualification of far-right candidate Călin Georgescu from running in the Romanian presidential election due to his links with Russian special services and numerous violations of campaign rules. In this regard, among the central themes of the Romanian right is the thesis of the "destruction of democracy" in Europe and the criticism of Brussels because of the pressure that the EU leadership allegedly exerts on Bucharest. It is significant that these are the "arguments" that the Russian media used against the Romanian authorities, trying to use the fiasco of the candidate loyal to Moscow to strengthen the influence of Russian propaganda in Romania.

Therefore, in this study, we decided to provide a cross-section of opinion polls of citizens of the three countries regarding their attitudes toward issues related to support for Ukraine. These indicators are important for understanding the size of audiences that are potentially vulnerable to the spread of pro-Russian and Ukraine-skeptic narratives.

Supporting Ukraine in the war (providing weapons):

Poland. According to a poll conducted by the Juliusz Mieroszewski Center for Dialogue in November-December 2024, 54% of respondents believe that Poland should continue to provide military support to Ukraine, while 26% are against it.

Romania. The results of the IRSOP poll (March 2025) show that: 65% of respondents believe that Romania should not allocate more money to support Ukraine, while 32% support an increase in support.

Czech Republic. According to a poll by STEM (January 2025), 47% of Czechs believe that the government provides excessive military support to Ukraine, while 34% consider the current amount sufficient.

Helping Ukrainian refugees:

Poland. 44% of Poles believe that the amount of social assistance provided to Ukrainian refugees is excessive. According to the Center for Public Opinion Research (CBOS) in October 2024, support for accepting Ukrainian refugees has dropped to 53%, the lowest since the Russian invasion in February 2022. For comparison, in March 2022, this figure was 94%.

Romania. According to the GLOBSEC study "Public Attitudes in Romania" (as of October 2024), 64% of Romanians support the provision of humanitarian assistance to Ukrainian refugees.

Czech Republic. Support for the stay of Ukrainian refugees in the Czech Republic remains stable: 54% of respondents express a positive or rather positive attitude.

Attitude towards Ukrainians:

Poland. A survey by the Juliusz Mieroszewski Center for Dialogue found that 25% of Poles have a positive attitude toward Ukrainians, 30% have a negative attitude, and 41% are neutral. At the same time, only 14% of Poles want Ukrainian refugees to stay in Poland, while more than half of the respondents would like them to return to Ukraine.

Romania. According to GLOBSEC, 35% of respondents believe that Ukrainian refugees pose a threat to Romania.

Czech Republic. 50% of Czechs perceive Ukrainian refugees as a threat, while 33% consider them useful for the country.

European integration

Poland. 62% of respondents favor the idea of Ukraine's integration into the EU.

Romania. 54% of respondents support Ukraine's accession to the EU, while 30% share the opposite view.

Czech Republic. There is limited data on public opinion in the Czech Republic regarding Ukraine's integration into the EU, as the question is not included in polls.

Romania

Political situation on the eve of the elections

Support for Ukraine has emerged as a key theme in Romania's far-right election campaign. The unexpected victory of independent candidate Calin Georgescu in the first round of the November 24, 2024 presidential election served as a catalyst for a surge in its popularity. The politician, known for his right-wing populist views, was previously unknown, but his result of nearly 23% came as a shock to most political observers.

According to Cristian Chiscop, program coordinator at the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Romania, Georgescu has dealt a significant blow to the trajectory parties, the Social Democrats (PSD) and the centre-right National Liberal Party (PNL), who have formed the ruling coalition since 2021. Their candidates lost to Georgescu, and the parties lost nearly 10% of the vote compared to the previous election.

However, an unsettling undertone to the far-right candidate's victory quickly emerged. On December 4, the then president of Romania Klaus Iohannis authorised the release of election-related intelligence documents that revealed Georgescu was campaigning illegally. This information was provided by the Romanian Intelligence Service (SRI), the Foreign Intelligence Service (CSAT), the Special Telecommunications Service (STS), and the Ministry of Interior. According to the SRI, Georgescu quickly gained popularity two weeks prior to the first round of the presidential election thanks to a coordinated social media campaign that included TikTok. According to the Romanian Ministry of Interior, more than 100 accounts with a total audience of over 8 million subscribers promoted the politician's candidacy on social media. It was reported that some of the accounts had previously advocated pro-Russian, anti-Semitic, anti-Western, or anti-Ukrainian views.

In light of this, the National Council for Television and Radio Broadcasting of Romania requested that the European Commission investigate the role of the TikTok platform in the electoral process.

The Romanian Constitutional Court annulled the first round results on December 6, 2024, citing suspicions of Russian interference in the election. Soon after, new dates for the presidential re-election were announced: May 4 (first round) and May 18 (second round, if no candidate receives more than half of the vote).

As for Gheorghe himself, the Romanian Prosecutor General's Office brought several charges against him, including incitement to actions against the constitutional order and the establishment or support of a fascist organization. On March 9, the Romanian Central Electoral Bureau ultimately rejected Gheorghe's candidacy. A few days later, the Constitutional Court confirmed this decision.



Rally in Support of Gheorghe, March 1, 2025,
Source: apnews.com

Georgescu described the authorities' actions as "a continuation of the coup" and a "blow to the heart of democracy." The disqualified ex-candidate participated in several rallies, demonstrating his desire to continue his political career. In early March, the protesters expanded their demands to include the resignation of the current Prime Minister, Marcel Ciolacu. Despite right-wing political party-organised street protests, elections are the most likely scenario for democratically resolving the political crisis.

Georgescu was not the only candidate to be disqualified. Diana Iovanovici-Șoșoacă, the leader of the S.O.S. Romania party and a member of the Romanian Parliament, was also barred from running in the rerun presidential election. Outside of Romania, the politician is best known for her open support of Russia's aggression against Ukraine and for spreading Kremlin propaganda.

In these circumstances, George Simion, the leader of the Alliance for the Unification of Romanians (AUR), was appointed as the "backup candidate" whom the right-wing forces would rally around. Simion received 14% of the votes in the first round of the presidential election and now the politician has a significant opportunity to expand his electoral base. In the parliamentary elections, his party finished second with 18% and it's believed that Simion can now count on the votes of Georgescu's supporters. Simion's candidature was also supported by Anamaria Gavrila, the leader of the Young People's Party (POT), who began her political career in AUR until 2021. The politically young right-wing party, founded in 2023, gained the support of 6.35% of voters in the December parliamentary elections.



Diana Soshoeke shows a map with the territories of neighboring states "annexed" to Romania

Thus, an informal alliance of far-right political parties (AUR-SOS-POT) has reached the final stage of Romania's presidential election. As a result, the chances of a right-wing candidate advancing to the second round are considered quite high.



Partidul Oamenilor Tineri (Courtesy Image)

Leaders of Romanian nationalists George Simion, Anamaria Gavrilă and Celin Georgescu (from left to right).
Source: stirilekanal.ro

Romanian sociologists have already documented the consequences of Georgescu's withdrawal, despite the fact that he was considered the first-round favourite. According to one of the first polls ([by AtlasIntel](#)) conducted since Georgescu's removal, his "ideological ally" George Simion has a chance at winning the first round of the presidential election. Several figures are vying for second place, including Bucharest Mayor Nicușor Dan, Crin Antonescu (a ruling coalition candidate), former Romanian Prime Minister Victor Ponta, and Elena Lasconi, leader of the opposition centre-left Romanian Salvation Union.

Romanian presidential elections 2025: anti-Ukrainian discourse

Călin Georgescu. Georgescu's recent actions have damaged Ukraine's reputation in Romanian society. The politician's campaign was based on the idea of Romanian economic sovereignty and reduced reliance on imports. Georgescu's rhetoric fuelled the resurgence of protest moods in some Romanian society against the import of Ukrainian goods. In late 2023 and early 2024, Romanian farmers protested the import of Ukrainian grain and agricultural products. At the time, the farmers' main argument was that cheaper Ukrainian imports lowered local prices, and their accusations were directed primarily at the EU leadership.

Georgescu is also known for his criticism of NATO. He denounced the installation of the United States' ground-based missile defence system at the former Deveselu air base. At the same time, the politician praised the Russian president, describing him as "a man who loves his country." By doing so, Georgescu helped spread Romanian society's rejection of the idea of transatlantic unity in the face of Russian threats.

Georgescu's anti-Ukrainian rhetoric reached its pinnacle in an interview with [romaniatv.net](#), when he referred to Ukraine as a fictional state whose true name should be the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. The politician did not stop there and went on to voice claims against Ukraine's territorial integrity. According to Georgescu, Romania is interested in regaining control of several historical Ukrainian regions, including Northern Bukovyna, Bujak, and Northern Maramures. The candidate also offered Hungary to "take" Zakarpattia and Poland to take the Lviv Oblast. He disparaged the rest of Ukraine, calling it "Malorossia," (historical term 'Little Russia' is used by Russian propaganda to denigrate Ukrainian identity).

Despite the fact that Georgescu was not allowed to run for re-election, his popularity reflects Romanian sociopolitical trends. His rise in popularity reflects Romanian social divisions as well as disillusionment with the traditional political and economic establishment. According to Christian Kiskop, his primary electorate is concentrated in rural and economically disadvantaged areas that have long been overlooked by reforms.

At the same time, traditional anti-Ukrainian actors, such as Senator Diana Iovanovici Șoșoacă, were expected to ramp up their activity during the election season. For many years, Șoșoacă has actively supported pro-Russian theses.

For example, in March 2023, she proposed a bill in parliament calling for the termination of the Good Neighbourhood Agreement with Ukraine and the annexation of Ukrainian territories (Northern Bukovina, Hertsaiivshchyna, Budzhak, historical Maramures, and Zmeinyi Island). Şoşoacă threatened to disrupt Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's speech in the Romanian parliament in October 2023, prompting the cancellation of the event. Şoşoacă also attended official events at the Russian embassy in Bucharest. For example, she went to the Russian diplomatic mission to "celebrate the results of the Special Operation" in Ukraine.



Diana Shoshoake at the Russian Embassy in Romania

In response to her recent exclusion from the elections, Şoşoacă wrote an open letter to the Russian leader. She noted that Romania is historically linked to Russia through the Orthodox faith, and its people are deprived of the opportunity to choose their own political path. She also stated that Ukraine allegedly "illegally" holds "Romanian territories" in violation of "the unjust Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, which was denounced, and therefore we have the right to protect Romanians in these territories, which we want to return." As a result of these actions, Şoşoacă was banned from entering Ukraine for three years.

Şoşoacă is a major mouthpiece for anti-Ukrainian propaganda among Romanian politicians, combining radical nationalism and Kremlin narratives. However, it is important to note that Shoshoake and her party represent a small portion of Romanian politics.

George Simion, the leader of the AUR party, poses a far greater threat. This political force describes itself as a centre-right, Christian democratic party. However, their policy is characterised by the promotion of anti-EU values.

George Simion and other AUR members have repeatedly criticised sanctions against Russia and assistance to Ukraine, claiming that "this is not our war" and that Romania should only prioritise its own interests.



AUR Congress in the city of Targovishte on April 7, 2024 against the backdrop of an image of the medieval ruler of Wallachia, Vlad the Impaler – the historical prototype of the character Dracula

For example, in February 2025, AUR MPs voted against a law allowing the shooting down of Russian military drones that violate Romanian airspace. AUR representatives also participated in protests accusing the government of obeying “orders” from the EU, NATO, and “foreign embassies,” hinting that a change of government could put an end to the alleged exploitation of the country's resources by foreigners. Despite the fact that party members occasionally deny any affiliation with Moscow in public statements, the Kremlin's narrative is clear in their actions.

George Simion has also been linked to Russian special services. Anatol Șalaru, former Minister of Defence of Moldova, accused Simion of meeting with the head of the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB). Representatives from the Security Service of Ukraine also presented documents confirming the politician's ties to Russia and his systematic anti-Ukrainian activities. Because of this, as well as his far-right statements, Simion was barred from entering Ukraine and Moldova in 2011 and 2015.

At the same time, the shift in AUR's radical rhetoric is noteworthy. The party's discourse is becoming more complex; as of early 2025, open pandering to Moscow and appeals to anti-European narratives are combined with a demonstrative “centring” of the party's position. The party's speakers are working to make their activities appear more moderate and “presentable” to representatives from other political parties.

George Simion's political image is also “twofold.” In his public statements, the politician condemns Russian aggression while opposing military aid to Ukraine. Furthermore, despite positioning himself and his party as “close to Europe,” Simion spent a significant portion of his campaign rhetoric criticising EU institutions and emphasising the importance of protecting individual states' national interests over European integration.

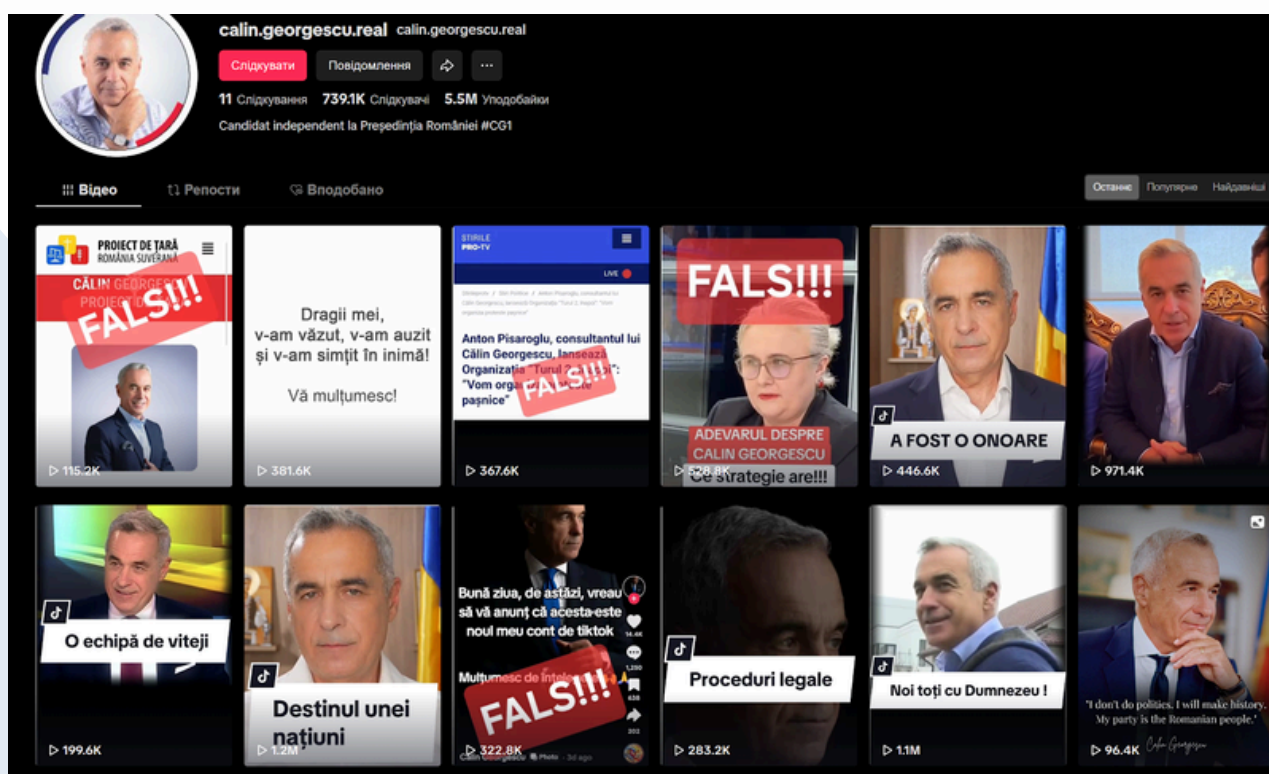
Such behaviour may indicate the use of a "lesser evil" strategy, which involves presenting a more rational and predictable political structure with which to cooperate. It is also worth noting that this rhetoric stands in "contrast" to Georgescu's election strategy, which openly referred to Putin as a "real leader."

Activities of anti-Ukrainian media in Romania

In Romania, pro-Russian and anti-Ukrainian propaganda is spread through traditional media, online publications, social networks, and influencers in various spheres of public life.

Social media plays an important role in the spread of manipulative messages, fake news, and biased interpretations.

As of January 2025, Romania had 13.0 million registered social media users, which accounted for 68.6% of the total population. At the same time, TikTok is experiencing the fastest growth, with a share of 8.51 million (47.7 percent of the local Internet user base).

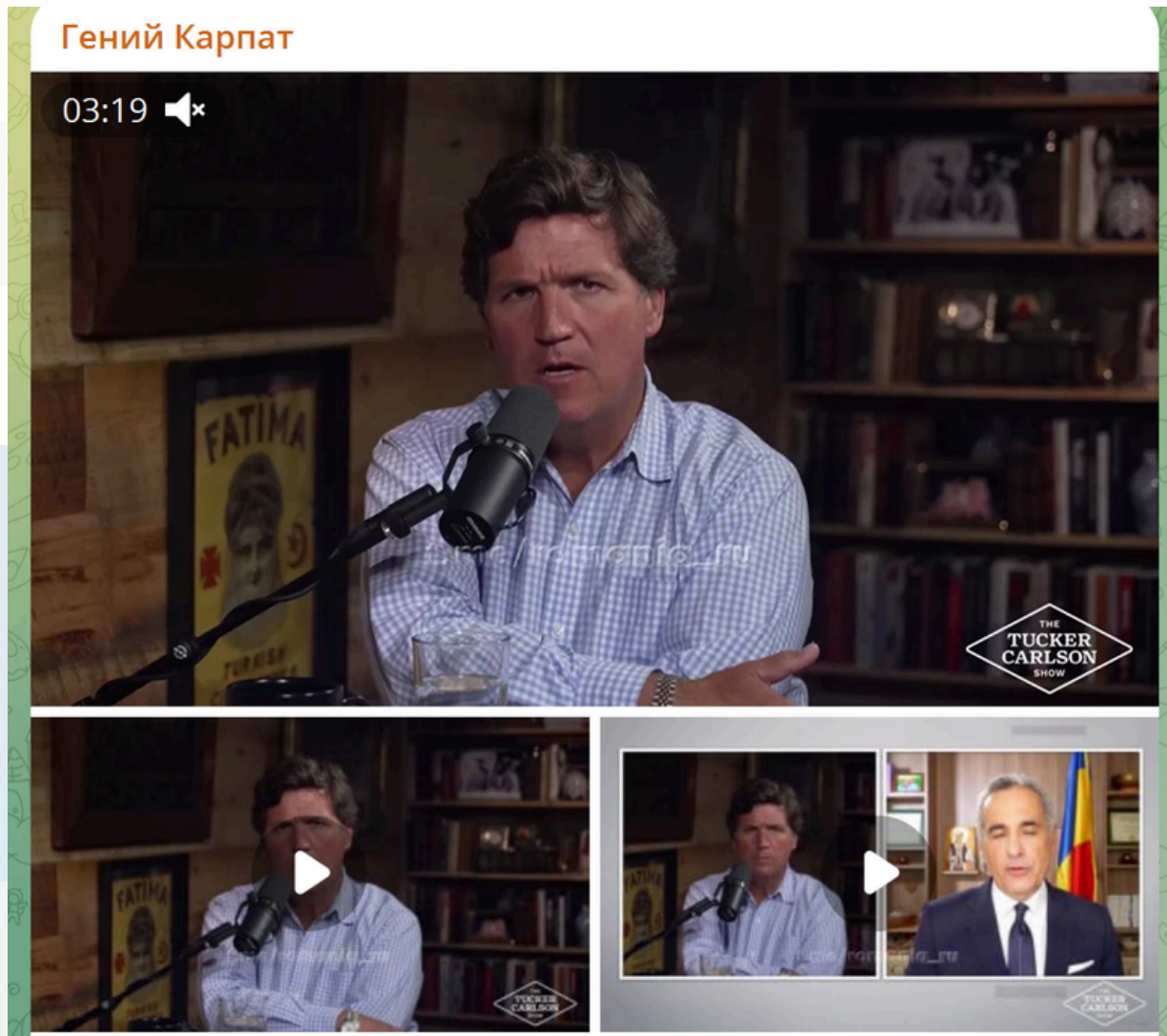


Screenshot of Georgescu's TikTok page, some of his recent videos have garnered over 1 million views

Based on data from datareportal.com, the growth dynamics of TikTok's audience can be outlined as follows: in 2022 – 6.37 million accounts, in 2023 – 7.58 million, in 2024 – 8.97 million, and in 2025 – 8.51 million. Thus, against the backdrop of the scandal surrounding the cancellation of the first round of the presidential election, a noticeable decline in the number of accounts is observed – likely due to a mass exodus of bots. Numerous toxic narratives, ranging from conspiracy theories to war disinformation, are spread via dozens of anonymous TikTok accounts, some with hundreds of thousands of followers and posting viral videos that distort reality.

The Georgescu campaign demonstrates how external, unscrupulous actors can "hack" elections using TikTok. According to Romanian authorities, the bogpr account, owned by Romanian citizen Bogdan Pesir, financed the candidate's TikTok campaign with more than a million euros. TikTok confirmed payments totaling \$381 thousand for the period of October 24 to November 24, 2024. The funds were sent to users who promoted Georgescu.

Telegram has become another platform for disseminating Russian narratives. As of 2025, Telegram is the fourth most popular messaging app in Romania, with an audience of around 1 million users. Russian-language and Romanian-language pro-Russian Telegram channels mainly serve as platforms for promoting politicians loyal to Moscow.



A Russian-language Telegram channel focused on politics in Romania (with an audience of 8,600) is sharing and positively commenting on the interview between Călin Georgescu and Tucker Carlson

Fake news sites and little-known online publications are another means of dissemination. There is a network of conspiracy and pro-Russian websites that mimic the style of the "conventional" press while actually attempting to manipulate public opinion. Much of the content is intended to undermine Ukraine's position on the peaceful resolution of the war and the prospects for European integration. These platforms are: ActiveNews.ro, SolidNews.ro, Flux24.ro, R3media.ro, Ortodoxinfo.ro, and Inpolitics.ro. The majority of these websites do not reveal their owners or sources of funding, instead positioning themselves as independent news sources to gain audience trust.

In Romania, television remains an important means of political communication. Talk shows on Romanian television cover issues concerning relations with Kyiv and influence public perception of Ukraine's European integration. For example, the "Bystroye scandal" (Ukraine's dredging of the Danube estuary, which, according to the Romanian side, could result in an environmental disaster), so called «oppressing» of the Romanian minority in Ukraine, economic losses caused by the "maintenance" of Ukrainian refugees, the "expansion" of Ukrainian agricultural products, and so on. Even if the channel's editorial policy is pro-European and pro-Ukrainian, the fact that it discusses topics imposed by Russian propaganda contributes to their legitimacy in the media discourse.

Some Romanian traditional media outlets, particularly news channels, are known to tolerate disinformation. România TV, owned by former Social Democratic Party MP Sebastian Ghitsu, is known for spreading anti-Ukrainian propaganda. The channel, in particular, actively covers the activities of the far-right party's leader, AUR Simion, who is known for his anti-European and anti-Ukraine rhetoric. Furthermore, the TV channel supports the thesis that imports of Ukrainian agricultural products have had a negative impact on the Romanian economy, claiming that they harm Romanian farmers. Romania TV (RTV) has received numerous fines from the National Audiovisual Broadcasting Council (CNA) for manipulating and promoting conspiracy theories.

Gold FM is well-known among radio stations for spreading disinformation about Ukraine on a systematic basis. For example, the December 19 edition of the program "Geopolitica la zi" reported on the presence of American biolabs in Ukraine, allegedly funded by Big Pharma, the Soros Foundation, and even members of the Biden family.

Moreover, the radio station's owner, politician Cosmin Gusa, recently published an article titled "The decision to donate the PATRIOT system to Ukraine is deadly for Romania" The author of the article contends that transferring the missile defence system to Ukraine will make Romania a "vassal" of the United States, placing it in Russia's strike zone, which may regard it as a legitimate target. According to Gusa, the decision was made without adequate compensation or security guarantees from the allies. "Romania is actually at war," he declares.



Cosmin Gușă and AUR's leader George Simion, Photo: thediplomaticaffairs.com

Another source of Russian disinformation is the Republic of Moldova's websites, which include sections in Romanian. For instance, Sputnik Moldova. Despite being blocked in 2022, the site remains active. In the context of the 2024/2025 elections, these sites served as information resonators, quickly picking up on provocative statements made by far-right candidates.

Poland

Political situation on the eve of the elections

The first round of the Polish presidential election is scheduled for May 18, 2025. Ukraine's western neighbor is approaching the election of a new head of state amid political polarization and general voter fatigue from the longstanding dominance of two main camps represented by the conservative Law and Justice (PiS) party and the liberal-democratic Civic Platform (PO).

The May elections end a period of frequent electoral campaigns - since October 2023, the country has held parliamentary, local, and European Parliament elections. Therefore, the current campaign will finally determine the configuration of power in Poland for the coming years.

The ruling Civic Platform party is nominating Warsaw Mayor Rafał Trzaskowski for the presidency. According to opinion polls, the head of the capital is the most likely candidate to win. By the way, in 2020, the politician came close to defeating incumbent President Andrzej Duda, gaining more than 48% of votes.

According to the latest polls, Rafał Trzaskowski is the leader of the race. He is supported by 38% of respondents. PiS candidate Karol Nawrocki is in second place, with 20% ready to vote for him. Sławomir Mentzen, a candidate from the right-wing Confederation of Liberty and Independence party, also has a fairly good chance of competing with Trzaskowski for the second round, with about 19% of voters supporting him.

Nawrocki had a bright start and began to close the gap with the favorite at the beginning of the year, but his campaign soon stalled. Political analysts note that the campaign of the Confederation candidate is currently looking more creative. As a result, according to some polls conducted in early March, respondents gave Mentzen second place.



The trio of candidates leading in opinion polls on the eve of the election - Rafał Trzaskowski, Karol Nawrocki, Sławomir Mentzen (from left). Photo: wiadomosci.onet.pl

The closest pursuers of the top three - Speaker of the Sejm Szymon Hołownia, leader of The Left alliance Magdalena Biejat, Adrian Zandberg of the Together Party, and MEP Grzegorz Braun - have virtually no chance of reaching the second round. Therefore, the main intrigue of the first round is the rivalry between Nawrocki and Mentzen.

At the same time, it is worth noting that the electoral base of the right-wing conservative camp remains mobilized, and the opposition is ready to impose a fierce struggle for the presidency.

Nawrocki's victory may be seen by PiS as a springboard for future revenge in the 2027 parliamentary elections. On the other hand, Mentzen's potential presidency will provide an additional increase in the popularity of far-right forces in Polish politics and a permanent crisis in the president's relations with the government and parliament. At the same time, in this scenario, Confederation leaders will try to push PiS out of the role of the main opposition party. Therefore, a victory by Nawrocki or Mentzen is likely to lead to the erosion of Polish-Ukrainian relations.

Polish presidential elections 2025: Ukrainian context

In Ukraine, Trzaskowski's candidacy is seen as the most convenient for establishing bilateral relations and maintaining the Polish leadership's continued support for Kyiv's European integration course. After Donald Tusk returned to power at the end of 2023, the tensions between Poland and Ukraine that arose under the previous government (PiS) were significantly reduced. Given the political affiliation of the mayor of Warsaw with the Tusk government, Trzaskowski's victory will mean that the domestic political situation in Poland will not have a significant impact on the strategic partnership with Ukraine.

The figure of the PiS candidate Nawrocki attracted attention in Ukraine due to his statements that he "does not see" Ukraine's membership in the EU and NATO until "important civilizational issues for Poles are resolved," i.e., the Volyn tragedy is resolved. According to Łukasz Adamski, political analyst, deputy director of the Juliusz Mieroszewski Center for Dialogue, "Karol Nawrocki believes that Ukraine should not only meet the Copenhagen criteria, including the willingness and ability to implement EU legislation, but also resolve problematic issues in relations with Poland. In particular, he emphasizes the issue of assessing the activities of the OUN (Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists) and UPA (Ukrainian Insurgent Army), which is the most painful historical topic for Poles, as well as the need to rebury the victims of the UPA, whose remains are in fields or in forgotten graves in Volyn and Galicia." Thus, a direct consequence of Nawrocki's victory may be the strengthening of the linkage of historical issues to the issue of Ukraine's European integration in the Polish political agenda.

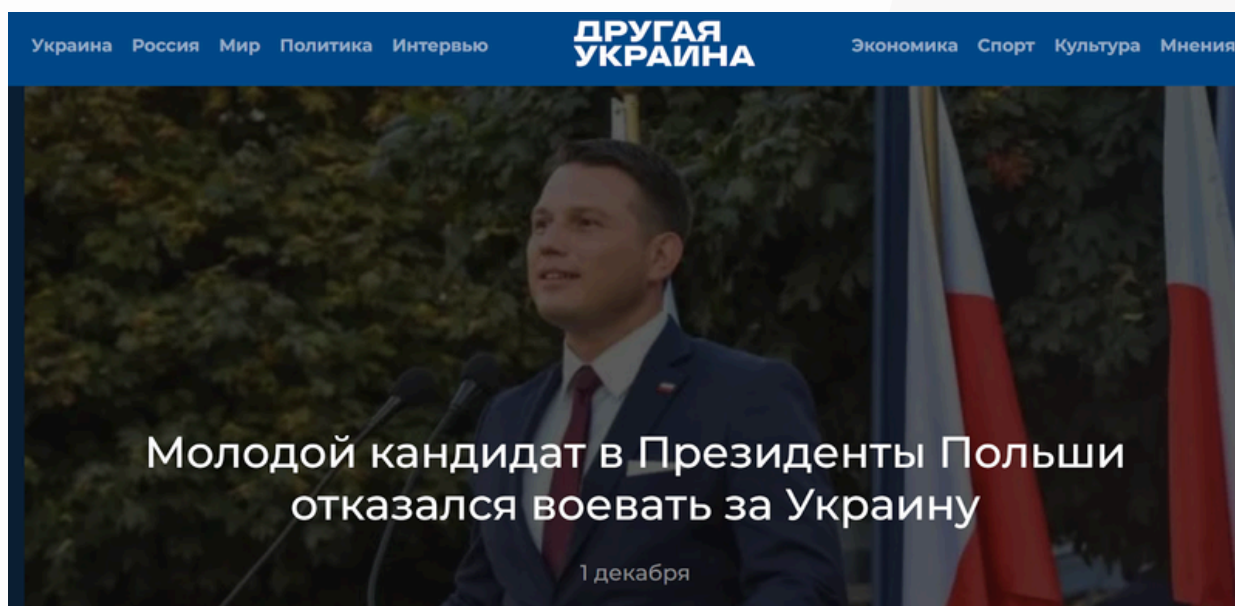
Mentzen, a presidential contender from the Confederation, also exploits the theme of historical memory, but he professes more uncompromising approaches. For example, at the end of February 2025, Mentzen and MEP Anna Bryłka visited Lviv. From there, they published a video in which Mentzen said that Ukraine should "stop the cult of Stepan Bandera." The politician also stated that "the funds allocated by Warsaw for the restoration of the infrastructure damaged as a result of the hostilities in Lviv were used to restore the Museum of Roman Shukhevych, responsible for the Volyn massacre."

These statements provoked a reaction from the local authorities (the mayor of Lviv) Ukrainian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Heorhii Tykhyi called on Polish politicians to refrain from using topics related to Ukraine in their domestic political campaign.



Polish presidential candidate Sławomir Mentzen in front of the monument to Stepan Bandera in Lviv (Photo: slawomirmentzen / instagram / screenshot from video)
Source: uacrisis.org

At the same time, Mentzen expresses limited support for Ukraine in the Russian-Ukrainian war. The politician notes that he considers Russia a threat and a terrorist state, and Putin a criminal. However, he also speculates about Poland's direct participation in the war (this is how the initiative to deploy European contingents in Ukraine after the cessation of hostilities to guarantee a stable peace is interpreted). "I will not allow even a single Polish soldier to appear in Ukraine," the politician said. By the way, these words of Mentzen were eagerly picked up by Russian propaganda.



Screenshot of the website of «Another Ukraine», a Russian media project coordinated by fugitive pseudo-Ukrainian politician Viktor Medvedchuk. The title states: "Young Polish presidential candidate refused to go to war for Ukraine."

To summarize, Mentzen's rhetoric on Ukraine is oriented toward the position of the US president. A similar approach is also characteristic of the "conservative" candidate Nawrocki. As is well known, PiS and Confederation supporters are the most pro-American (66% of PiS voters call the United States a key ally, even more important than the United Kingdom, France, Germany, or the European Union.) Thus, the Trump administration's statements about Ukraine play a role of a kind of guideline for representatives of conservative and right-wing circles in Poland in matters of relations with Ukraine.

The current election campaign shows that the Confederation is aiming to gain a long-term foothold as a third force in Polish politics. Therefore, it is worthwhile to focus on the role of this party in shaping the image of Ukraine and Ukrainians in the Polish information space.

Representatives of the Confederation regularly use anti-Ukrainian narratives in their campaigns. In 2023, the Confederation organized a series of protests under the slogan "This is not our war," and in the fall of the same year - early 2024, its regional representatives coordinated protests by Polish carriers on the Polish-Ukrainian border.

One of the party's leaders, Krzysztof Bosak, known for his Euroskepticism and anti-immigration stance, promotes the thesis that the Polish government favors the economic well-being of Ukrainians, while sacrificing the interests of Poles: "There are attempts to impose pro-Ukrainian political correctness in Poland. But we have an unresolved issue regarding the seizure of the transportation market and agricultural products from Ukraine." The politician interprets Ukraine's European integration as a "threat" to the Polish economy. As an example, Bosak often cited Ukraine's introduction of electronic queues for European trucks, as well as the EU law granting privileges to Ukrainian carriers.

However, the rejection of Ukraine's EU membership is not dominant among this party's voters. According to Łukasz Adamski, Confederation supporters "do not rule out Ukraine's membership in the EU or NATO, but in their election rhetoric they try to demonstrate the negative consequences." Thus, unlike PiS, which focuses on historical memory, the Confederation pays more attention to the economic context of relations with Ukraine, including the issue of European integration.

Among the candidates critical of Ukraine running in the presidential race are far-right MEP Grzegorz Braun (leader of the fringe anti-Western party Confederation of the Polish Crown) and Sejm member Marek Jakubiak (Free Republicans). Both politicians actively use anti-Ukrainian narratives, particularly in the context of Ukraine's integration into the EU.

For example, in a recent interview, Jakubiak said that while support for Ukraine in 2022 was justified, "Ukraine is dangerous for Poland today." The threats from Ukraine, according to the candidate, are the millions of Ukrainians who have come to Poland to exploit the "big hearts" of Poles, as well as the potential invasion of Poland by "demoralized by the war demobilized Ukrainian military."

Braun, in turn, is known for numerous anti-Ukrainian attacks. An illustrative episode is Braun's denial of the crimes of the Russian military in Bucha. In October 2024, during a vote on a loan to Ukraine in the European Parliament, Grzegorz Braun shouted "thieves" at MEPs who supported the allocation of funds. In his speech, he called the government in Kyiv "perhaps one of the most corrupt and murderous regimes for its own citizens in the history of Europe."



From left: Sławomir Mentzen, Grzegorz Braun, Krzysztof Bosak,
Photo: wiadomosci.radiozet.pl

Activities of anti-Ukrainian media in Poland

On the eve of the presidential election in Poland, there is a noticeable intensification of anti-Ukrainian and pro-Russian narratives on social media. It is worth noting that in January 2025, there were 29 million social media users in Poland (75.6% of the population).

Numerous studies have documented a surge in anti-Ukrainian propaganda in the Polish infosphere in 2024. According to a joint report by the fact-checking organization Demagog and the Institute for Media Monitoring (IMM), almost 327 thousand anti-Ukrainian posts were published from Polish-language accounts in 2024, which is 13% more than in 2023. It is noteworthy that the volume of the relevant content increased sharply at the end of 2024, coinciding with the election season.

The largest platform for anti-Ukrainian content in Poland was X. The vast majority of detected anti-Ukrainian publications in 2024 appeared here - 85%, or 277 thousand tweets or retweets.

Last year, about 8% of posts critical of Ukraine were posted on Facebook, or about 26.6 thousand. According to the Demagog/IMM report for 2024, the most active Facebook accounts spreading anti-Ukrainian propaganda were: the official page of Grzegorz Braun, the page of the Braun's Confederation of the Polish Crown political party, the page titled "Ukrainiec NIE jest moim bratem" ("Ukrainian is not my brother"), the page of the nationalist organization March of Independence, and the page of the far-right internet TV channel wRealu24.

According to the authors of the study, anti-Ukrainian posts on social media had more than 75 million potential views. For comparison, in 2023, there were about 290 thousand anti-Ukrainian publications with a total reach of about 54 million views. Thus, these data indicate an increase in the coverage of anti-Ukrainian content by almost 40% during the year.

TikTok has quickly become a major source of disinformation among young Poles. Anonymous TikTok accounts often spread viral content depicting Ukrainian refugees as a burden to Polish taxpayers, accusing the government of allegedly prioritizing Ukrainians over Polish citizens in terms of healthcare and social benefits.

Mentzen, the 38-year-old candidate from the Confederation is actively using TikTok. Observers of Polish politics call him the "king" of TikTok, as the politician has mastered the genre of short funny videos, which allows him to approach young people. This tactic has already brought him success during the 2023 Sejm election campaign. Although Mentzen's videos on the popular social media platform mostly focus on economic issues or government scandals, he has also made anti-Ukrainian arguments. In one TikTok video that received over 30 thousand likes, Mentzen stated that "we spend much more on social benefits for Ukrainians than they pay taxes here."

Czech Republic

Political situation on the eve of the elections

In the fall of 2025, the Czech Republic will hold regular parliamentary elections. The main intrigue is the possible return to power of Andrej Babiš, the head of the country's government in 2017-2021. Thus, according to a study conducted by Politico, the ANO 2011 (lit. Yes 2011) party, headed by Andrej Babiš, may take the first place. Other opinion polls also favor the former prime minister's party.

In the public sphere, Babiš is known as a skeptic of Prague's proactive role in military support for Ukraine. For example, during the 2023 presidential election, Babiš portrayed his main opponent, former chairman of the NATO Military Committee Petr Pavel, as a "war candidate," and criticized the government for "excessive attention" to the issue of supporting Ukraine.

Today, Babiš positions himself as the main supporter of peace in Ukraine among Czech politicians. This is evidenced by his recent statement that the real solution to the war in Ukraine is not in sending more weapons, but in diplomacy. In this way, the politician portrays himself as a "peacemaker" in contrast to the current government, which appeals to Prague's leadership in the "coalition of ammunition" in its campaign.

At the same time, Babiš continues to actively criticize the EU. For example, at the beginning of last year, the politician supported his political allies - the prime ministers of Hungary, Slovakia and Poland - in the issue of Brussels freezing part of the EU funding for countries that violate EU principles, including the rule of law. Babiš accused the European Commission of wanting to "decide who will become prime minister in a particular country." It is noteworthy that in the European Parliament, ANO is a member of the far-right Patriots for Europe faction, one of whose unofficial leaders is Viktor Orbán.



Former Prime Minister of the Czech Republic Andrej Babiš

Following Babiš's expression of solidarity with the leaders of Hungary and Slovakia, the Czech parliamentary elections were interpreted by a number of international observers as a decisive moment in the context of the unpleasant prospect of a mini-bloc of countries in Central Europe headed by Euroskeptical politicians loyal to Russia. Concerns are expressed about the complications of using the Visegrád Group and the Three Seas Initiative formats to promote Ukraine's agenda in relations with European countries.

Babiš is also known for criticizing the prospects of Ukraine's European integration. As early as February 2024, he stated that he did not support Ukraine's accession to the EU, calling such a scenario a "complete disaster." Babiš criticized the government of Petr Fiala for what he believes to be excessive assistance to Ukraine, which is allegedly at the expense of the interests of Czech citizens. The ex-minister relies on the growing discontent of the population, caused, among other things, by the deteriorating economic situation. For example, the politician is promoting a narrative about the economic damage that support for Ukraine causes to European countries.

It is likely that during the autumn parliamentary campaign, the ANO party will exploit the threat of war because of the high level of support for Ukraine provided by the current government and the Czech president.

However, as of the beginning of this year, ANO representatives have been publicly demonstrating support for Ukraine, which may indicate a revision or adjustment of the party's position. For example, in January 2025, ANO First Deputy Chairman Karel Havlíček assured the Ambassador of Ukraine to the Czech Republic that his party's support for Ukraine would not change if he came to power.



During his visit to Ukraine, Czech President Petr Pavel visited the production of Bren-2 assault rifles under license from Česká Zbrojovka (March 22, 2025).
Source: glavcom.

Havlíček's statement is important given that he is the head of the "shadow (opposition) government" and is currently considered one of the candidates for the post of prime minister. However, it is worth noting that the politician's position at the time of the meeting with the Ukrainian diplomat was dictated by a desire to demonstrate commitment to the White House's initiative to "end the conflict quickly." Obviously, as the negotiation process drags on and discord in US-EU relations grows, ANO representatives will have to adjust their rhetoric on the Russian-Ukrainian war.

However, it is likely that the party's pre-election agendas will be based on criticizing the current government for its assistance to Ukraine, which, from the ANO's point of view, is often carried out "at the expense" of the economic interests of Czech citizens. For example, shortly after his meeting with the Ukrainian ambassador, Havlíček said that (if he came to power) the ANO would not continue the initiative with ammunition for Ukraine. The opposition may also try to actualize the thesis of a corruption component around the "ammunition coalition", which is led by the Czech Republic. For example, Havlíček recently expressed doubts about the quality and price of the shells: "We have information from the military sector that the quality is not perfect and that it is simply very expensive."

At the same time, the return to power of the Babiš's party does not seem to be a foregone conclusion. Despite ANO's leadership in opinion polls (at the end of March, the party's rating was 33.7%), the current majority retains its chances of winning thanks to coalition agreements with allied parties.

A poll conducted by STEM for CNN Prima NEWS in March gave the second place with 17.3% to the pro-government coalition Together (Spolu), an alliance of ODS, TOP09, and KDU-ČS. Mayors and Independents (STAN) is in third place (current rating - 10.6%), which is also part of the government majority. The combined rating of the two parties is not enough to counter ANO, especially given the latter's potential alliance with the right-wing populist party SPD. The situation for the current government is complicated by the fact that, unlike in previous elections, an alliance between Spolu and the Czech Pirate Party is unlikely after the latter left the government last September. In addition, the Pirate Party's entry into the next convocation of parliament remains in doubt, given the party's unconvincing results in 2024 in the European Parliament and local elections in the Czech Republic.

Thus, it is likely that in the fall, the "golden share" of Czech politics will be played out among the political parties that are most critical of Ukraine and relations with the EU.

Czech Republic: anti-Ukrainian forces unite ahead of parliamentary elections

At the end of March, a four-party election coalition was formed on the far right of the Czech political scene: Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD), Svobodní (The Free), Tricolour and Law, Respect, Expertise (PRO).

The SPD is the leader in this coalition, as it has the highest rating (around 9% according to STEM) and is represented in parliament. The other three political parties together gain about 5% of support and would not be able to overcome the electoral barrier alone. Thus, representatives of Svobodní, Tricolour and PRO will most likely run on the SPD list in the fall.



On March 21, the leaders of far-right parties - Tomio Okamura (SPD), Zuzana Majerová (Tricolour), Libor Vondráček (Svobodní) and Jindřich Rajchl (PRO) - signed a memorandum of cooperation in the Chamber of Deputies 2025.

The Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD) party is known for consistently promoting pro-Russian views. On the issue of the Russian-Ukrainian war, Tomio Okamura proposes to achieve peace without further support for Ukraine, reciting that "a bad peace is better than no peace."

However, Ukrainians in the Czech Republic are the most frequent targets of Okamura's attacks, as migration policy issues are key to the SPD's agenda. According to the politician's recent statements, "Ukrainian refugees should return to Ukraine to put pressure on their government to end the war." Sometimes Okamura's statements openly duplicate Russian propaganda narratives. For example, back in 2023, Okamura said that Ukrainians in the Czech Republic were "celebrating the murder of Czechs and Jews." This statement was made after the scandal with the Stepan Bandera party, which two refugees from Ukraine wanted to organize as a fundraiser for the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

Jindřich Rajchl, a junior partner in the right-wing electoral coalition, and head of the PRO party, has an equally intransigent position on Ukraine. It is worth noting that since its founding (in the summer of 2022), PRO has made a name for itself by criticizing the Fiala government for its "excessive" support of Ukraine during the Russian invasion. In its campaign materials, Rajchl expresses an unequivocal position: "I do not agree with Ukraine's accession to NATO and the EU. Joining NATO would threaten our security, joining the EU would threaten our economy, food quality and labor market. Therefore, every politician who supports these steps prioritizes the interests of Ukraine over the interests of the Czech Republic."



An example of criticism of the idea of Ukraine's European integration in the campaign of the leader of the PRO party Jindřich Rajchl, 2025, (Quote: "I do not agree with Ukraine's accession to NATO and the EU. Joining NATO would threaten our security, joining the EU would threaten our economy, food quality and labor market. Therefore, every politician who supports these steps prioritizes the interests of Ukraine over the interests of the Czech Republic.") Source: [Facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com/Джерело: facebook.com)

The Stačilo! (Enough!) party holds positions on the left flank of the Czech political spectrum. The political force was established in 2023 as an electoral coalition of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSČM), United Democrats - Association of Independents (SD-SN), and the Czech National Social Party (ČSNS).

In relation to Ukraine, the party exploits pacifist rhetoric, manipulating the fear of war. For example, Jana Turoňová, a representative of Stačilo! in the South Bohemian region, states on the party's official Facebook page that "illegal weapons from Ukraine threaten our security." Ondřej Dostál, the first deputy chairman of Stačilo! and a member of the European Parliament, also reproduces the narrative of Russian propaganda. "Ukraine is another episode in the long history of proxy wars between the United States and Russia" is the main leitmotif of the politician's recent post on social media.



A party poster depicts a campaigner wearing a sign with a St. George's ribbon, a symbol of Russian aggression
(Source: <https://www.facebook.com/stacilo.cz>)



Jana Turoňová, a representative of Stačilo! in the South Bohemian region, states on the party's official Facebook page that "illegal weapons from Ukraine threaten our security."

The party's campaign materials contain unrepresentative polls on sending Czech soldiers to Ukraine. Also, the program statements of the Czech left contain promises to reject the financing of weapons from the EU budget, attempts to create a common European army and further sending weapons to Ukraine.

The party is also playing up the theme of World War II memory in line with the Kremlin's methodology. For example, representatives of the political party were outraged by the dismantling of the names Moscow and Minsk from the Alley of Hero Cities in the Kyiv War Museum. In this regard, the Czech communists posted an absurd statement on the Stačilo! page on Telegram: "Zelenskyy's regime is renouncing the role of victors, its history, glorious traditions and the memory of heroic ancestors, which is barbaric and a crime against its own people."

Activities of anti-Ukrainian media in the Czech Republic

In addition to political figures, social networks and fake news sites are also used as tools for spreading pro-Russian narratives in the Czech Republic.

In current research on the spread of Russian disinformation in the Czech media environment, news resources such as cz24.news, aeronet.news, novarepublika.cz, and Protiproud.info are most often mentioned. It is noteworthy that these media outlets are developing channels on Telegram (the audience of some Euroskeptical Czech resources on this social network reaches tens of thousands of users).

Several trends can be identified among the "markers" of pro-Kremlin resources:

- Publication of content that whitewashes the Kremlin's activities and makes Russia look good
- Duplication of texts and news published by Russian media in Czech language
- Promotion of discrediting materials about Ukraine and Ukrainians in the Czech Republic
- Manipulating the threat of a direct NATO war with Russia.
- Coordination of information policy and agendas (mutual citation) between different pro-Russian websites

At the same time, it is worth noting that in 2023-24, the Czech authorities and special services have had a successful experience in eradicating Russia's attempts to use the Czech Republic as a hub for information operations in Europe. The most resonant case was that of the Voice of Europe network. This project posed as an independent media outlet based in Prague. In fact, the Kremlin used Voice of Europe to disseminate discrediting materials and "bought" articles promoting pro-Russian narratives. This network was also used to corrupt European politicians on the eve of the European Parliament elections. Among the sponsors of Voice of Europe was oligarch and politician Viktor Medvedchuk, who is close to the Russian leadership.



Sponsored by Voice of Europe's Viktor Medvedchuk and Artem Marchevskyi, media manager and curator of the propaganda network in the Czech Republic in 2023-24.

In the spring of 2024, the activities of Voice of Europe were exposed and stopped thanks to the cooperation of Czech and Polish law enforcement agencies. In connection with this case, the Czech government and the European Union imposed sanctions against Medvedchuk and his pocket propagandist Artem Marchevskyi, who was the main manager of the resource.

In addition to the covert work of creating fake media, the Kremlin also used more "traditional" ways to promote propaganda, such as bribery. According to an investigation by the Czech Security and Information Service (BIS), Russia paid its "agents" to spread pro-Kremlin narratives in public space. The source of the propaganda was the Russian Cultural Center in Prague.

One of the most notable cases of Russian propaganda in marginalized Czech media was the incitement of hostility towards Ukrainian refugees during the floods (September 2024). Among the "conspiracy theories" on Facebook, fakes were spreading that Ukrainians allegedly refused to help Czech citizens cope with the consequences of the floods. The purpose of these fakes was to demonstrate the ingratitude of Ukrainian refugees who, while receiving asylum, refused to help Czechs in difficulty. Fake news was also spread that the Czech Republic does not have enough money to support people affected by the floods due to the significant economic burden caused by Ukraine's humanitarian and military assistance. This strategy is intended to cause resentment among Czech citizens and lead to a decrease in the level of Czechs' support for Ukrainians.

As of 2025, Facebook is the most popular social network in the Czech Republic. Thus, the possibility of spreading Russian propaganda here poses a significant danger due to the ability to reach a large number of users. The case of fake news about the alleged unwillingness of Ukrainians to help Czechs during the floods also signals the use of local influencers to spread disinformation. Kristína Šefčíková, Regional Security Program Analyst at the Prague Security Studies Institute (PSSI), commenting on the peculiarities of the Russian disinformation campaign in the Czech Republic, noted that this model is based on rapid adaptation to popular trends and ways of presenting information, and also allows for the implementation of new ways of spreading the desired narratives. In addition, the risks of this format also lie in the ability to quickly adapt it to other social platforms.

Russian propaganda was also spread in the Czech information space through the Telegram messenger. According to a PSSI study, Telegram has become a center of conspiracy theories and radical communities in the Czech Republic. This space is used by Russian propagandists to popularize Russian culture and create spaces where pro-Kremlin narratives are spread. In particular, danger is posed by anonymous channels that pretend to be news media often serving as a cover for sanctioned Russian media. An example is the case that took place during the previous elections in 2023. Back then, the Telegram channel neČT24, which turned out to be a front for the Russian media platform Sputnik (a platform that is under sanctions for spreading disinformation and propaganda), published a fake video in which President Petr Pavel said that the Czech Republic should go to war against Russia.

Conclusion:

the main anti-Ukrainian narratives that harm the idea of Ukraine's European integration

Russia perceives the European integration aspirations of countries that have historically been in the orbit of its geopolitical influence as a serious threat to its imperial ambitions.

At the same time, a number of EU countries regularly voice opposition to EU enlargement, particularly in the context of Ukraine's European integration. Russia uses these sentiments to spread destabilizing influence on European countries and interfere in the internal politics of EU states. The spread of pro-Russian disinformation may result in the disorganization of support for Ukraine's European integration by a number of EU governments. This threat goes beyond the negotiation process between Kyiv and Brussels, as in a full-scale war, Ukraine's relations with neighboring states are critical to maintaining economic stability and ensuring the continuity of military assistance.

The anti-Ukrainian narratives that are widespread in Poland, Romania, and the Czech Republic in the run-up to the 2025 elections are centered around several narratives. All of them harm the positive perception of Ukraine's European integration by European societies. At the same time, it is worth noting that there are currently no targeted discrediting campaigns against Ukraine's negotiations with the EU in the information space of Poland, Romania, and the Czech Republic. The main reasons for this include the following:

- The focus on the war and the search for a peaceful settlement outweighs the issue of Ukraine's integration into the EU in public attention.
- Ukraine's membership in the EU is perceived by European societies as a distant event that has no direct impact on the economic and political situation of individual countries.
- The topic of Ukraine's European integration is perceived through the prism of certain issues of bilateral relations, such as the export of Ukrainian agricultural products and the status and benefits of Ukrainian refugees.
- The lack of systematic outreach to local societies on the topic of Ukraine's membership in the EU results in low public interest.

Nevertheless, it is possible to identify key narratives that undermine confidence in Ukraine's European integration in the societies of its EU neighboring countries. According to the analysis conducted in this study, these themes are being actively articulated by right- and left-wing populist politicians in Poland, Romania, and the Czech Republic ahead of the 2025 election campaigns.

The weaponization of the fear of war - an appeal to the phobia of a direct armed conflict between NATO and Russia in the event of the deployment of European contingents in Ukraine - is currently a fairly common tactic of criticizing the government in the rhetoric of opposition forces in Poland, Romania, and the Czech Republic. In this regard, there is a noticeable overlap in the rhetoric of both far-right and left-wing parties and politicians. At the same time, even official statements by representatives of the governments of the three countries about the absence of such intentions are ignored, especially in the hot phase of the war.

Calls to prevent the participation of military personnel in the mission in Ukraine on the eve of the elections are explained by the unpopularity of this initiative among the vast majority of voters in Poland, Romania and the Czech Republic (according to polls, 70-80% of respondents are against it). This narrative also has a negative impact on the perception of Ukraine's European integration, as European audiences may form a strong belief that Ukraine's accession to the EU could provoke a war involving their countries.

Discrediting Ukrainian refugees - At the beginning of the full-scale invasion, European societies demonstrated solidarity with refugees from Ukraine. However, in the following years, Russian propaganda and local populists have been quite successful in embedding the issue of asylum seekers from Ukraine in the European discourse on migration policy. As a result, the Polish, Romanian, and Czech media space has been filled with theories that payments and benefits to Ukrainian refugees place an excessive burden on the national economy and pose a potential threat to national security. At the same time, propaganda usually scales up individual, usually minor, domestic excesses involving Ukrainians in their countries of residence. This creates a general background of a "conflict of cultures" and a narrative about the inability of Ukrainians to adapt to life in the EU.

The novelty of the 2025 elections in the Czech Republic and Poland was the manipulation of anti-Ukrainian forces regarding the "risk" of infiltration of a significant number of ex-servicemen of the Armed Forces of Ukraine after the active phase of the war. Despite the fact that there is no rational justification for this fictitious threat, it is actively circulating as part of the campaigning of populist politicians in the Czech Republic and Poland.

The use of the topic of Ukrainian refugees in political campaigns is a potential threat to the growth of general rejection of Ukraine's integration in economic and cultural terms. In the future, anti-Ukrainian forces may form a phobia among European audiences that, as a result of Ukraine's accession to the EU, their countries will face even greater economic hardships due to the "influx" of Ukrainians into their countries.

"Ukraine's membership in the EU will deepen the economic crisis" is another common narrative used in election campaigns, linking economic difficulties to aid to Ukraine. Inflation, including rising energy and food prices, is simplistically attributed to the war and anti-Russian sanctions.

The problem of communicating and justifying the economic attractiveness of Ukraine's accession to the EU is particularly acute in Poland and Romania, as local farmers feel the risks associated with opening the Ukrainian agricultural market to Europe. The right-wing populist political parties in both countries are focused on voters from rural areas, so this narrative will remain in their arsenal throughout the entire period of Ukraine's negotiations with the EU.

The issue of national memory - historical narratives appeal to national grievances and nostalgia. In the case of Romania, the idea that territories such as Northern Bukovina, Southern Bessarabia, and Zmeinyi Island should be torn away from Ukraine was until recently considered a plaything of marginalized politicians. However, the rise in popularity of right-wing populists, as well as the voicing of territorial claims by the recent leader of opinion polls, Georgescu, indicates a negative trend in public sentiment for Ukraine.

It is unlikely that the territorial issue will become a direct obstacle to Ukraine's path to the EU, but it may affect the general attitude towards our country (in the context of other bilateral issues) on the part of part of Romanian society. Also, this narrative radicalizes the attitude of Romanian politicians and society to issues related to the Romanian minority in Ukraine and the status of the Romanian language.

In the case of Ukrainian-Polish relations, the dynamics of the historical narrative depends on the results of the presidential election. If the opposition candidates (PiS or Confederation) win, historical contradictions are likely to escalate. Accordingly, this will erode Warsaw's support for Kyiv on the European integration track.

Expert Survey

In response to the spread of narratives in the media of Poland, Romania, and the Czech Republic that discredit the idea of Ukraine's European integration in the eyes of local societies, the Ukrainian Crisis Media Center conducted an expert survey using a questionnaire method. The survey was carried out as part of the project "European Integration of Ukraine and Elections in EU Countries. Information Aspect."

More than 115 participants took part in the study, including journalists, scholars, political scientists, and information security experts from the Czech Republic, Poland, and Romania. The survey was conducted from March 10 to 20, 2025.

The goal of the survey is to assess how the expert community in the Czech Republic, Poland, and Romania perceives the trends and dynamics of media coverage related to Ukraine's European integration within their national information spaces.

Among other things, respondents were asked to answer the following **questions**:

- How would you assess the level of threat posed by Russian informational interference in the electoral process (in the context of upcoming elections)?
- How relevant is the topic of Ukraine's European integration in the public discourse of the Czech Republic / Poland / Romania as of March 2025?
- Do you expect the issue of EU enlargement, particularly Ukraine's accession, to be used by political actors during election campaigns?
- Are manipulative narratives or disinformation related to Ukraine's European integration present in traditional media (television, press, radio) or on social media platforms (Facebook, TikTok, X, etc.)?
- What impact could the hypothetical deployment of your country's military contingent on Ukrainian territory (following a peace agreement) have on public opinion regarding Ukraine's accession to the EU?

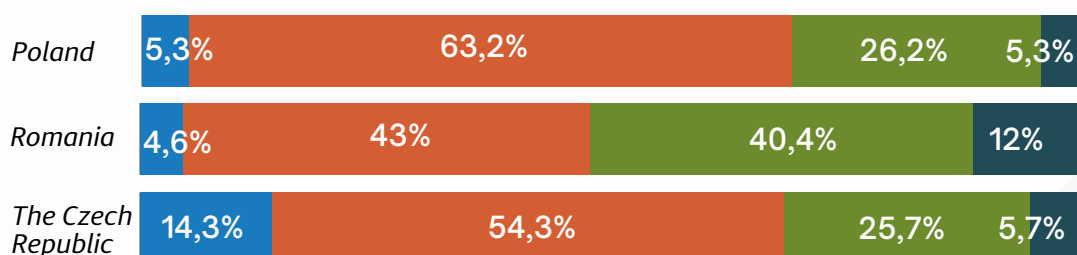
The results of the expert survey revealed the following:

The topic of Ukraine's European integration is present in the media landscape of Poland, Romania, and the Czech Republic



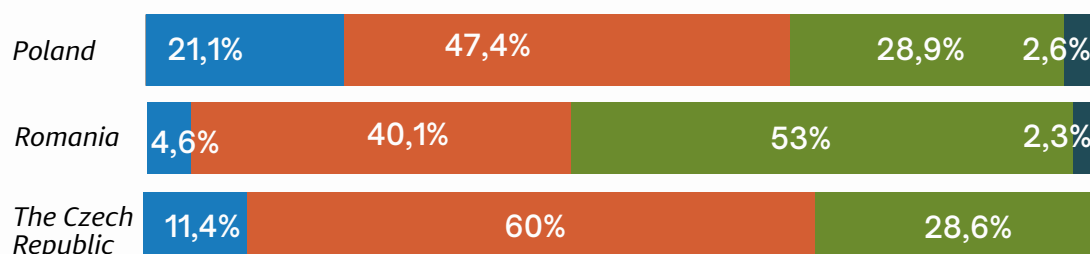
- High level (potentially significant impact on election results)
- Moderate level (limited influence, unlikely to significantly affect election outcomes)
- Low level (minimal impact on the electoral process, almost no effect on results)
- No threat to the electoral process

Will the issue of EU enlargement, particularly Ukraine's accession, be used by political actors during election campaigns?



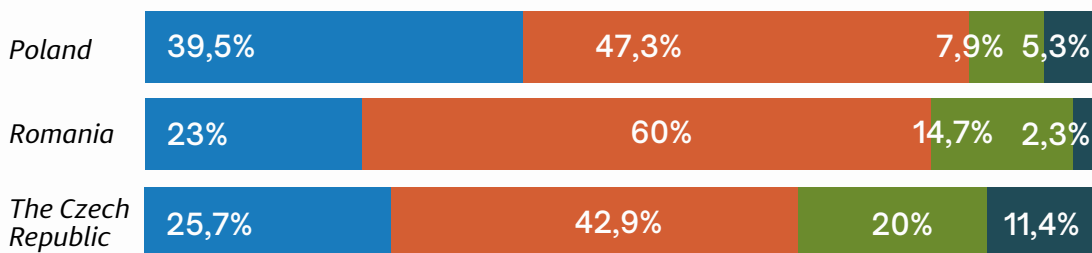
- Yes, it is consistently present
- Yes, it occasionally attracts media attention depending on news and events
- No, but it may become more relevant depending on the progress of Ukraine's EU membership negotiations
- No, the media do not pay attention to this topic

Will the issue of EU enlargement - particularly Ukraine's accession - be used by political actors during election campaigns?



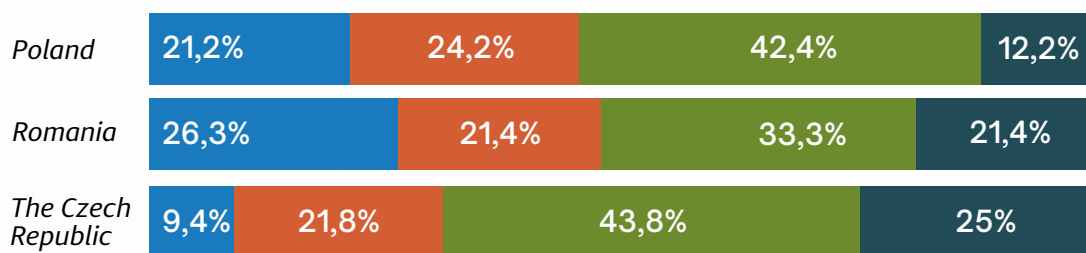
- Yes, it may become one of the main foreign policy topics
- It may occasionally become relevant (depending on developments)
- This topic will not receive significant attention
- Hard to say

Presence of Manipulative Narratives and Disinformation in Traditional Media and Social Platforms Regarding Ukraine's European Integration



- Yes, I observe targeted and coordinated operations
- Campaigns against Ukraine's EU accession are fragmented and sporadic
- No, the topic of Ukraine's EU accession is not subject to manipulation or disinformation
- Hard to say

Impact of the hypothetical deployment of Polish / Romanian / Czech military contingents on Ukrainian territory (after the signing of a peace agreement) on public opinion regarding Ukraine's accession to the EU:



- Support for Ukraine's European integration will increase
- Support will remain at the current level
- Ukraine's accession to the EU will become less popular
- I do not see a connection