

Attitudes to media freedom and independence in Central Europe

Selected outcomes from a 4-country survey
24 April 2023

Aim of the poll

Main objective:

to explore people's perspectives on media freedom and their support for independent journalism in V4 countries

Research questions:

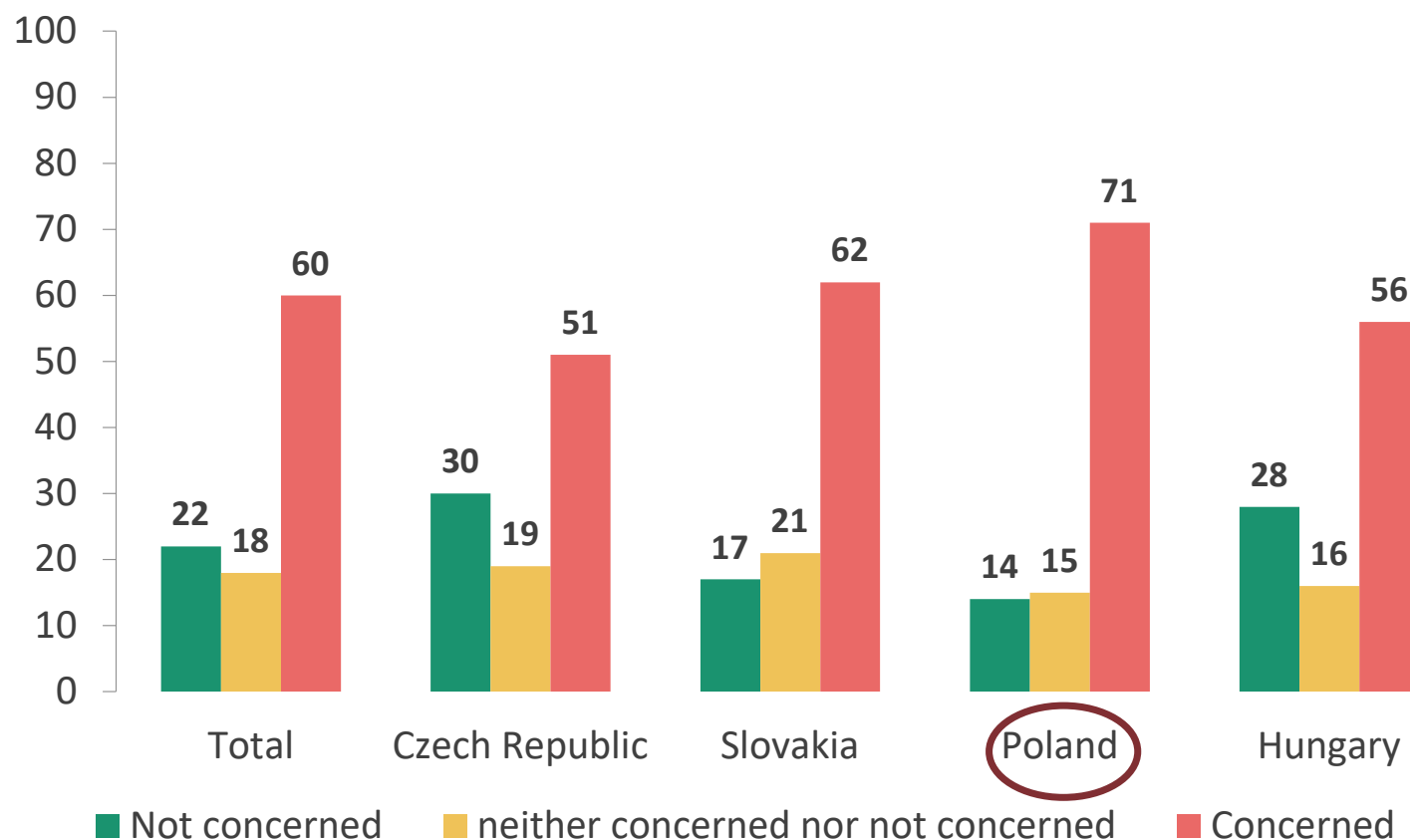
- How much concerned are people about the **current state** and **threats to media freedom**? Have these concerns changed since last year?
- What do people think should be done to **protect media freedom and support independent journalism**, and which institutions do they trust in this regard?
- What is people's perceived **importance of values that are associated with journalistic professionalism and independence**?

Methodology

Sample size	4 023 respondents aged 18+ Sample size per country: CZ = 1 007 SK = 1 004 PL = 1 009 HU = 1 003
Dates of interviewing	6th – 21st March 2023
Method of data collection	personal interviews, online panel questioning (CAWI) and telephone interviews (CATI)
Method of sampling	Quota sampling method (gender, age, education, region and size of place of residence)
Research design & supervision	Dr Václav Štětko, Loughborough University & Committee for Editorial Independence
Implementer and client	The research was carried out by MEDIAN, s.r.o. (member of SIMAR) exclusively for Bakala Foundation

**How concerned are people about the state of
media freedom?**

Concerns about media freedom

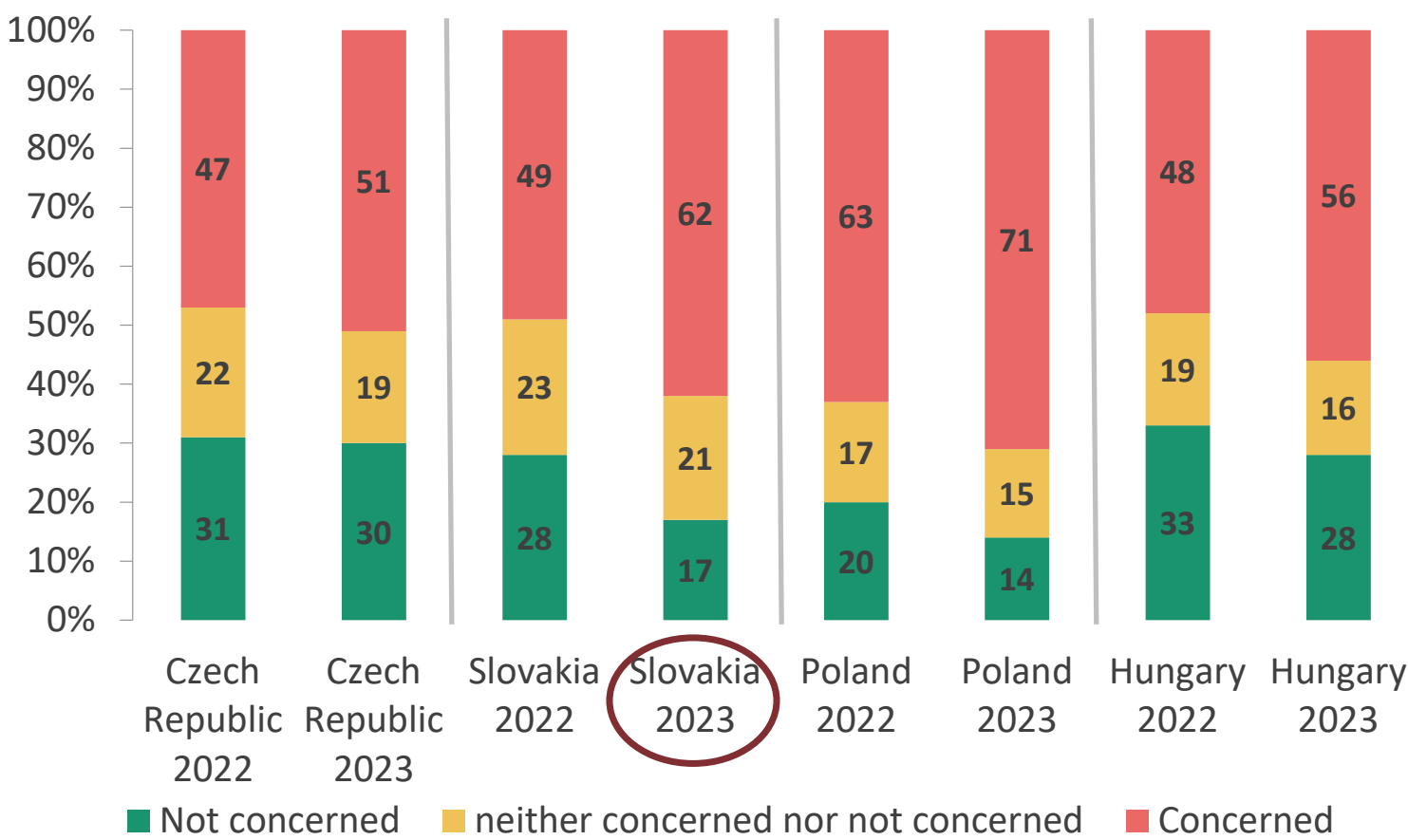


Most people express concern about the current state of media freedom.

The largest % in Poland, the smallest in the Czech Republic (but still > 50%).

Q06. Can you tell us how concerned are you right now about the current state of media freedom in your country?

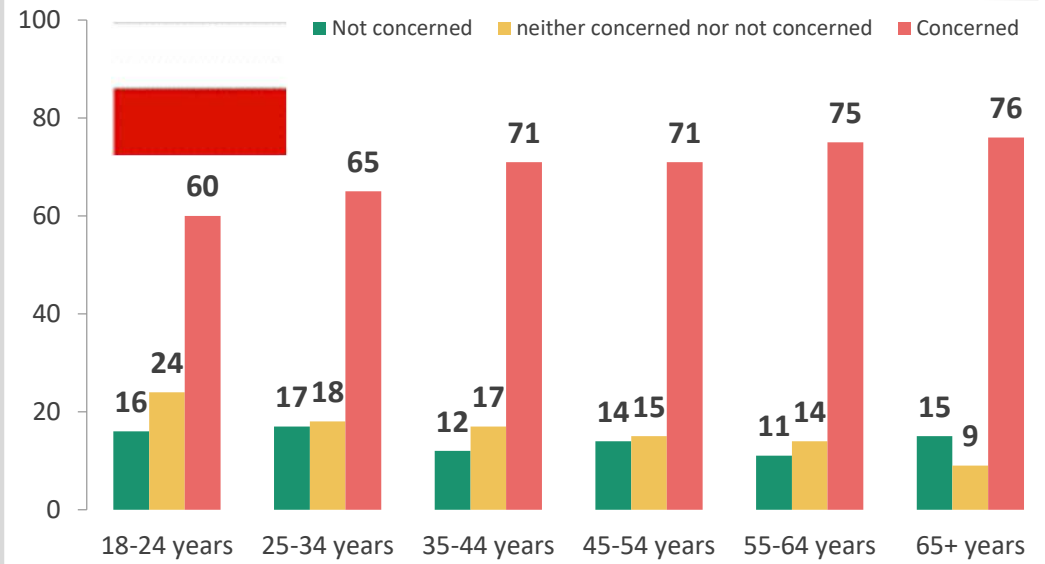
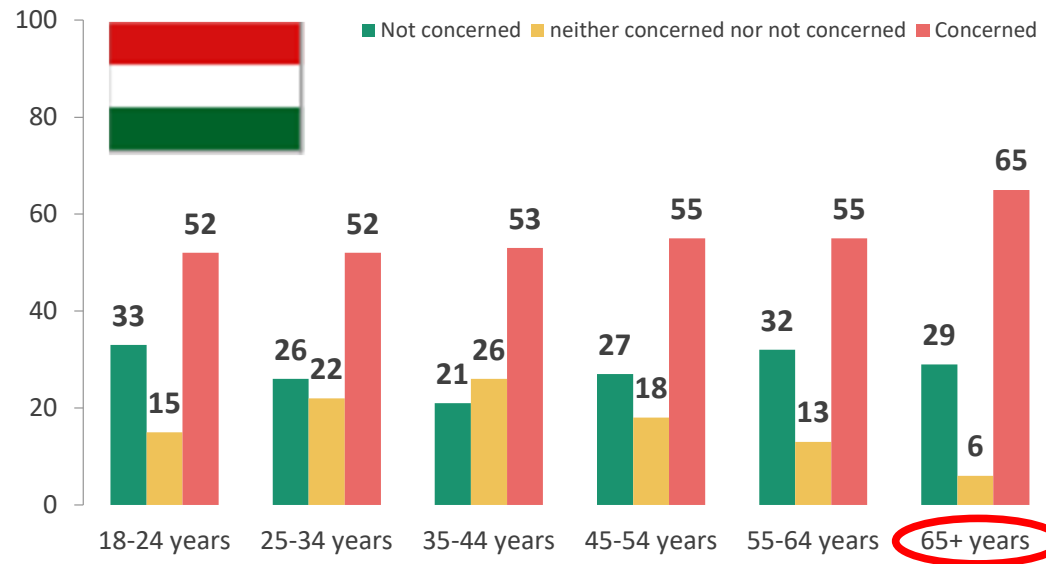
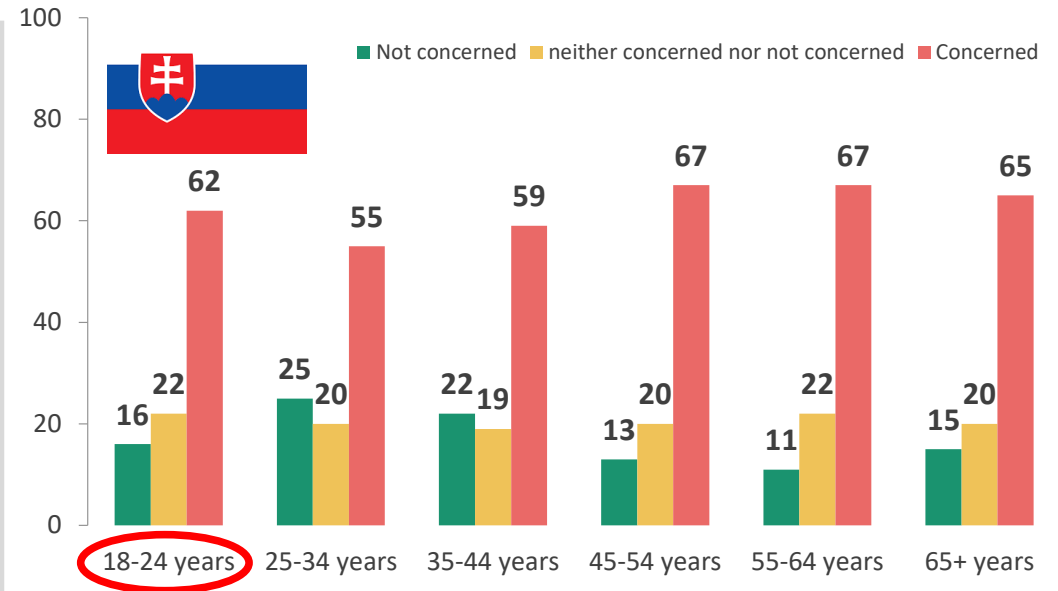
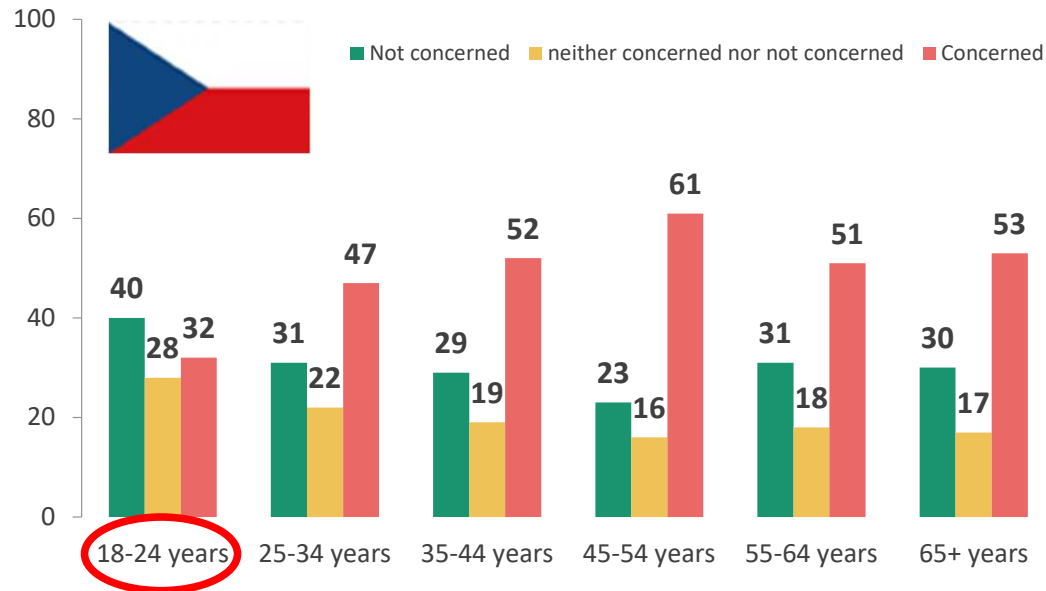
Concerns about media freedom: comparison with 2022 data



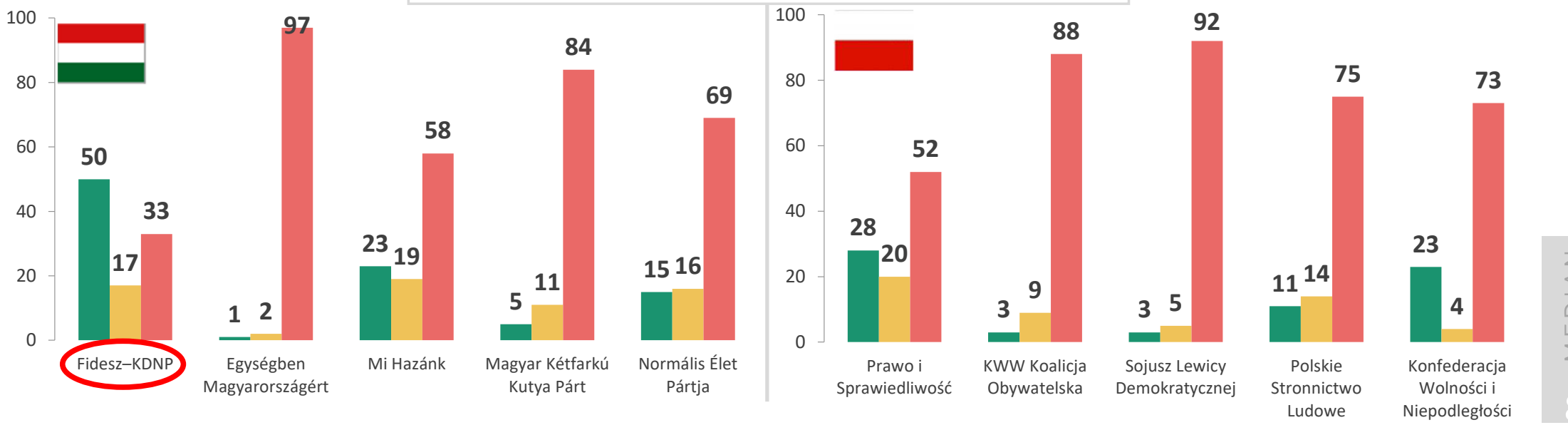
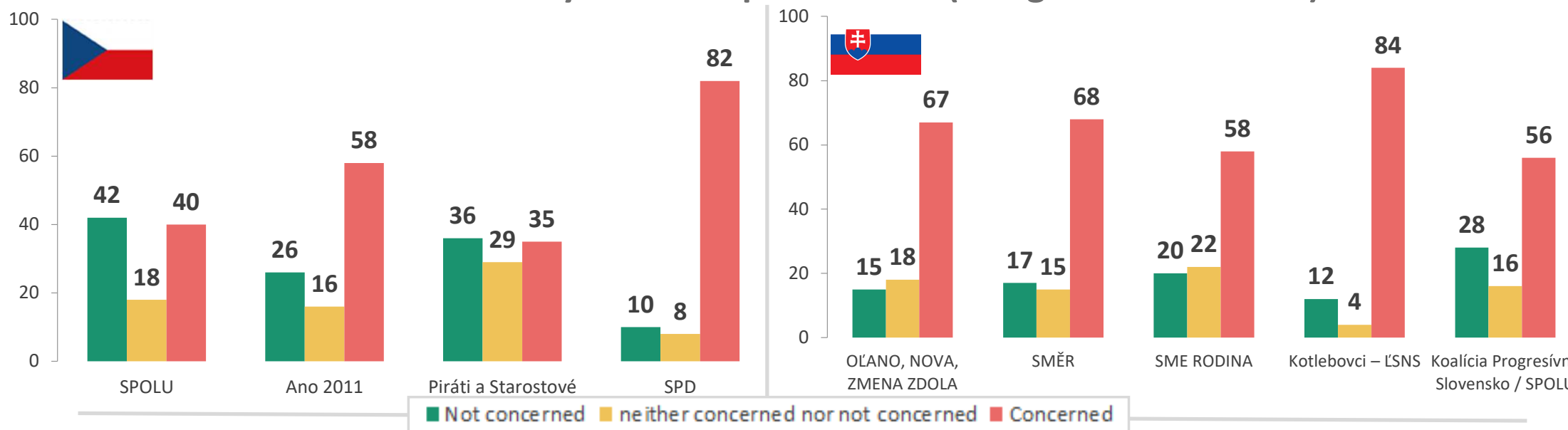
Concerns about media freedom have grown across the four countries – the most in Slovakia (from 49% to 62%), followed by Poland and Hungary.

Q06. Can you tell us how concerned are you right now about the current state of media freedom in your country?

Concerns about media freedom by age categories

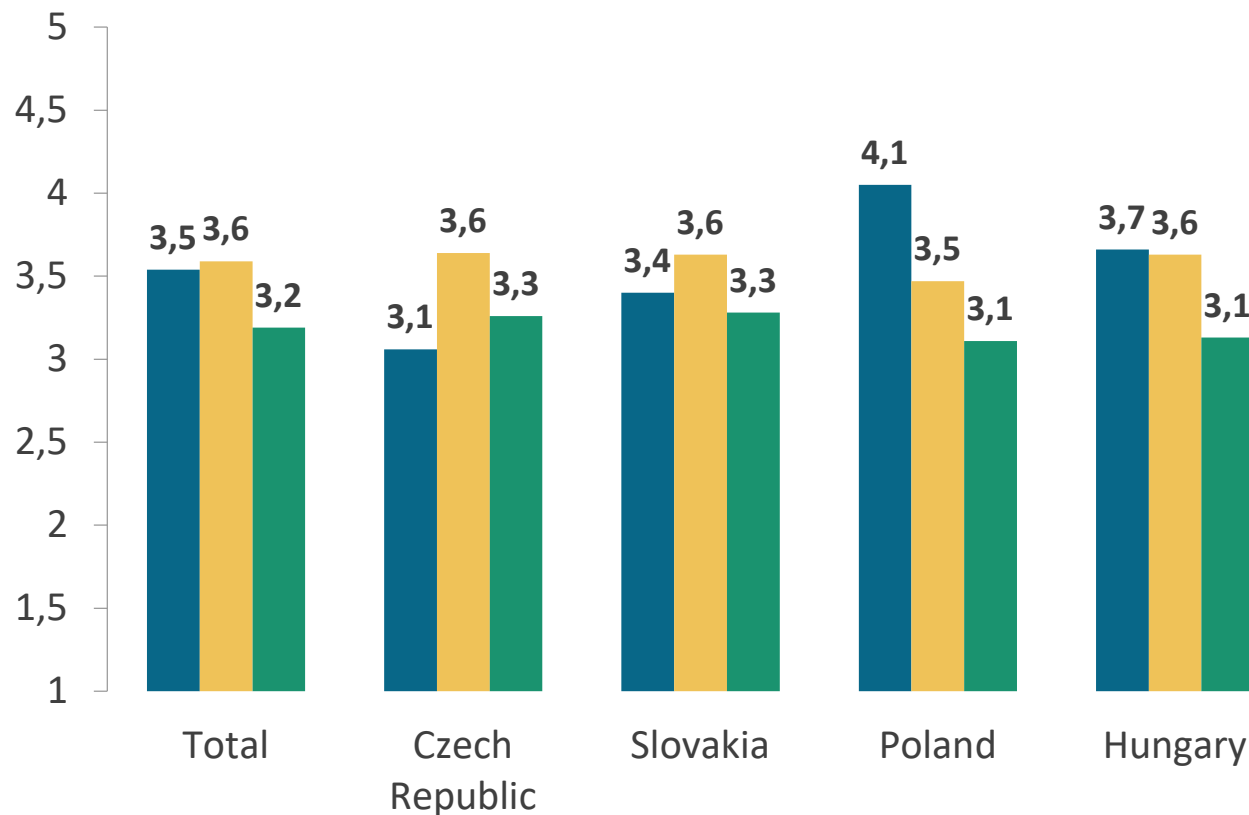


Concerns about media freedom by electoral preferences (last general elections)



Threats to media freedom

Perceived threats to media freedom (average scores)



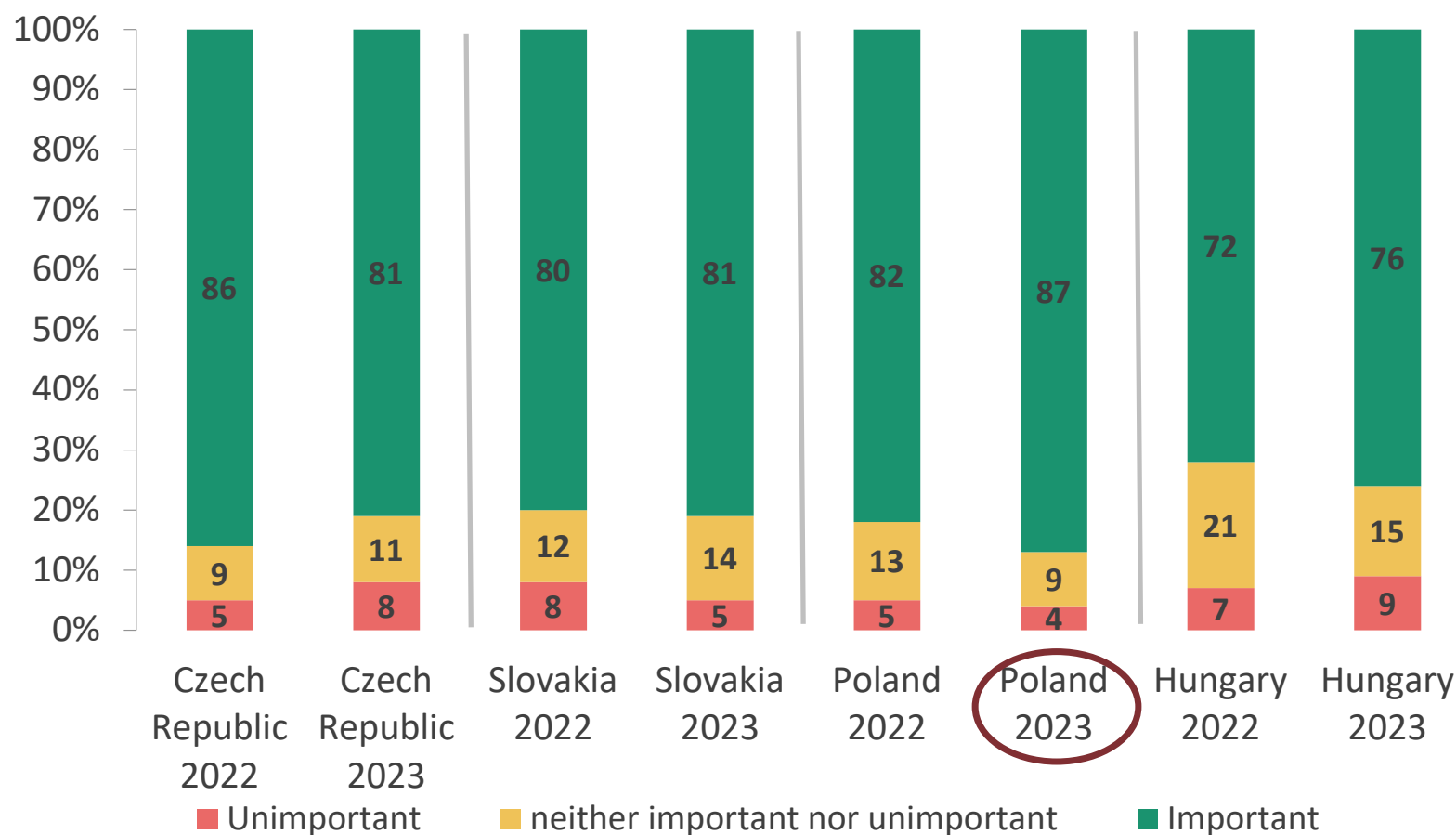
In Poland and Hungary, the government is seen as the biggest threat to media freedom. In the Czech Republic and Slovakia, it is the media owners and other commercial interests.

- The government
- Media owners, advertisers or other business interests
- Digital platforms (Google, Facebook, Twitter etc.)

Q07. Thinking about the state of media in [COUNTRY], can you tell us to what extent it is currently being threatened by....

**How do people assess the importance of
independent media?**

Importance of political independence of media: comparison with 2022 data



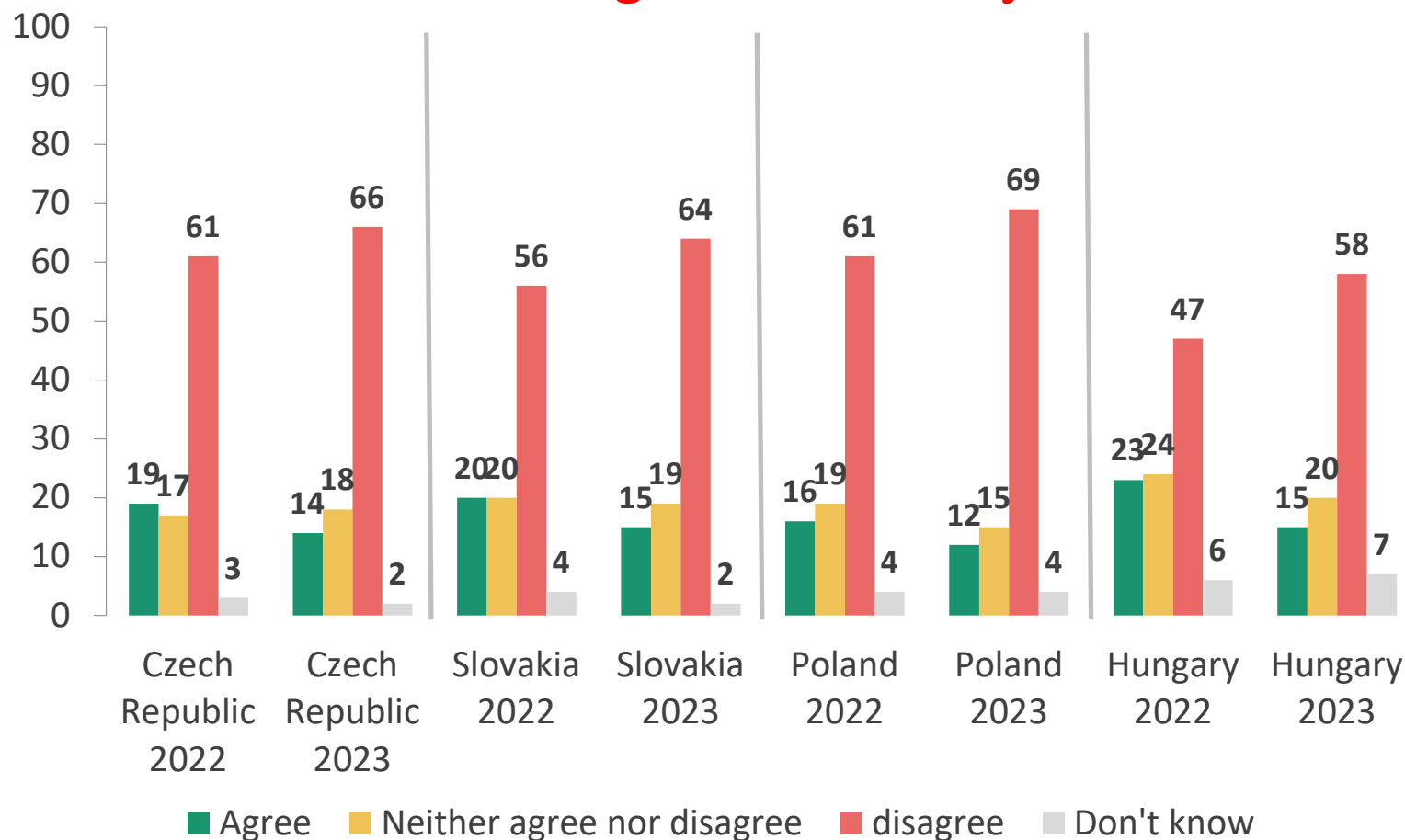
There is a widespread consensus among the public about the importance of political independence of media. The increase in the perceived importance of this value is the highest in Poland (+5pp).

Q04. How important it is for a society to have news media that can operate without any interferences or censorship by the state or government?

Editorial autonomy of media

Opinions on the role of media owners:

“media owners have a right to tell their journalists what to write or say”

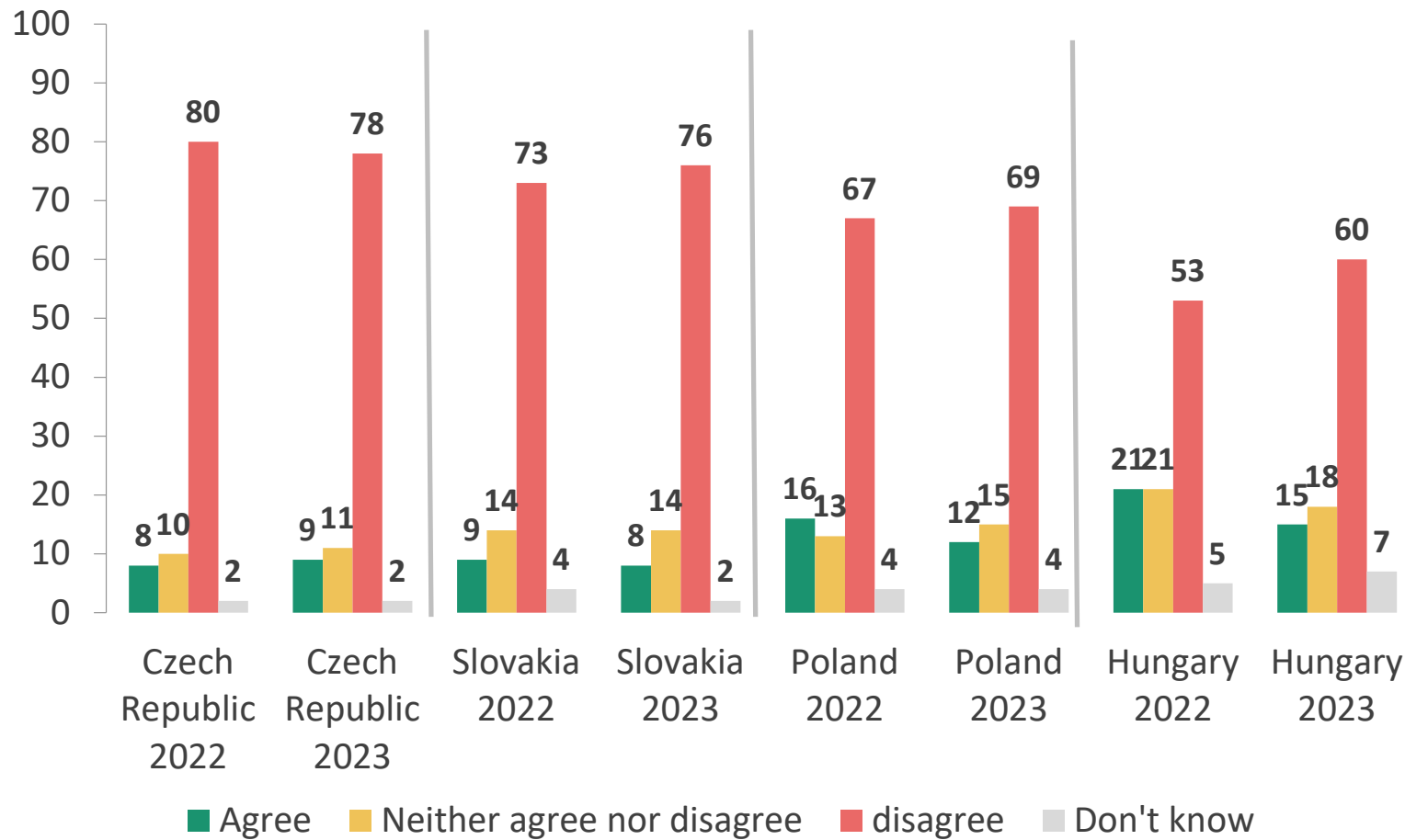


In all countries, the share of people who disagree that media owners should interfere with editorial autonomy has grown, most significantly in Hungary (+11pp).

Q13. Please tell us to what extent you agree or disagree with following statements: Media owners have a right to tell their journalists what to write or say.

Opinions on the role of the government:

“The government has a right to influence the content of the news that is broadcasted by public service media”

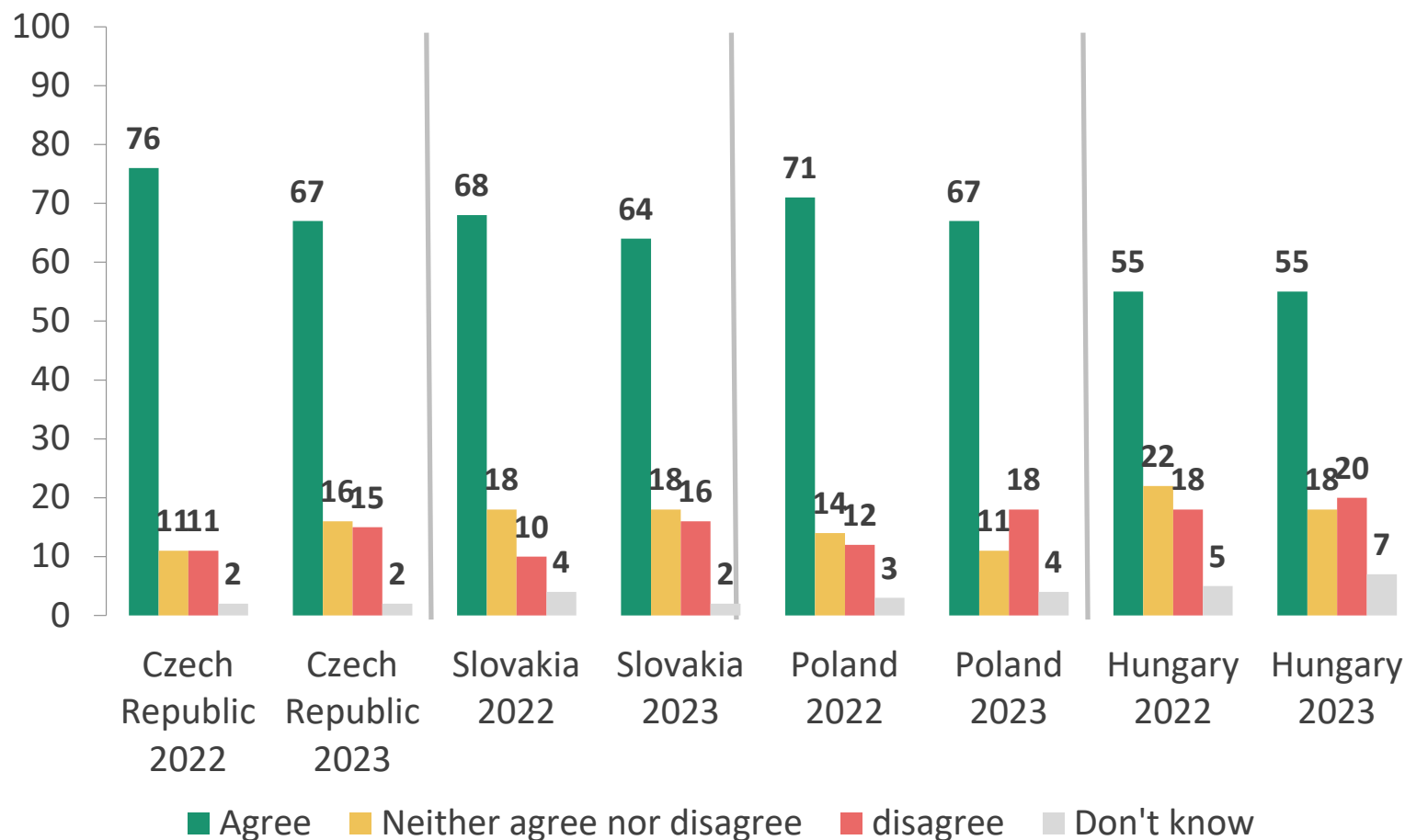


In most countries, more people than last year oppose government’s interference in the content of public service media. The increase of those who believe this is the biggest in Hungary (+7pp).

Q13. Please tell us to what extent you agree or disagree with following statements: The government has a right to influence the content of the news that is broadcasted by public service media..

Opinions on the editorial autonomy of newsrooms:

“Newsroom should always be able to decide what to write about without any external interference”

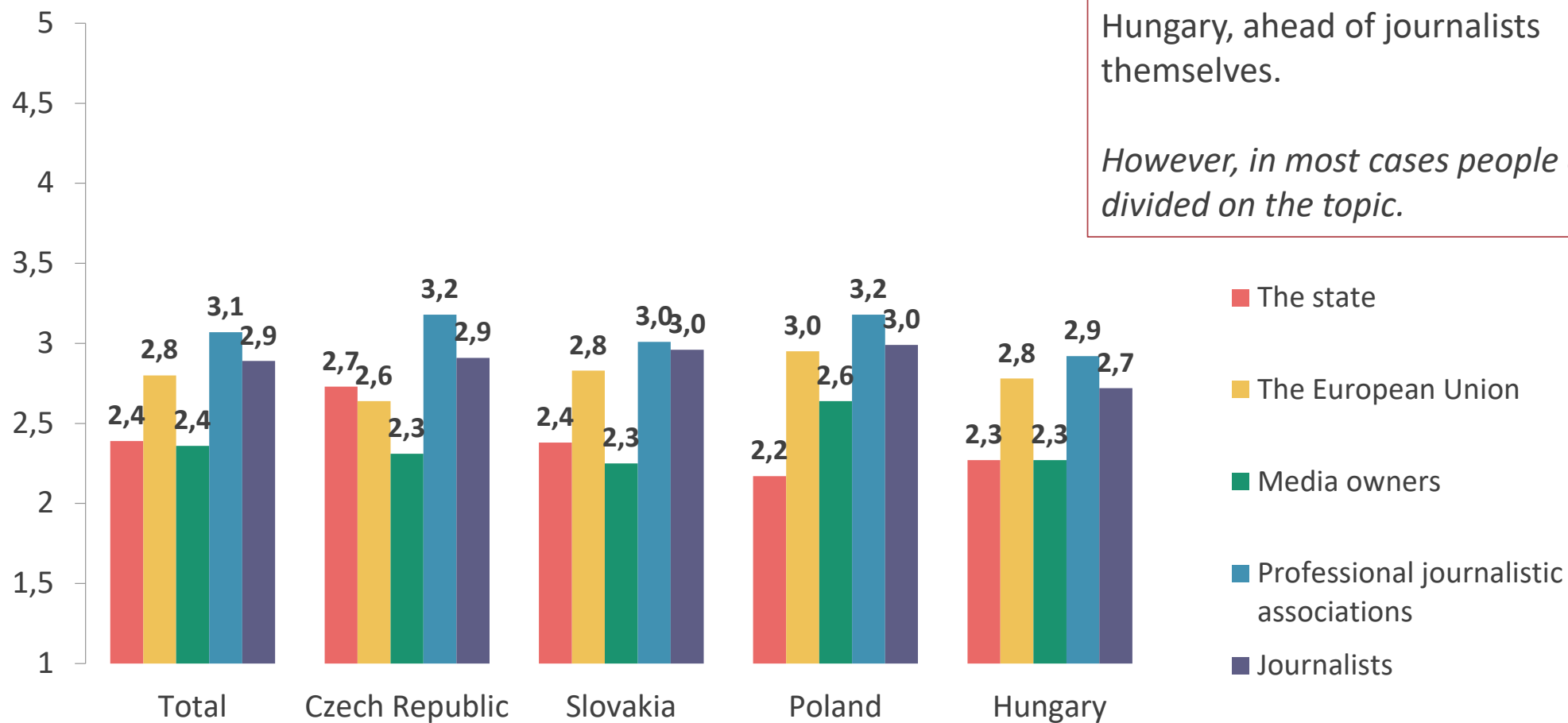


The share of people who agree with newsrooms' editorial autonomy has declined in most countries; the biggest drop is in the Czech Republic (-9pp).

Q13. Please tell us to what extent you agree or disagree with following statements: Newsroom should always be able to decide what to write about without any external interference.

Trust in protecting media freedom

Trust in protecting media freedom (average scores)



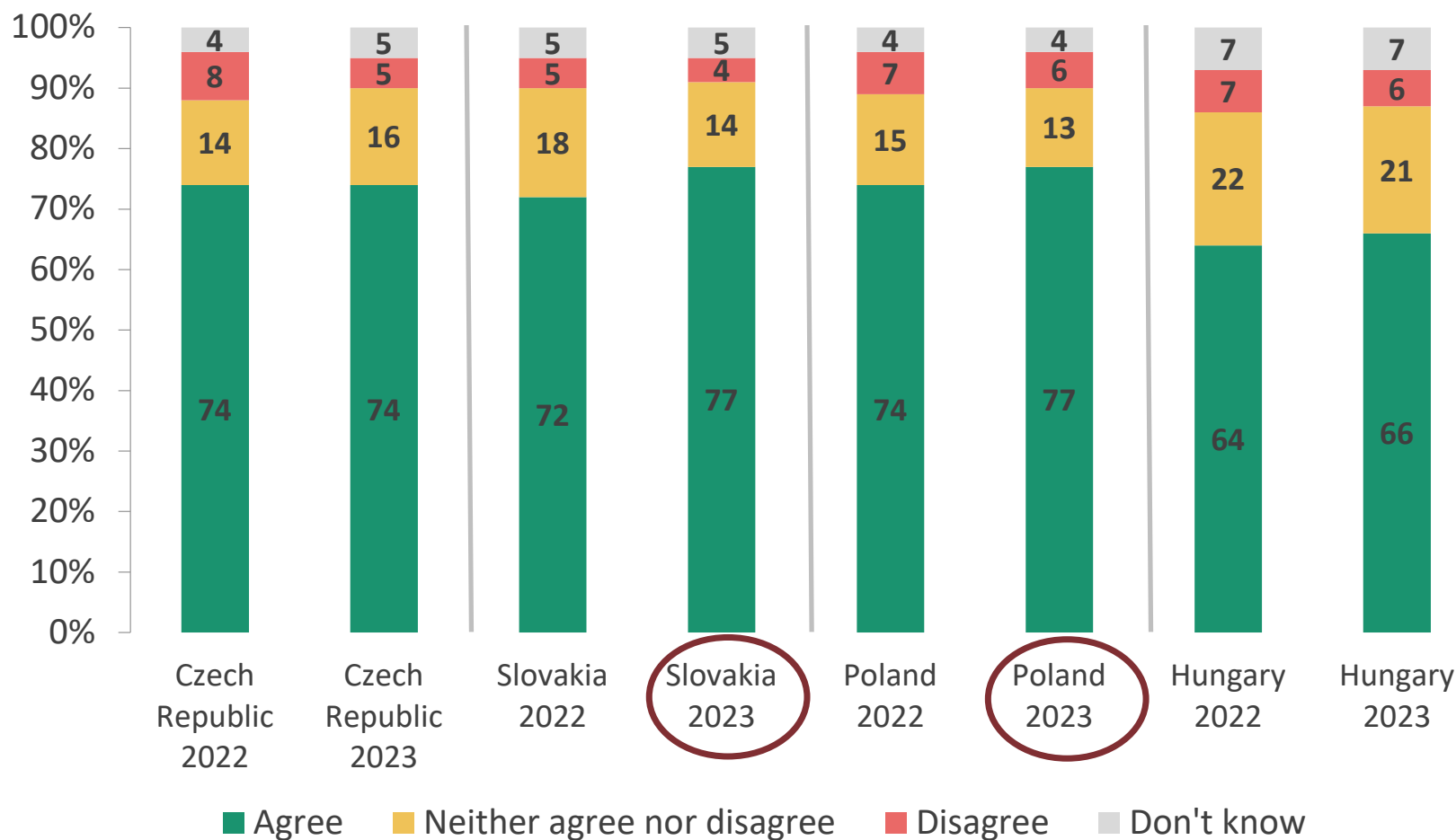
People across V4 trust professional journalistic associations the most to protect media freedom. The EU is the 2nd most trusted actor in Hungary, ahead of journalists themselves.

However, in most cases people are divided on the topic.

Q09. How much would you trust following actors or institutions to protect media freedom in [YOUR COUNTRY]?

**What should be done to safeguard media
freedom?**

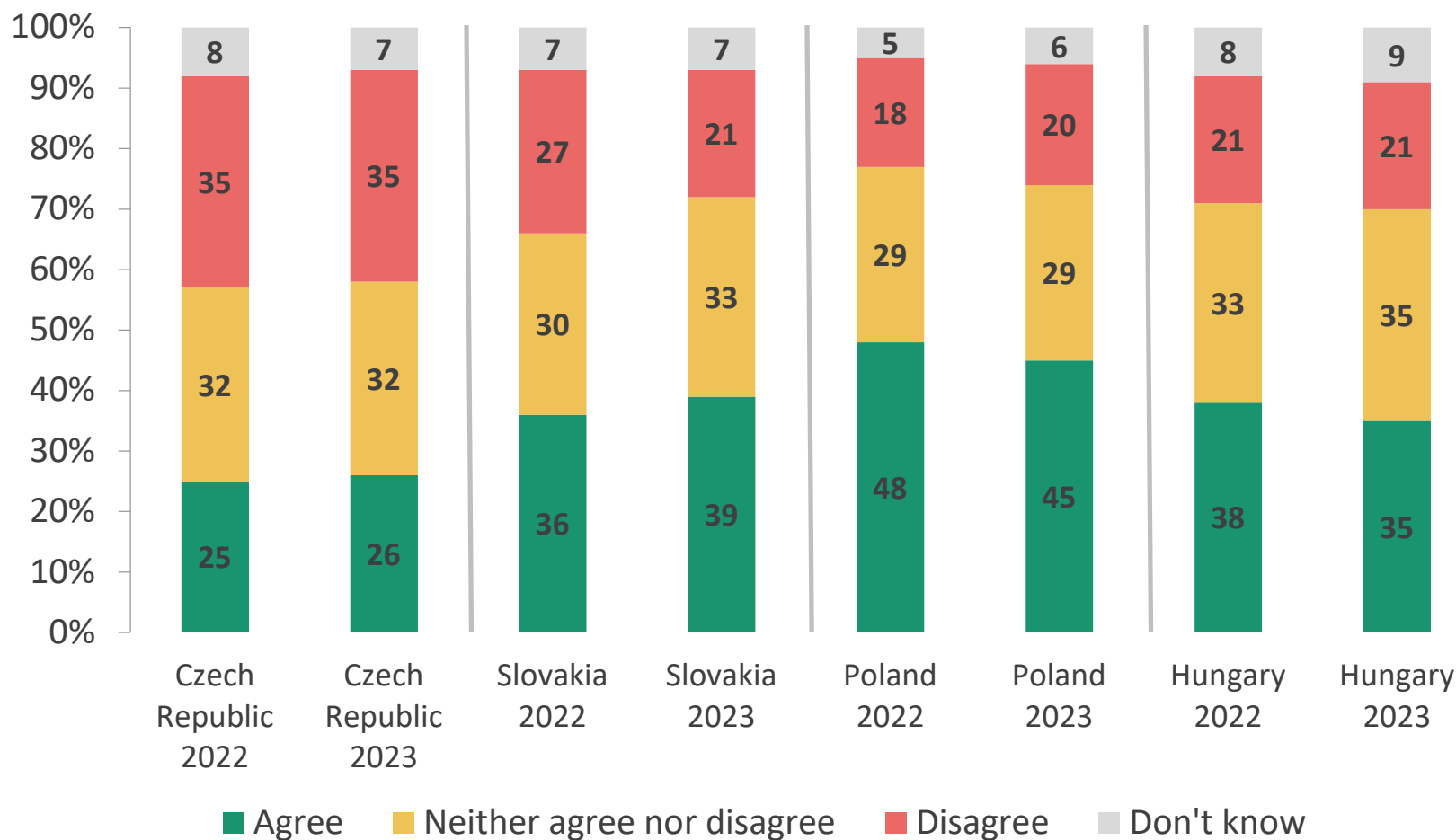
State should strengthen legislation



Most people are in support of stronger legislation to safeguard media freedom and independence; the % of agreement is slightly higher this year in Slovakia and Poland.

Q17A The state should strengthen legislation to safeguard media freedom and independence.

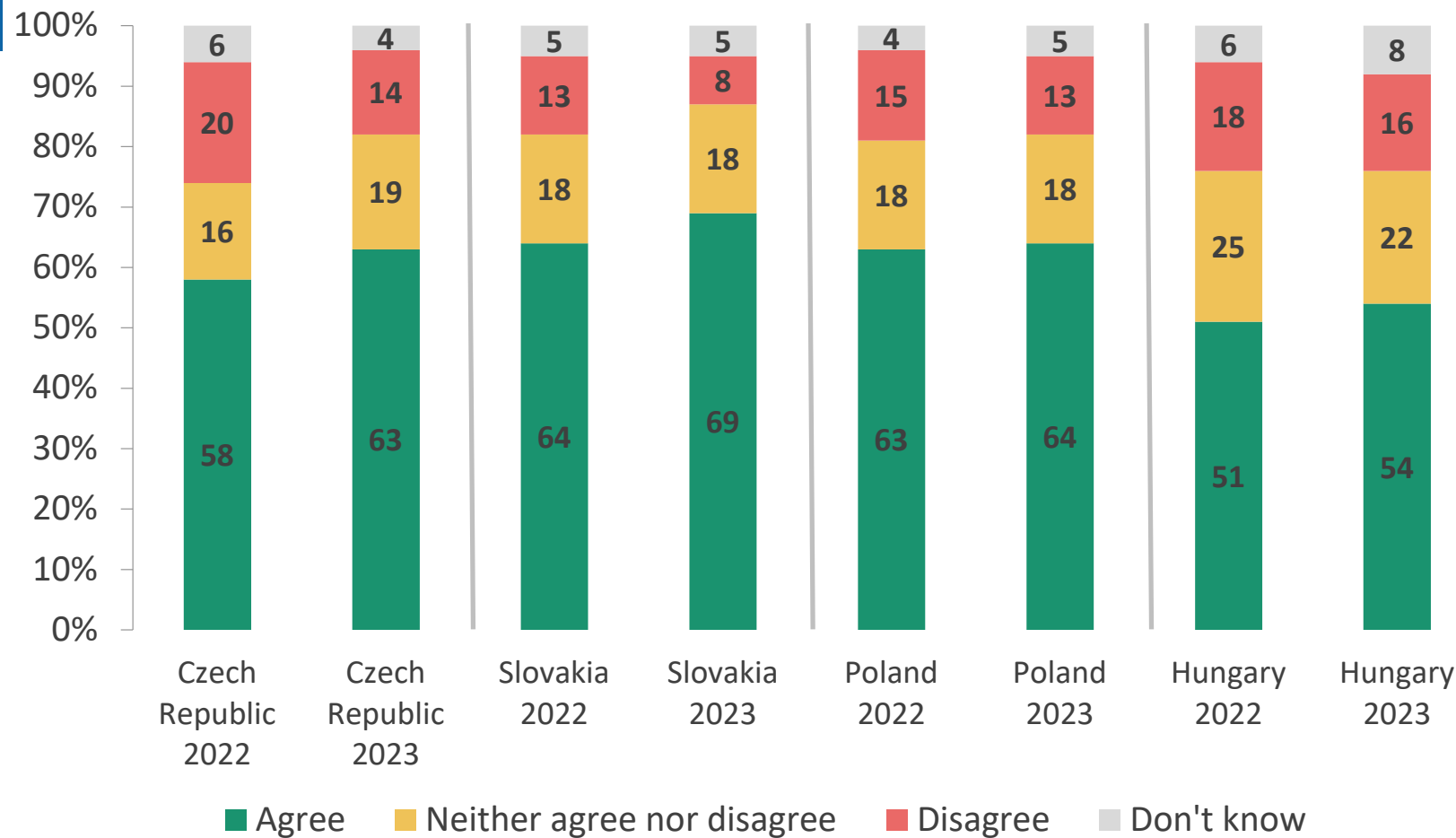
Economic support by the state:



People are divided on the question of state's subsidies for media; the Poles are relatively the most supportive, the Czechs disagree with economic support by the state.

Q17B. The state should provide media with more economic support, for example by subsidies or tax reliefs.

The role of the EU in protecting media freedom



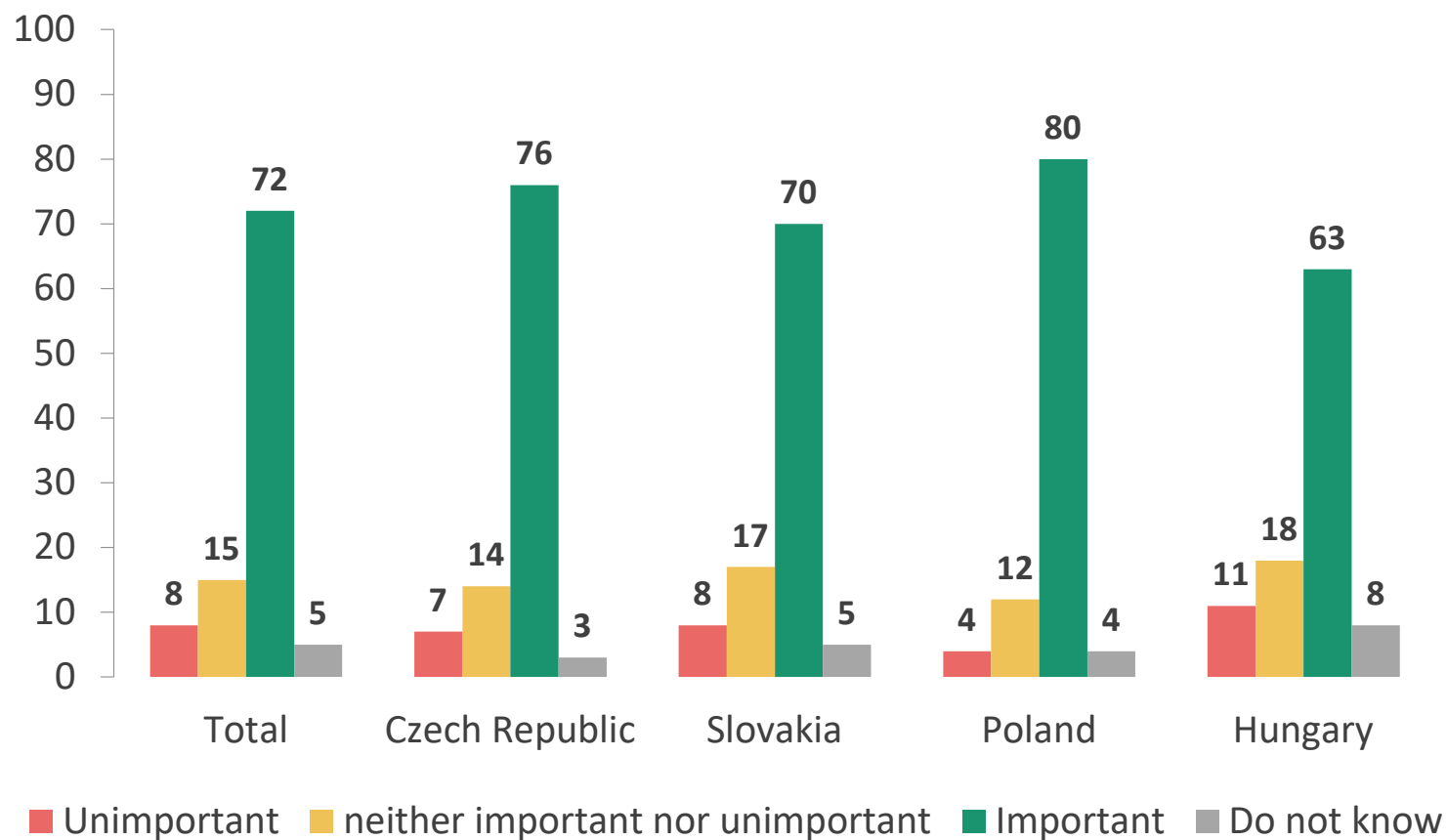
Q17C. The EU should impose penalties or sanctions on countries whose governments interfere with media freedom.

Just like last year, majority of people are in favour of the EU imposing sanctions on countries for interfering with media freedom, most in the Czech Republic and Slovakia (+5pp compared to last year).

Importance of journalistic values

Importance of journalistic values:

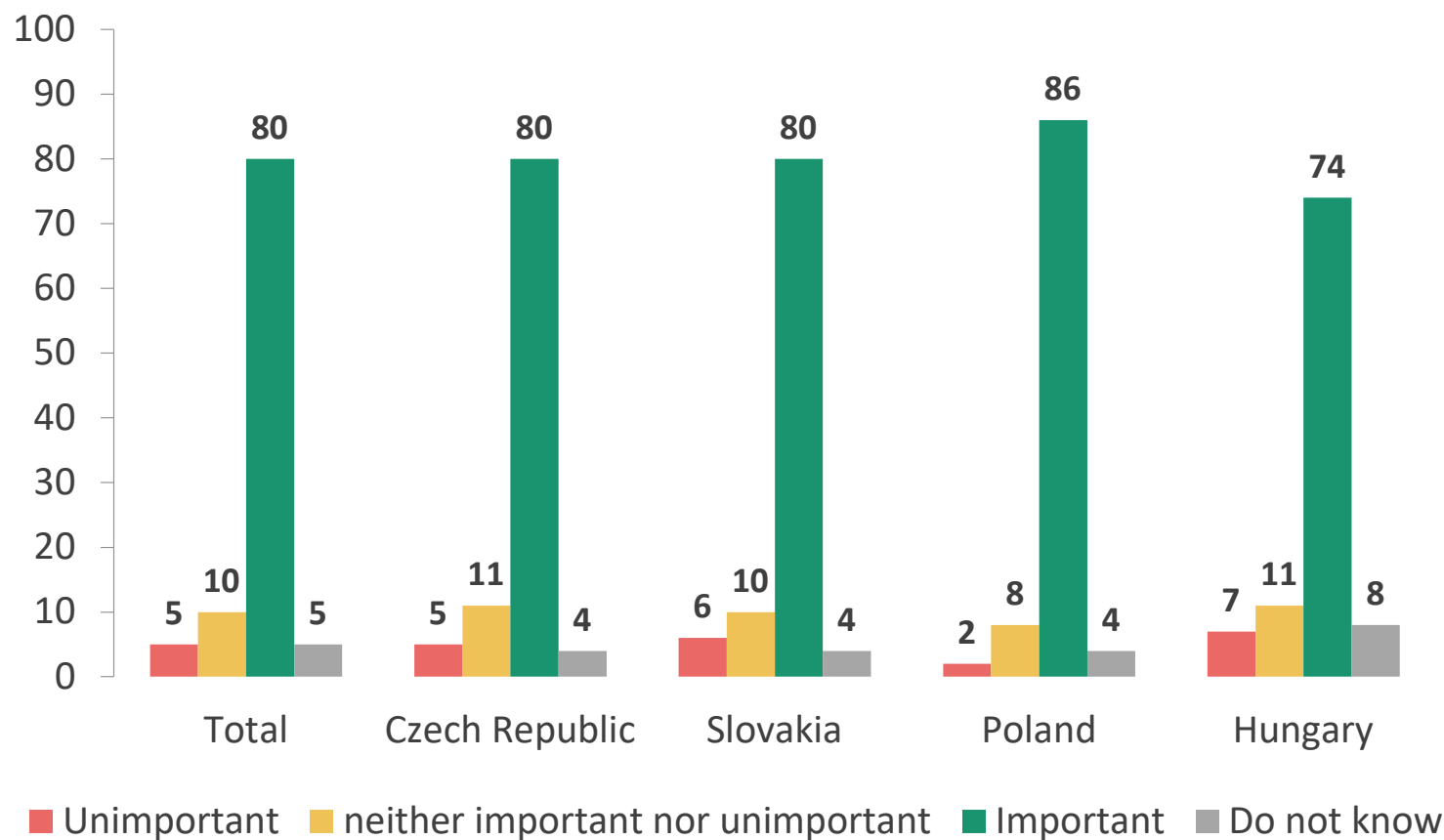
media are not linked to any political party



Q12. Thinking about news media outlets that you consume regularly, please tell us how important it is for you that...

Importance of journalistic values :

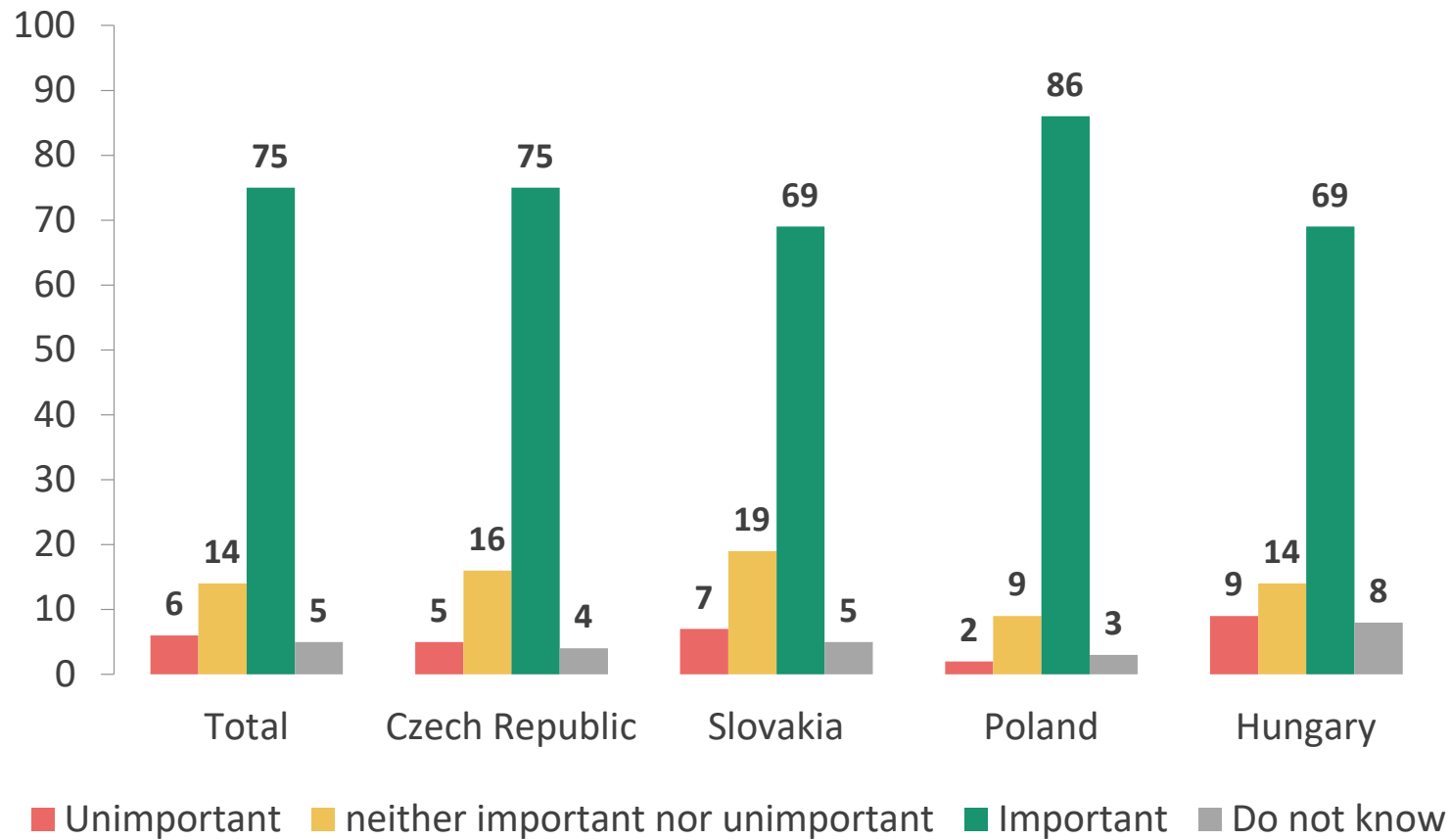
media produce news content that is truthful and factually accurate



Q12. Thinking about news media outlets that you consume regularly, please tell us how important it is for you that...

Importance of journalistic values :

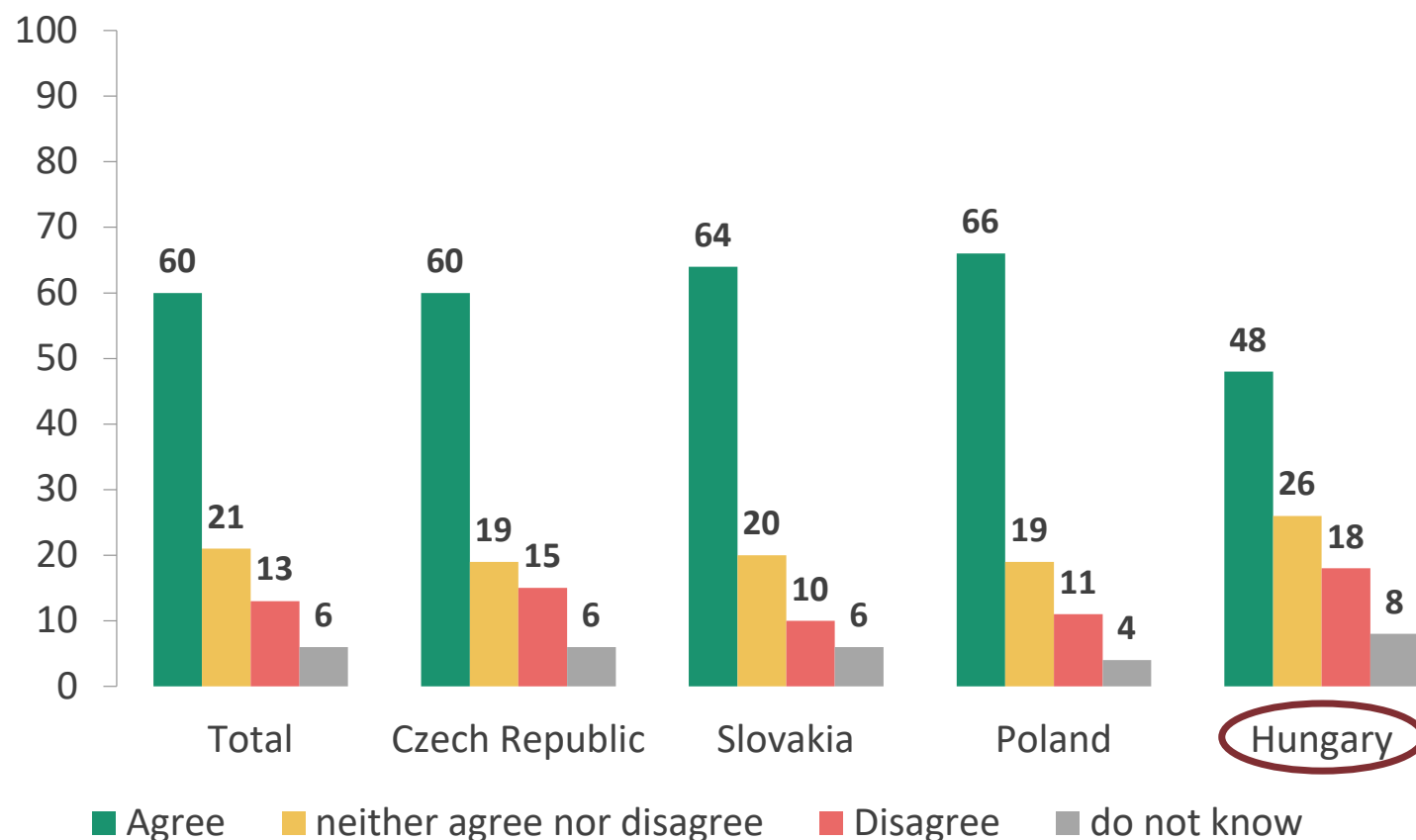
media emphasize factual information, rather than their own point of view



Q12. Thinking about news media outlets that you consume regularly, please tell us how important it is for you that...

Opinions on media ownership regulation

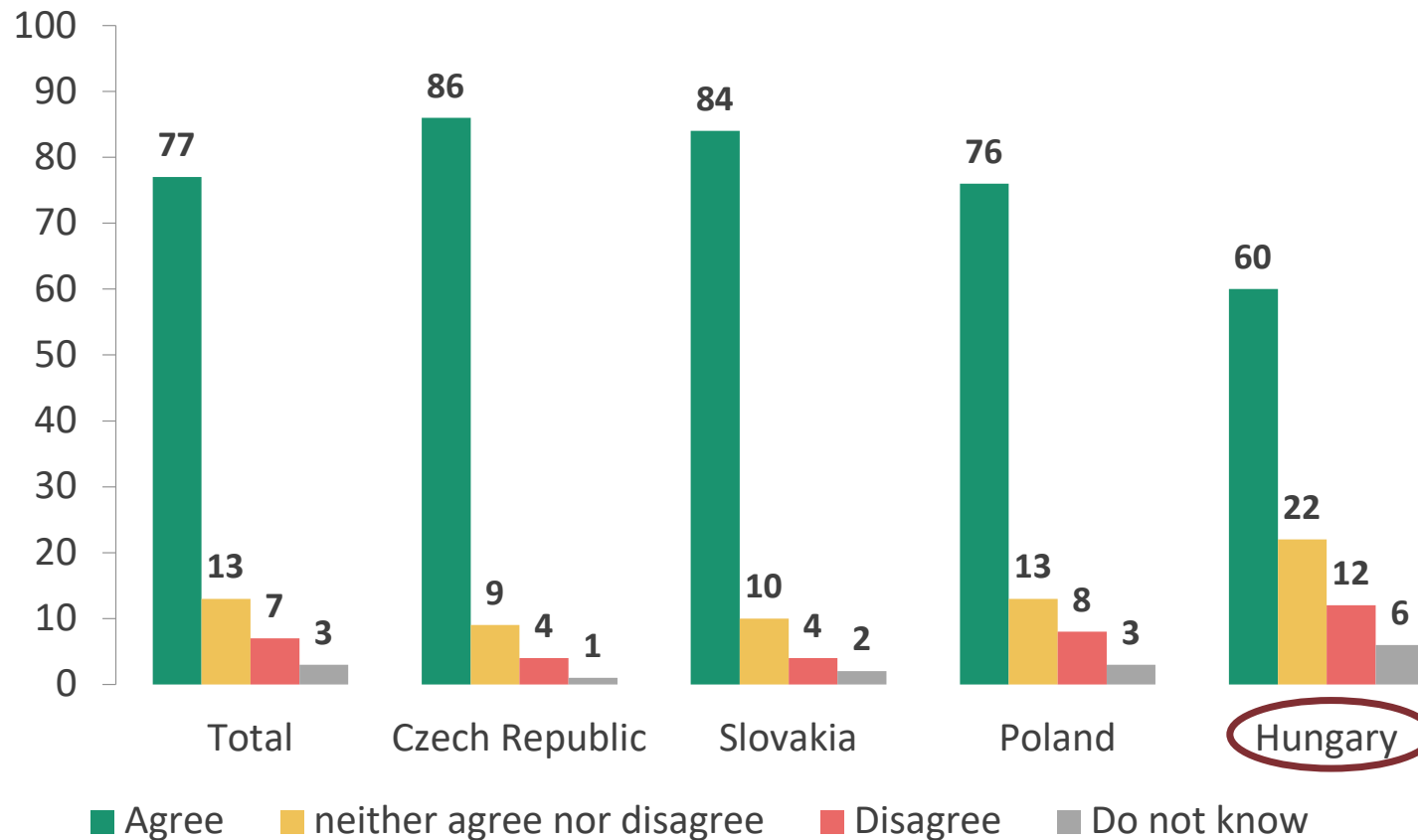
Concentration of media ownership



Most people agree that there should be limits on media ownership in the hands of single owner. In Hungary, the share of those who agree is lower.

Q14A. Thinking about news media in „country“, please tell us how much you agree or disagree with following statements: There should be limits to the amount of control a single individual owner or company have over the media in my country.

Media ownership transparency

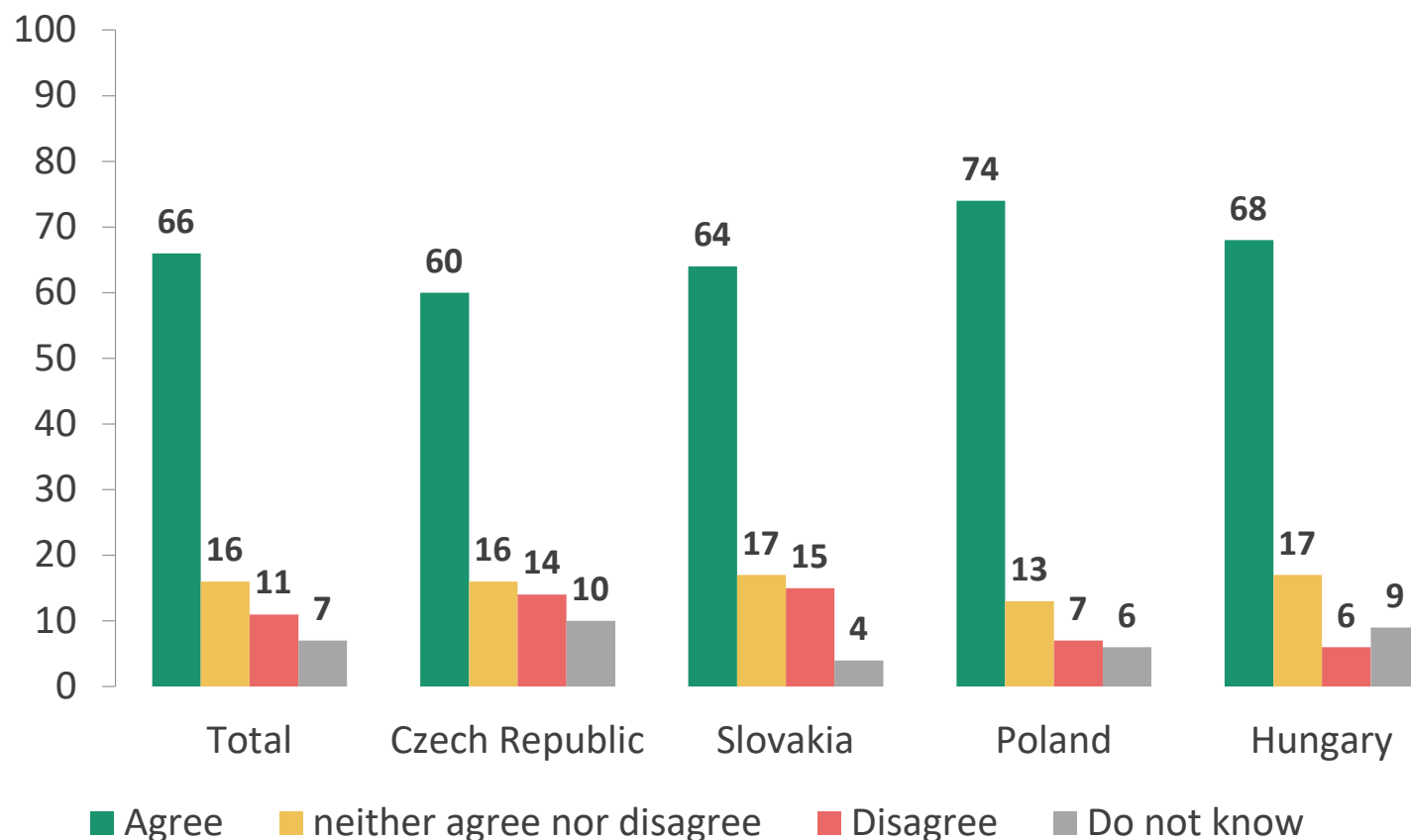


Most people agree that it is important for the public to know who owns the media. Hungary displays relatively lower agreement than the rest of the V4 countries.

Q14B. Thinking about news media in „country“, please tell us how much you agree or disagree with following statements: It is important that the public knows who owns the media .

Opinions on regulation of online content

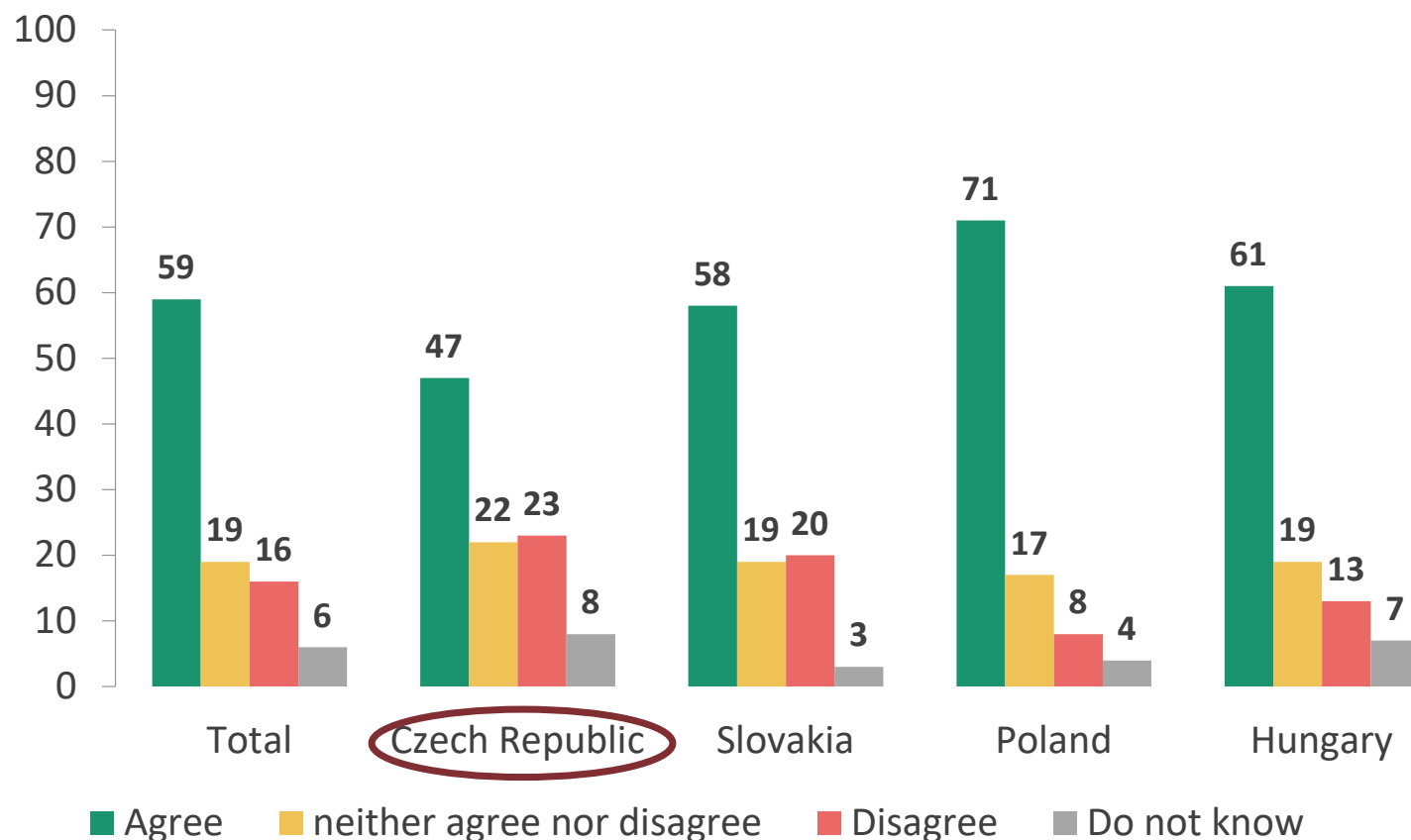
Promoting trustworthy sources by platforms



Majority of people think that platforms should boost visibility of trustworthy information sources.

Q15A. Please tell us whether you disagree or agree with following statements: Digital platforms should ensure trustworthy sources of information are more visible than those that are known to spread disinformation.

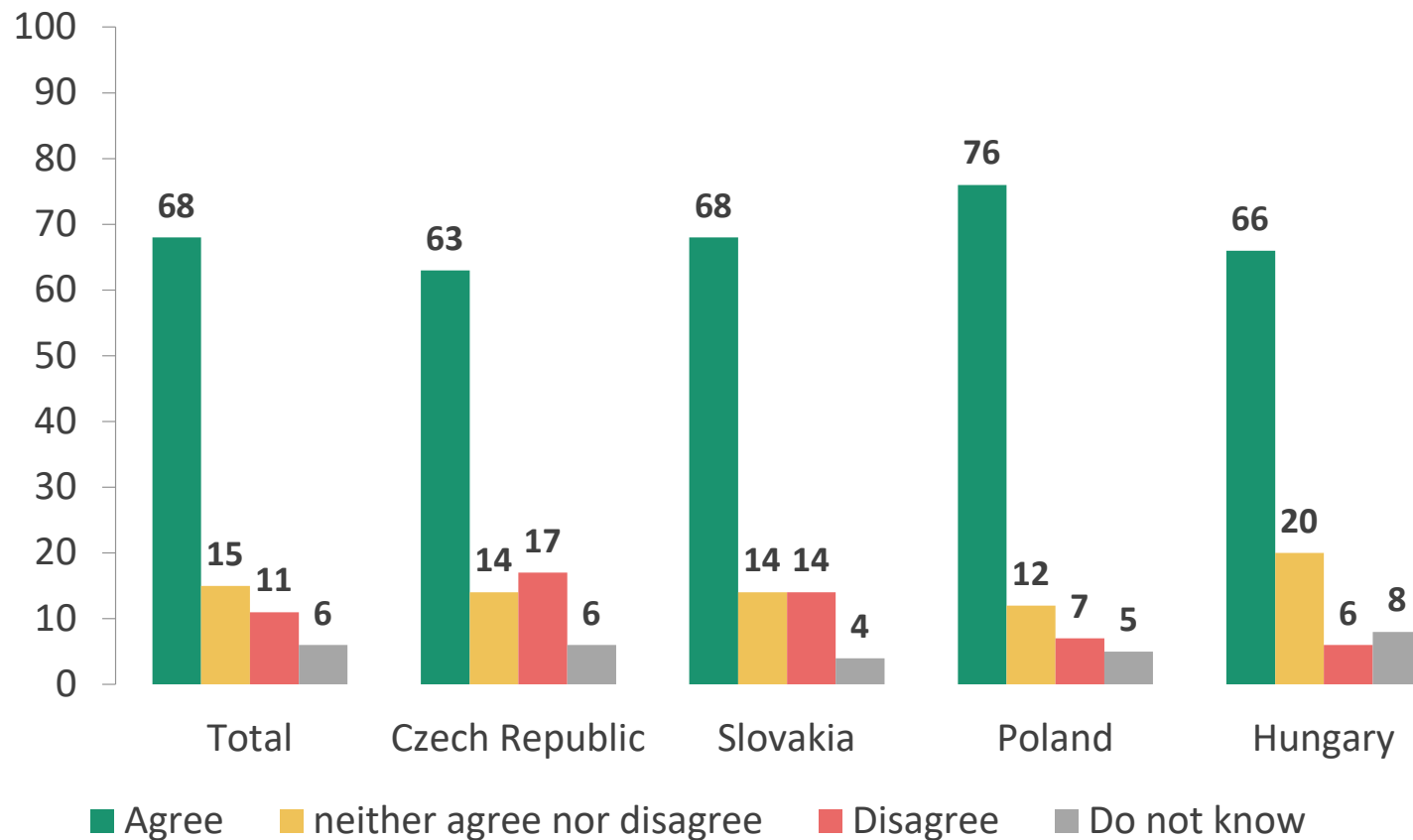
Regulation of online content



Most people believe that online media should be regulated to prevent from spreading hate speech or harmful content. % of agreement is significantly lower in the Czech Republic.

Q15B. Please tell us whether you disagree or agree with following statements: It is appropriate to regulate the content of online media to prevent the spreading of hate speech or harmful content.

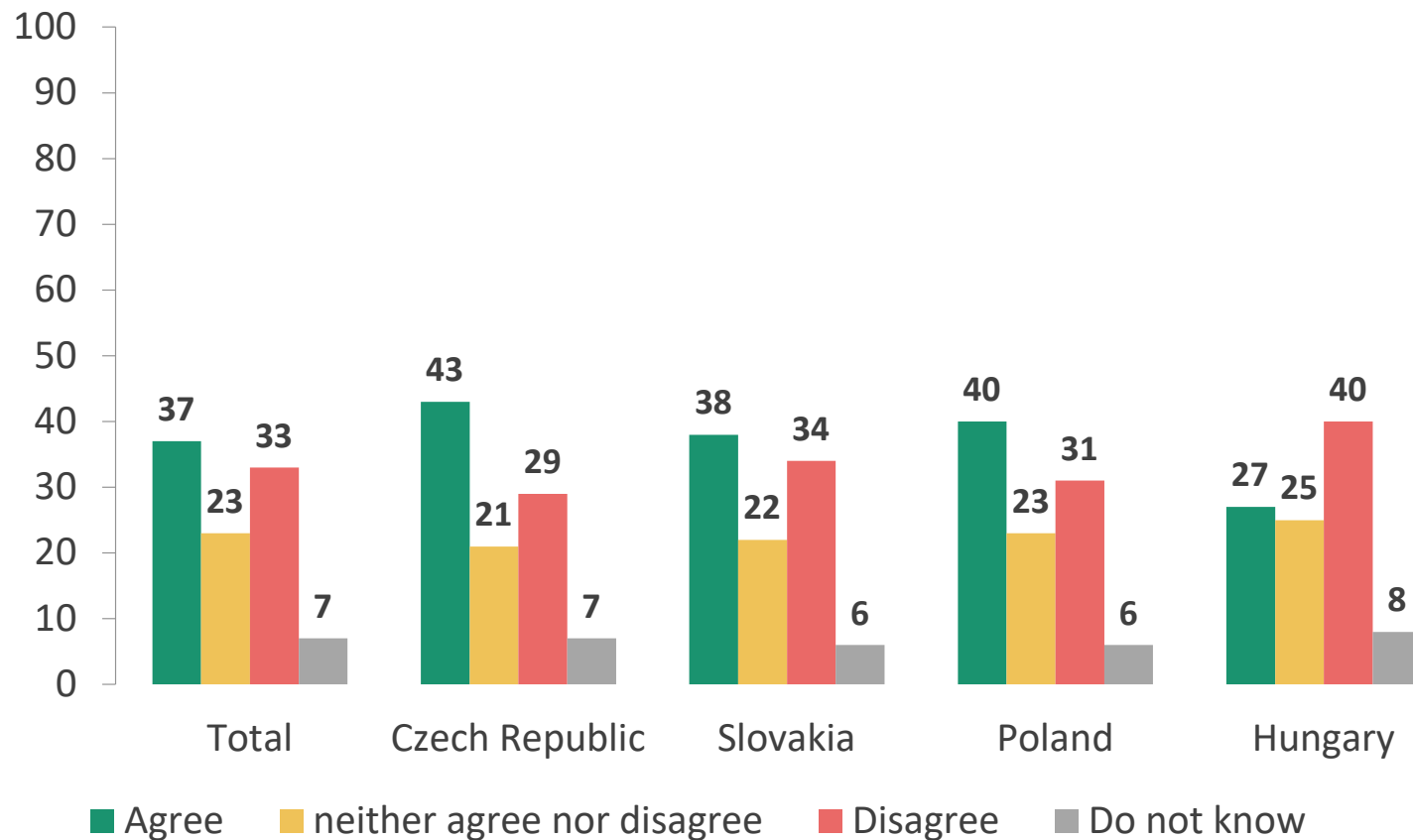
Action against spreading disinformation



Most people believe that a stronger action should be taken against the spreading of online disinformation.

Q15C. Please tell us whether you disagree or agree with following statements: Stronger action should be taken against the spreading of online disinformation.

Blocking of online content for security reasons



People are divided about blocking online content for reasons of national security. In most countries, more people agree than disagree, except for Hungary, where disagreement prevails.

Q15D. Please tell us whether you disagree or agree with following statements: Government has a right to block access to online content in the interest of national security.

Thank you!

rada@economia.cz
v.stetka@lboro.ac.uk