

GLOBSEC Vulnerability Index: How resilient is Central Europe to Russian and Chinese influence?

GLOBSEC's new extensive research, the Vulnerability Index, analyses vulnerabilities which can lead to greater Kremlin's and Beijing's influence in eight countries of Central Europe and the Western Balkans.

On a scale of 0-100 where 100 is the most vulnerable and 0 the most resilient, it evaluates the eight countries in the areas of public attitudes, political landscape, public administration, information landscape and civic and academic space, and shows how confrontation between the West, on one side, and Russia and China, on the other is playing out in one of the strategically important region with geographically peripheral or aspiring members of the EU and NATO.

Foreign malign activities constitute both a cause and consequence of weak and vulnerable societies and governments. The study, however, shows how different factors play a strong role in resilience-building.

From the EU countries analyzed in the study, **Hungary** turned out as the least resilient, with the score of 44/100. This is primarily due to its decreasing freedom of the media and civil society, both of which have been frequent targets of attacks and the government's control. Such top-down approach applies to all studied areas combined with many political actors actively spreading pro-Kremlin and pro-Beijing narratives, putting the country into vulnerable position.

On the other hand, (**Czechia** closely followed by Romania) are the most resilient as both score 29/100. In the Czech Republic, the source of resilience constitutes quality state administration, openly communicating with the public and recognizing threats coming from both Russia and China. The country's weakest point can be found in strong Eurosceptic attitudes, prevalent both in the political discourse and in people's minds, linked to a stronger willingness to stay independent, out of anyone's control.

While **Slovakia** remains rather resilient as well at 32/100, its weakest point – the people and their pro-Russian attitudes as well as higher inclination to believe conspiracy theories and disinformation – requires attention. Slovaks are still widely influenced by the romantic 19th century notion of pan-Slavism and thus continue treating Russia, to some extent, as its "large brother", with no ability to constructively assess the threat the Kremlin poses. Such attitudes are being reinforced by lack of historical revisionism, stalled reform of education and, to some extent, by various political leaders and their communication.

The countries covered by the study are Bulgaria, Czechia, Hungary, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia- How do the countries under review compare against each other in the above-mentioned five areas of public life? Visit www.vulnerabilityindex.org or GLOBSEC website to see more.

For media enquiries:

Adam Sipos, PR manager, GLOBSEC, adam.sipos@globsec.org, +421 948 066 234

Overall Vulnerability Scores

