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## Editors' Introduction

In 2025, artificial intelligence significantly affected the media industry, automating editorial workflows and introducing hyper-personalized content. Many newsrooms have implemented or streamlined the use of AI to generate news, analyze data, and create personalized feeds. Publisher actions stemmed indirectly from changing audience behavior. The trend of deliberately disconnecting from news has deepened, forcing media outlets to seek new forms of engagement through algorithm-based personalization. These changes have increased efficiency but also raised concerns about disinformation. The year 2025 was also marked by the intensive implementation of the European Artificial Intelligence Act (AI Act) and the Digital Services Act (DSA).

In the *Central European Journal of Communication* FALL 2025 issue, our authors undertake an analysis of current problems and challenges. In particular, the authors focus on the challenges posed by disinformation and misinformation, including how people are exposed to it, why they believe it, and how difficult it is to counter or regulate it. They analyze the difficulty of maintaining healthy democratic communication, especially in environments shaped by conflict-oriented behavior, polarization, and political disagreement on social media. The research concentrates on the limited public capacity to critically evaluate information, due to low media literacy, low verification practices, and cognitive biases that reinforce belief in false or preferred narratives. The authors focus on the struggle to design effective institutional, regulatory, and societal responses to information disorders, where existing mechanisms (e.g., EU policies, fact-checking, and literacy programs) are often insufficient or lack enforcement. Finally, they research ethical and societal challenges emerging from new communication technologies, including issues of privacy, consent, trust, and shifts in social norms – especially in mediated or digital forms of interaction.

Márton Bene and Veronika Patkós' question whether the „dark side” of political disagreement – making people uncertain about their views – also diminishes their sense of political competence in a social media environment. The findings suggest it does not, positioning social media as a potentially „safe space” for such discourse.

The research of Martina Novotná, Alena Pospíšil Macková, and Lucie Čejková addresses the need to understand what drives online conflict, given its significant potential to shape public opinion, increase societal polarization, and impact deliberative democracy. It finds that younger, less educated men with low political interest are highly active in these conflicts.

Dren Gërguri and Darren Lilleker, based on the Kosovo case, analyze individuals' exposure to disinformation and the factors influencing their belief in it. The study finds that repeated exposure, along with cognitive and situational factors, is a more significant predictor of belief than trust in traditional news media.

Todd Nesbitt, Tess Slavičková, and Veronika Zavřelová examined the persuasive function of subject headings in Czech-language disinformation chain emails. Their study focuses on the first six months of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and analyzes a corpus of email subject headings collected by the civic initiative Čeští Elfové (Czech Elves). Drawing on critical discourse analysis, relevance theory, and presupposition theory, the article explores how subject headings establish relevance, mobilize shared assumptions, and encourage recipients to access and disseminate disinformation content.

Jacek Kołodziej focuses on the issue of „deep symmetrism.” The article addresses a gap in academic literature by defining this phenomenon as a mechanism of political struggle. Deep symmetrism is described as a system of duplicating social institutions („doppelgangering”) to orchestrate political influence, linking it to modern propaganda and disinformation, with the 2023 Polish election serving as a case study.

A critical analysis of the European Union's regulatory initiatives to combat disinformation by Gergely Ferenc Lendvai, János Tamás Papp, Tamás Attila Szikora, and Krzysztof Wasilewski sheds new light on these issues. While the EU has created frameworks like the Digital Services Act to improve platform accountability, these measures are identified as being largely voluntary and lacking sufficient enforcement mechanisms. The paper concludes that regulation alone is insufficient to solve the problem of disinformation.

The final research by Maia Klaassen, Ianis Bucholtz, Marju Himma, and Krista Lepik-Verliin presents a comprehensive review of academic research on fact-checking from 2010 to 2023. The rapid expansion of research on fact-checking has made it difficult to get a complete overview of the field. This review of 675 articles maps the research landscape and identifies key gaps.

The study in Methods & Concepts section addresses the need for a systematic, evidence-based framework to understand and enhance societal and individual resilience to information manipulation. Dmytro Iarovy, Ragne Kõuts-Klemm, Sten Torpan, and Kristina Juraitė present a three-dimensional model (macro, meso, and micro levels) to serve as a foundation for future research and practical interventions.

We are also returning to a significant event: the Media and Democracy Karol Jakubowicz Award 2025. Marius Dragomir – the editor of the *Media Capture Monitoring Report* project – received the Award for the *Media Capture Monitoring Report*, a research report by the Media and Journalism Research Center and the International Press Institute (co-authored with Zsuzsa Detreköi). A special Media and Democracy Karol Jakubowicz Award 2025 was awarded to Basil Kerski for his book *Europejczycy z kantonu Polska (Europeans from the Canton Poland)*; Cracow; Budapest; Syracuse: Austeria Press, 2024).

In this issue, we are introducing a new editorial team to the *Central European Journal of Communication* for the term 2025–2028, as well as a new group of associate editors.

We would like to express our gratitude to the former editor-in-chief, Michał Głowacki, for his clear vision of the scientific journal's role in fostering international collaboration within the academic community. We would also like to thank Damara Sidyk-Furman and Jacek Mikucki for their tremendous work in the last 6 years. Finally, we thank all the associate editors who supported the journal during the previous term (2022–2025): Catherine Johnson, Kristina Juraitė, Marcus Kreutler, Päivi Maijanen-Kyläheiko, Marco Mazzoni, Dariya Orlova, Gabriella Szabó, Dren Gërguri, Dina Vozab, and Bissera Zankova.

We welcome new editorial team members, Denis Halagiera and Roksana Gloc. We are looking forward to our cooperation with scholars who accepted our invitation to join the CEJC as associate editors for the next three years: Delia Cristina Balaban, Carlos Edmundo Arcila Calderón, Renata Matkevičienė, Cristina Monzer, Jakob Ohme, Lada Trifonova Price, and Sergio Splendore.

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