



A CLOSER LOOK AT HUNGARIAN SENSATIONALIST NEWS AGENCY V4NA

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Get The Trolls Out



Introduction

Media monitoring is a key element of the Get The Trolls Out! project. All our partners monitor the media, both mainstream and social, on a weekly basis. Through this monitoring we detect cases of anti-religious hate and sometimes notice trends in terms of what type of hate is being spread, and who is spreading it.

Our Hungarian partner, the [Centre for Independent Journalism](#), noticed that in many of the media cases they found through monitoring, a news agency called V4NA (V4 News Agency) was cited as the main source of information.

Together with Hungarian platform 444.hu, content from V4NA was analysed to see what type of messages they were spreading and the reach they had. Below you will find a rundown of the key findings of the study as well as the original article which appeared on 444.hu (translated from Hungarian to English – [original article here](#)).

WHAT IS V4NA?

V4NA is a relatively new news agency. Its headquarters are in London, UK, and [according to their website](#) they currently have a team of 50 journalists. Their moto is: “V4NA – news, views, vision for Europe.” In their own words, V4NA aims to give “a conservative, right wing perspective of the key political, economical, cultural and other news critical to the EU and the world.”

Some of the content on V4NA is free to access; however, for more detailed pieces one needs to register (and presumably pay) for access. It is unclear what the rates for content are. There does not seem to be a formal subscription model currently.

Key Findings

The monitoring period for the research was July 2020. During that time, the 444.hu team collected and analysed content which V4NA was producing, and where this content was being published.

The key finding from the research is that V4NA operates with manipulative news summaries. Their stories are often completely independent in space and time, distorted for their own purposes and are then combined into one piece, creating a false phenomenon. The content is often alarmist and sensationalist. Several state-owned media platforms in Hungary regularly published content from V4NA, either completely unedited or using elements of it in their own articles.

Further findings include:

- The contents of V4NA are not typically fake. Instead, they are a collection of manipulative and emotionally disturbing contents from foreign sources
- The Hungarian pro government newspaper Magyar Nemzet (www.magyarnemzet.hu) regularly republishes V4NA content with some editing (different titles, different leads etc.)
- Media outlets of KESMA (The Central European Press and Media Foundation, a Hungarian foundation controlling more than 500 of the country's media outlets) republish V4NA contents without any changes
- The public broadcaster's website (hirado.hu) usually does not report from V4NA
- The pro government HírTV does occasionally report using V4NA content
- The online state-owned news portal www.888.hu usually adds more disturbing/manipulating content to the V4NA content

Key Findings

- Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests were “the star” of the month (July 2020) which seemed an ideal topic for V4NA. People in Hungary do not have much information about BLM, therefore news was easy to manipulate
- The most suspicious content are the videos; it is common that no authors, and no sources are provided
- Although V4NA publishes economic insights as well, only the news with political content are being republished by the pro-government media
- French and Belgian news/stories are the most favourable ones since they can easily create the narrative of incapable authorities versus violent immigrants
- Almost all reports from Italy come with commentary from Salvini
- Stories from Italy are often bizarre (migrants are eating cats or running naked on the streets etc.) and sensationalist
- Reports/news from Spain or Greece are rare
- They seem to heavily favour Trump, referring or quoting him regularly, no edition is needed, his words completely fit into their narrative
- V4NA produced only one article by themselves (which is not taken from foreign sources) in July. The article covered the story of mayor Imre László, who won his seat in the 2019 local elections as the candidate of the opposition. Imre László said in June 2020 that Hitler deserved to be named “Person of the year” by the Time magazine, “because the work he had done before that, brought spectacular advancement for Germany after the financial crisis”. More to read about the story here:
<https://thehungaryjournal.com/2020/06/28/left-wing-politician-praises-hitler/>

Original Article

Below is the article which the researchers from 444.hu wrote for their platform. The original version of the article [can be found here](#).

When Árpád Habony, Viktor Orbán's one time influential adviser, set up an international news agency in London last year, he called it the V4 News Agency (V4NA). staffed by fifty writers and editors.

British company records show that 57% of the company's shares are owned by the New Wave Media Group, which operates the origo.hu website, meaning the majority of the company is in the hands of the Central European Press and Media Foundation (KESMA), [the government-backed holding that controls 500 media outlets in Hungary]. Habony's consultancy company in London, Danube Budapest Consulting, owns 40%, while 3% is owned by the Hungarian ambassador in London, Kristof Szalay-Bobrovniczky, who registered the company. V4NA's director is Balázs Medveczky, who is also the director of Duna Media Service, one of the companies that dominates the Hungarian media.

News agencies generally derive their income from subscriptions, mainly from media operations such as newspapers, radios and television stations, but also to a lesser extent from governments, research institutes, think tanks, companies and civil organisations. The subscription fees for V4NA are surprisingly high, costing hundreds of pounds.

According to the Guardian, the Czech and Slovak governments complained to the Hungarian government that the V4NA name was misleading, since it implied that the agency dealt with matters of importance to the members of the Visegrád 4 group (Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia), when in fact it represented the views of the Hungarian government.

In July , this website (444.hu) and the Budapest-based Independent Media Centre, conducted a joint study of how far V4NA is present in the media and how it writes about the themes it chooses. What we found, was that V4NA does not deal directly in fake news – unlike several of the Hungarian newspapers in the KESMA portfolio. Its approach is to make a controversial selection of news stories from the foreign press that even the official Hungarian news agency MTI will not touch.

This is not an open fabrication of stories, but more small distortions that twist the truth, such as frequently presenting opinions as facts. It is as if V4NA has taken the place of Russian Today in the government media, presenting the kind of material that used to come from Russian sources.

The 129 V4NA articles that appeared in the government-controlled media in July do not give the sense of a fifty-strong team working at the agency, both in terms of quantity and quality. Most commonly it was the Magyar Nemzet newspaper that carried the V4NA articles, with slight edits. KESMA's provincial newspapers generally reproduced them word for word. The hirado.hu news portal doesn't really use V4NA material, and similarly Hír [News] TV channel rarely does. The website 888.hu readily carries V4NA material and attempts to make its message even stronger.

We did find the occasional V4NA article in the Czech and Polish media, but this was not common. The website Átlátszó wrote in May that in the first part of the year, V4NA material appeared in newspapers belonging to the Slovenia and Macedonian companies that Habony and his friends bought up in recent years.

Since July, the most common subject covered has been the Black Lives Matter protests and riots. This is a rewarding topic, as it does not concern anyone in Central Eastern Europe or in the Visegrád countries, and the conflicts behind the events are a US phenomenon and are unknown here. However, it perfectly serves the purpose of strengthening anti-Western or Anti-American sentiments. There is minimum effort to complicate matters from a journalistic perspective, as they practically never used their own research, choosing instead to quote or review only American sources.

In the past two months (June and July 2020) the following articles appeared in the government-controlled press related to the BLM movement:

- Leftwing terrorist runs organisation handling donations to the BLM
- Violence is slowly taking over London but the liberal city authorities spend on racism-hunters
- Racist classical music – every white person should be wiped out?
- Soros' lawyer tries to ruin the life of family defending their own house

- Black Jesus painted in English cathedral
- Claims about slavery are a historical hoax.
- Crime spikes during the radical left-wing protests, but they are defunding the police in New York
- Dutch government won't apologise for country's past
- Popular rapper lays into Soros
- Nothing is sacred for extreme BLM protesters + video
- Soros spends billions supporting BLM movements and abortion
- Brother of Black Lives Matter icon back on trial
- Now we know: white men are semi-animal, genetically defective beings
- BLM holds awareness training for whites
- Left wing culture ostracises Trump supporters in America
- Reliability and loyalty are disgusting sign of white supremacy, says radical left-wing leader
- Another Soros lawyer swears loyalty to Black Lives Matter
- Racist sticker causes outrage
- BLM movement is the equivalent of the Ku Klux Klan
- George Soros is stuffing money into old allies
- Liberal left-wing targets kindergartens with anti-racist propaganda
- Illegally erected statue of BLM activist removed
- Hundreds of radical left-wing activists attack police in Chicago – video
- Crime is on the rise in New York, but the police are protecting BLM mural
- Now anti-abortion protest is racism
- American rapper: whites are inferior to blacks
- Teacher who fell asleep is labelled racist
- Shocking footage comes to light of BLM riots
- Radical left-wing violence drives people to ever more extreme outrages
- BLM movement: liberal lunacy reaches British museums
- America in flames again – 'Peaceful' vandals go wild with a burning Trump flag. – Marx resonates with New York's mayor
- Coloured teenage girl beats up white friend – but this isn't racism
- Antichristian left-wing anarchists show their true colours
- Latest Black Lives Matter scandal is good news for Soros' man
- Pensioners tried to hold up BLM protesters + video
- Families flee from New York's Upper West Side
- Policeman makes very apposite response to BLM supporters
- Crimes committed by BLM hushed up + video
- Knifings and hold-ups continue under cover of BLM movement
- Demonstrators cheer death of Trump supporter
- Woman describes her harassment by BLM demonstrators

A regular feature of these pieces, is that they sweep together events that are completely separate in time and space to give the appearance of them being bigger and part of a broader trend.

Take the sensational news item which appeared in June 2020, that “one of the BLM leaders” had said that white people were inferior. It was presented as if an influential voice in a global movement that was at the centre of the world’s attention was making this statement. On closer reading, we find that three years earlier, one of the founders of the BLM group in the Canadian city of Toronto might have written something similar on her Facebook page (there is a screenshot of this on the internet). The woman herself formally announced in May 2019, a year earlier, that she was leaving the movement.

In the videos that accompany news items, it is not often clear where or when they were filmed, or what is exactly happening. Often neither the title nor the introductory paragraph say whether what was being reported happened in France or Australia.

A strong theme running through the stories about France and Belgium is that the hopeless authorities can’t cope with violent migrants (“Violence and frightful scenes in many French cities, police are helpless against criminal migrant children”). In Germany the authorities are not so weak, according to the articles. In London it is the leftwing city leadership that is to blame, in Italy the leftwing government. Most of the items about Italy come with commentary by Matteo Salvini, the rightwing leader, who acts as a filter for the news. The most extreme items about migrants come from here: “they roast cats, eat dogs and run around the streets naked”, and so forth.

The articles about migration and Muslims take complicated social issues and simplifies them down, divorced from all context and presented exclusively and one-sidedly in a manner that suits the political interests of the government.

Some countries get very little coverage, such as Spain and Greece. On the other hand, Trump’s speeches and appearances are reported precisely, without any distortion.

The news agency also offers economic analysis, but its media partners do not use this – it is exclusively the V4NA's political articles that feature in the Hungarian media.

In July, V4NA carried only one story with a Hungarian reference which was not a press review or taken from the foreign press. This was about the statement by Imre László, an opposition politician, about Hitler [that he deserved to be man of the year in 1938]. They asked diplomats in Brussels to comment but received no response.