Analysis of harmful content on Slovak language Tik Tok

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Main findings:

1. **A small, relatively insignificant account can have a substantial impact, making it difficult to monitor the environment.**

- Despite tracking down the main and most followed accounts, smaller, hard to detect accounts can spread propaganda, hoaxes, and conspiracies without being under proper moderation and supervision. This helps deleted accounts as well — if an account gets deleted and loses its followers and likes, the viewers can actively search for the video, and this makes the algorithm promote it

2. **A practice of establishment of secondary accounts after being banned was found with new profiles resharing content from suspended accounts.**

- During the analysis, there have been several cases of suspended accounts detected, which were replaced by a new account on the same basis, with a very similar username, likely run by the same person.

- Many of them have actively reshared content from the suspended account, as evidenced by the watermark of the previous (suspended) account. During the analysis, it was not possible to confirm, whether the reshared content had led to the suspension of the previous account or whether mostly non-problematic content was reposted. Some profiles actively promoted their problems with compliance with TikTok Community Guidelines and claimed they would establish a new account in case they were to be blocked.

3. **Users are being closed in a loop of self-strengthening narratives, including conspiracies, pro-Russian propaganda, and other harmful content, which is recommended to them.**

- Experiments in the Slovak environment showed that 1 in 5 displayed videos contain disinformation, misleading content, or other problematic content, such as climate change denial, hoaxes about vaccination, and conspiracies about the war in Ukraine. In other experiments, it took a relatively short time until the algorithm offered problematic content to the user.

- Once the algorithm acknowledges the interest of the user in such videos, their FYP can turn into a continuous stream of videos containing hoaxes, conspiracies, pro-Russian propaganda, and other problematic content, which has happened during this analysis as well.

4. **Among the most influential accounts spreading conspiracies and pro-Russian narratives, political accounts were prominent.**

- Despite the existence of not politically affiliated accounts spreading problematic content, accounts run by political parties or individual politicians were spreading a substantial number of conspiracies and pro-Russian narratives.

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5. **Foreign accounts are prevalent as well, as the language barrier is not that important in graphic and audio content; Czech accounts have a lot of prevalence as well.**
   - During the analysis, a number of Czech accounts spreading conspiracies, propaganda, and hoaxes were either recommended by the For You Page or found by keyword search. In addition to that, as TikTok offers audio-visual content instead of pure text, foreign, often Russian or English-speaking accounts can reach part of the population, that does not speak the language, and delivers the message by audio and graphic features.

6. **A blending of entertainment and problematic content was detected.**
   - Some of the accounts detected tried to present themselves as a satire, however included many open or hidden conspiracy messages or pro-Russian narratives.

1544