European Parliament
2024-2029

TEXTS ADOPTED

P10_TA(2026)0404

Media freedom and rule of law in the Czech Republic: threats to the independence of public broadcasters

European Parliament resolution of 25 November 2026 on media freedom and rule of law in the Czech Republic: threats to the independence of public broadcasters (2026/2969(RSP))

The European Parliament,

– having regard to the Treaty on European Union (TEU), in particular Articles 2, 4(3), 5, 6, 9 and 10 thereof,

– having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), in particular Article 20 thereof,

– having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union ('the Charter'), in particular Article 11 thereof,

– having regard to Regulation (EU) 2024/1083 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 establishing a common framework for media services in the internal market and amending Directive 2010/13/EU (European Media Freedom Act)[1], in particular Articles 5, 6, 21 and 22 thereof,

– having regard to the coordinated statements by the European Federation of Journalists, the European Broadcasting Union, Reporters Without Borders and PEN International,

– having regard to the Reporters Without Borders World Press Freedom Index, the Media Pluralism Monitor of the Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom, and the monitoring reports of the Media Freedom Rapid Response consortium,

– having regard to the reports, surveys and opinions of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights,

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1 OJ L, 2024/1083, 17.4.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1083/oj.

– having regard to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the protocols thereto, and to the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) concerning Czechia,

– having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

– having regard to the international human rights treaties of the United Nations and the Council of Europe,

– having regard to Directive (EU) 2019/1937 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2019 on the protection of persons who report breaches of rule of Union law[2] (the Whistleblower Directive),

– having regard to the judgment of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) of 6 March 2025 in Case C-152/23 (*European Commission* v *Czech Republic*)[3], which concluded that Czechia had failed to fulfil its obligations under Article 26(1) and (3) of the Whistleblower Directive by failing to adopt and communicate, within the prescribed deadline, all the measures necessary to transpose that directive,

– having regard to its resolution of 29 April 2026 with observations forming an integral part of the decisions on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2024, Section III – Commission and executive agencies and the ninth, tenth and eleventh European Development Funds[4],

– having regard to its resolution of 10 June 2021 on the conflict of interest of the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic[5],

– having regard to its resolution of 19 June 2020 on the reopening of the investigation against the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic on the misuse of EU funds and potential conflicts of interest[6],

– having regard to its resolution of 13 December 2018 on conflicts of interest and the protection of the EU budget in the Czech Republic[7],

– having regard to the Commission communication of 17 July 2026 entitled ‘2026 Rule of Law Report – The rule of law situation in the

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2 OJ L 305, 26.11.2019, p. 17, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2019/1937/oj.
3 ECLI:EU:C:2025:147.
4 OJ L, 2026/1577, 10.9.2026, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/res/2026/1577/oj.
5 OJ C 67, 8.2.2022, p. 56.
6 OJ C 362, 8.9.2021, p. 37.
7 OJ C 388, 13.11.2020, p. 157.

European Union’ (COM(2026)0900) and the accompanying country chapter on the rule of law situation in Czechia (SWD(2026)0903),

– having regard to the Third Interim Compliance Report on Czechia, published by the Council of Europe’s Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) on 29 April 2026,

– having regard to the judgment of the CJEU of 18 June 2020 in Case C-78/18 (*Commission v Hungary*), which concluded that mandates relating to foreign-funding transparency and registration violate free movement of capital under Article 63 TFEU and fundamental rights under Articles 7, 8, and 12 of the Charter,

– having regard to the statement of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe’s Representative on Freedom of the Media of 17 July 2026 on the funding and independence of Czech Television and Czech Radio,

– having regard to Rule 136(2) and (4) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas Czech public broadcasting media, namely Czech Television (Česká televize) and Czech Radio (Český rozhlas), are facing intense pressure as a result of a government-backed proposal to abolish traditional licence fees, replacing them with direct allocations from the state budget while at the same time making severe budget cuts, reducing overall resources by an estimated 15 %; whereas this cut effectively reduces the funding to its nominal level for 2008;

B. whereas, on 23 October 2026, the governing majority in the Czech Chamber of Deputies fast-tracked the bill to abolish licence fees for Czech Television and Czech Radio and set the first-reading vote for 4:36 a.m. on 24 October 2026; whereas the debate ended before all members registered to speak had been heard, and the bill was referred to the Committee on Media and Culture;

C. whereas most provisions of the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA) have applied across all EU Member States since 8 August 2025;

D. whereas Article 5 EMFA clearly states that public service media must receive adequate, sustainable and predictable funding on the basis of transparent and objective criteria, with their editorial independence fully safeguarded;

E. whereas the proposed funding changes lack crucial independence safeguards and make Czech public broadcasting media more vulnerable to political pressure and arbitrary budget decisions, as they subject the funding for Czech public broadcasting media to the will of the government majority through the annual state budget prepared by the Czech Ministry of Finance;

F. whereas safeguarding Czech Television’s independence is of wider European significance; whereas the State Media Monitor’s 2026 European assessment provisionally classifies it as one of only 12 media organisations in the ‘Independent Public’ category, while identifying the proposed funding changes as a risk to that status; whereas weakening an institution with this role and public standing would represent a serious setback for media pluralism and democratic resilience in the region;

G. whereas public service media exist to ensure access to editorially independent media content and reliable information, support democratic scrutiny, and promote media pluralism and cultural diversity, all to the benefit of free and democratic discourse, an essential mission that relies fundamentally on their institutional autonomy from executive power;

H. whereas, in its 2026 Rule of Law Report, the Commission identified persistent obstacles to finding out who owns Czech media outlets and found that no further progress had been made on media ownership transparency, as draft legislation remained pending in the Czech Parliament and a fully functional transparency register had yet to be formally established; whereas the Commission reported that the Media Pluralism Monitor had raised its assessment of the risk to ownership transparency from high to very high, and indicated that it would follow up on the issue through the implementation and enforcement of the EMFA;

I. whereas Andrej Babiš, Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, and members of the ruling coalition in the government and parliament regularly conduct verbal attacks on Czech journalists and media, including public service broadcasters, while linking the reform of the funding of the public media with the fact their editorial line is critical of the government;

J. whereas Andrej Babiš built up and owned the Agrofert group, which in 2013 acquired the MAFRA media group, one of the largest media houses in Czechia and publisher of the national dailies *Mladá fronta DNES* and *Lidové noviny* and of the news portal iDNES.cz, and whose group also includes Radio Impuls; whereas the Agrofert Group sold the MAFRA group in 2023; whereas there is evidence of political interference in the media by Andrej Babiš; whereas in 2017, audio recordings were made public in which Andrej Babiš, then Minister for Finance, exerted pressure on a journalist from *Mladá fronta DNES* regarding when to publish material about his political rivals;

K. whereas international and Czech non-governmental organisations (NGOs), including Reporters Without Borders, the International Press Institute, the European Federation of Journalists, Freedom House and Transparency International Czech Republic, and the Media Pluralism Monitor, have warned that politically concentrated

media ownership threatens pluralism and that hostile rhetoric by senior politicians intimidates journalists; whereas, on 5 October 2026, around 40 Czech editors-in-chief, including representatives of Czech Television and Czech Radio, urged public officials to reject violence, uphold civil discourse and guarantee equal access to public information; whereas Czechia fell from 23rd in 2017 to 40th in 2019-2021 in the World Press Freedom Index, and the 2026 Media Pluralism Monitor rates Czechia's overall risk at 51 % and its market plurality risk at 74 %;

L. whereas recent demonstrations across Czechia, including the mass rally held in Prague on 15 November 2026, in which approximately 400 000 people participated, and the one-day strike by Czech Television and Czech Radio employees on 3 November 2026 in response to the government's plan to fund both broadcasters through the state budget, which employees fear would undermine their editorial independence and financial stability, reflect strong public opposition to threats to public service media independence and widespread support for media freedom and pluralism; whereas European and international journalists' organisations supported the striking employees and the citizens demonstrating in defence of independent public service media;

M. whereas the EMFA safeguards public broadcasters' independence and requires transparency of media ownership and safeguards for editorial decisions in news and current affairs (Article 6), justification and proportionality for national measures liable to affect media pluralism or editorial independence (Article 21), and assessment of media concentrations that could significantly affect both (Article 22);

N. whereas Andrej Babiš's conflict of interest situation, which was noticed as far back as 2021, is present even now, during his second term as prime minister; whereas in its letter of 14 September 2026, the Commission stated that, after assessing information provided by the Czech national authorities, it had concluded that Andrej Babiš's situation constituted a conflict of interest within the meaning of Article 61(3) of the 2024 Financial Regulation[8], and that the measures currently being implemented – which had also been notified – were insufficient to address the conflict of interest in accordance with Article 61(1) of the regulation;

O. whereas Czechia's Act No 195/2026 on State Employees increases political influence over senior appointments and raises concerns about safeguards against arbitrary dismissals and the durability of

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8 Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2024 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (OJ L, 2024/2509, 26.9.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/2509/oj).

civil service reforms supported by Czechia's recovery and resilience plan;

P. whereas independent journalism, an impartial civil service and effective safeguards against conflicts of interest are essential to prevent abuses of power and ensure accountability for public spending, including EU funds, and whereas developments in Czechia raise concerns about the strength of these safeguards;

Q. whereas changes affecting public service media and civil service impartiality, together with the prime minister's unresolved conflict of interest, must be assessed cumulatively for their impact on democratic checks and balances, the rule of law and the EU's financial interests;

R. whereas some journalists have been denied access to government press conferences, raising concerns about discriminatory media accreditation practices and the need to ensure equal access for journalists irrespective of their outlet's editorial line;

S. whereas Czechia's proposed 'foreign agents' bill – originally drafted in March 2026 by lawmakers from the prime minister's governing coalition to require NGOs and individuals receiving foreign funding to register with the Ministry of Justice or face heavy fines – has been shelved in its initial form and has not been formally submitted to the Czech Parliament; whereas the prime minister has stated that the government has not abandoned plans to create a registry tracking foreign funding for NGOs; whereas the Minister for Justice has indicated that the government is preparing legislation on foreign funding of non-profit organisations engaged in political activities;

T. whereas on 15 July 2026, the Commission opened infringement proceedings against Czechia for failing to give notification of the complete transposition of the Anti-SLAPP Directive[9]; whereas the Czech authorities should ensure the effective implementation of that directive and extend its safeguards to purely domestic cases, ensuring that journalists, including freelance journalists, can seek the early dismissal of manifestly unfounded claims and recover their legal costs in the event of abusive proceedings;

U. whereas public criticism and questioning of the judiciary by politicians, including those holding positions within the executive branch, have become increasingly frequent, raising concerns that

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9 Directive (EU) 2024/1069 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 on protecting persons who engage in public participation from manifestly unfounded claims or abusive court proceedings ('Strategic lawsuits against public participation') (OJ L, 2024/1069, 16.4.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/1069/oj).

such statements may undermine the independence of the judiciary and public confidence in the justice system;

V. whereas recent changes to the Czech Code of Administrative Justice and further proposed amendments risk making it harder for citizens and civil society organisations to challenge decisions by public authorities and defend their rights before the courts, particularly for the most vulnerable, thereby weakening access to justice and democratic oversight of public authorities;

W. whereas the government has failed to make progress in strengthening conflict-of-interest rules, with the Commission's 2026 Rule of Law Report noting that no progress has been made in reinitiating the revision of the relevant legislation, including as regards beneficial ownership, and reiterating the Commission's recommendation to do so; whereas these persistent legislative gaps undermine the oversight of politicians' private business interests and raise concerns that private interests may take precedence over the public good;

X. whereas Czechia's ethics rules for politicians contain significant shortcomings, with insufficient safeguards against revolving doors, no binding code of conduct for members of parliament, a non-binding ethics code for government members and inadequate checks on asset declarations, leaving major gaps in the prevention of political corruption;

Y. whereas the procedure for lifting the immunity of high-level officials, including ministers and members of parliament under investigation, has created unjustified obstacles to criminal investigations, allowing public officials to evade accountability for serious allegations;

Z. whereas the lack of effective protection for whistleblowers and cuts to funding for independent support organisations raise serious concerns about the proper implementation of the Whistleblower Directive;

AA. whereas the increasing use of fast-track procedures and legislative riders undermines transparency and democratic scrutiny in the legislative process, limiting public consultation and allowing major institutional reforms to be adopted without proper public debate;

AB. whereas cuts to public funding and the political stigmatisation of civil society organisations risk weakening democratic checks and balances and undermining the organisations' ability to hold the government to account;

1. Calls on Czech legislators to ensure that national legislation fully aligns with the provisions of the EMFA and Article 2 TEU;

2. Recognises Czech Television’s democratic and cultural importance in providing independent journalism, supporting Czech cultural production and enabling informed public debate; notes the high level of public trust in Czech public service broadcasters;

3. Calls on the Czech Government to amend its legislative proposal making Czech Television and Czech Radio dependent on annual state budget decisions so that it fully complies with Article 5 EMFA, and to ensure that any reform provides adequate, sustainable and predictable resources to enable the broadcasters to fulfil their public service remit, with effective safeguards against political interference;

4. Calls on the Czech authorities to ensure that any future reform of public service media is designed and assessed *ex ante* to ensure full compliance with Article 5 EMFA, including safeguards for editorial and functional independence, the impartiality of the civil service, the protection of appointments and dismissals from undue political interference, transparent appointment and dismissal procedures, and adequate, sustainable and predictable funding;

5. Calls on the Czech authorities to ensure that conflicts of interest affecting the management of EU funds are effectively prevented and addressed in accordance with Article 61 of the Financial Regulation;

6. Calls on the Czech authorities to ensure that major legislative and institutional reforms undergo a transparent legislative process, proper parliamentary debate and a broad and meaningful public consultation stakeholders, and not to misuse fast-track procedures, and further calls on them to allow sufficient time for parliamentary scrutiny and meaningful consultation with both broadcasters, journalists, employees, media experts and civil society;

7. Condemns the decision by the ruling majority to push the government proposal through its first parliamentary reading in an unprecedented and illegitimate manner, at 4.36 a.m. on a Saturday, while denying dozens of members of parliament the opportunity to speak during the debate;

8. Considers it unacceptable that the drafting and submission of the government proposal lacked transparency and were not preceded by meaningful and serious consultation with the stakeholders involved, including media experts and independent supervisory bodies;

9. Calls on the Czech Government to consult Czech Television, Czech Radio, their staff and representative trade unions before any further advancement of the reform, and to publish an impact assessment covering the reform’s effects on employment, regional coverage and the broadcasters’ ability to fulfil their public service remit;

10. Calls on Czech authorities to ensure that the Council for Radio and Television Broadcasting – the existing oversight body – remains fully independent and free from any political influence from the government;

11. Calls on the Council for Radio and Television Broadcasting and on the respective oversight bodies of the public service broadcasters – the Czech TV Council and the Czech Radio Council – to systematically monitor compliance with the EMFA and release their findings publicly;

12. Expresses its deep concern that the proposed changes to public service media funding, the risks of politicisation arising from Act No 195/2026 on State Employees, the prime minister's unresolved conflict of interest, as identified by the Commission, and the proposal to weaken Czech national conflict-of-interest provisions together point to a systematic weakening of democratic checks and balances; calls on the Czech authorities to ensure effective safeguards against political interference in the civil service and full compliance with Article 61 of the Financial Regulation;

13. Calls on the Commission to actively monitor the legislative process in Czechia to assess whether any legislative changes submitted comply with the EMFA; calls on the Commission to ask the European Board for Media Services for an opinion, under Article 21(4) EMFA, on any regulatory or administrative measures adopted to implement the reform; further calls on the Commission to assess the cumulative impact of these developments on the rule of law and the EU's financial interests, and to use all available tools in the event of non-compliance, including the relevant enforcement and budgetary instruments where the applicable legal conditions are met;

14. Calls on the Czech authorities to publicly identify the independent bodies or mechanisms responsible, under Article 5(4) EMFA, for monitoring editorial and functional independence, management appointments and funding;

15. Calls the Commission to keep Parliament regularly informed about the steps taken and replies given by the Czech authorities;

16. Calls on the Czech Prime Minister to fully, verifiably and durably resolve his conflict of interest in line with Article 61 of the Financial Regulation;

17. Regrets the Czech Government's failure to strengthen conflict-of-interest rules and urges the Czech authorities to promptly resume the reform recommended in the Commission's 2026 Rule of Law Report, including on beneficial ownership, in order to close gaps in the oversight of politicians' private business interests; calls for binding codes of conduct for ministers and members of parliament, effective safeguards against revolving doors, and scrutiny of asset

declarations, in order to prevent political corruption; urges the Czech authorities to ensure that procedures for lifting parliamentary immunity do not obstruct criminal investigations or shield public officials from accountability;

18. Calls on the Czech authorities to ensure that national legislation and its implementation comply fully with EU law and uphold European standards on media freedom, public service media independence and civil service impartiality, including by adopting the domestic measures needed for the effective application of the EMFA and ensuring full transparency, through accessible and up-to-date information, regarding the beneficial ownership of all media outlets, as required by Article 6 EMFA, and any continuing economic relationships between media outlets and companies linked to members of the government;

19. Reaffirms that everyone has the right to access a pluralistic, independent and reliable information ecosystem, as an essential condition for democratic participation and informed public debate;

20. Condemns verbal attacks, smear campaigns and stigmatising rhetoric against journalists and civil society organisations by political leaders; calls on members of the Czech Government to refrain from such conduct and to respect, protect and support the role of independent journalism, which is essential in a democratic society;

21. Calls on the Czech authorities to ensure the full and effective implementation of the EU Anti-SLAPP Directive and extend its safeguards to purely domestic cases, stressing that journalists, including freelancers, should be able to ask courts to dismiss manifestly unfounded claims at an early stage and to recover their legal costs when proceedings are abusive;

22. Expresses its serious concern over the Czech Government’s practice of selectively denying certain media outlets access to government press conferences, thereby discriminating against journalists on the basis of their media affiliation and undermining media pluralism and press freedom; calls on the Czech authorities to ensure the full and effective implementation of the Whistleblower Directive;

23. Recognises the essential role of NGOs, journalists’ associations and civil society in monitoring media freedom in Czechia; calls on the Czech authorities to involve them meaningfully in any reform affecting the media sector; expresses its deep concern at cuts to public funding and the political stigmatisation of civil society organisations, and calls on the Czech authorities to safeguard civic space and ensure that independent organisations can continue to hold public authorities to account without political pressure;

24. Recommends that full use be made of all available instruments to address concerns regarding democracy, the rule of law and

fundamental rights, starting with preventive and cooperative tools within the framework of the Commission’s annual rule of law report, with a view to that the values enshrined in Article 2 TEU are upheld; stresses, however, that where concerns persist and are duly substantiated, the Commission should not hesitate to make use of all enforcement measures at its disposal to protect the EU budget and uphold the values enshrined in Article 2 TEU, including infringement procedures, and, in particular, expedited infringement procedures, applications for interim measures before the CJEU and actions regarding the non-implementation of CJEU judgments, as well as more comprehensive audits, the suspension of payments, and the systematic application of financial corrections and recovery procedures;

25. Calls on the Czech Government and Parliament to permanently abandon any legislative or administrative initiatives aimed at establishing a special registry, stigmatising labelling, or disproportionate reporting obligations for civil society organisations and individuals receiving foreign funding, in full compliance with the free movement of capital under Article 63 TFEU, the Charter, and the case-law of the CJEU (Case C-78/18); urges the Czech authorities instead to foster an enabling environment for civil society and ensure meaningful stakeholder consultation in the legislative process;

26. Notes that only 8 of the 14 recommendations contained in GRECO’s Fourth Round Evaluation Report have been implemented satisfactorily; calls for the swift and effective implementation of the other six recommendations, especially with regard to corruption in respect of members of parliament, prosecutors and judges;

27. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Government and Parliament of the Czech Republic, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the United Nations.