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Parliament report on conflicts of interest exposes flaws in system for managing EU funds

Andrej Babiš

Today, Members of the European Parliament will vote on the report into conflicts of interest in the case of the Czech Prime Minister, Andrej Babiš. The report draws upon a fact-finding mission to Prague in February by Members of the Budgetary Control Committee. The Commission has yet to publish the results of multiple audits into the conflicts of interest around the business dealings of Mr Babiš and EU funds. The vote will take place today at 17.45 with results expected at 21.30.

Viola von Cramon MEP, Greens/EFA shadow rapporteur on the resolution and Member of the Budgetary Control Committee, comments:

"This report lays bare the problems across the EU in stopping conflicts of interest from existing at the highest levels of government. The case of Andrej Babiš exposes the gaps in the payment system for EU funding: The shared management system has proven that there is a lack of transparency that cannot be tackled under the current provisions. We need revised rules that ensure full transparency about who the final beneficiaries of subsidies are.

"In the case of the Czech Republic, where the Prime Minister has direct influence on all levels of public administration and still is involved in the management of Agrofert, there is no independent information system. We need the tools to address these structural problems in the EU to ensure that EU funds are not siphoned off by oligarchs and those in power.

"In the meantime, however, a very serious conflict of interest remains with the head of an EU government who will shortly be negotiating the next long-term EU budget that could benefit him personally. The Council needs to clearly set out how it intends to protect against such conflicts of interest."

Mikuláš Peksa, Greens/EFA and Pirate Party MEP who attending the mission to Czechia and Member of the Budgetary Control Committee, comments:

"On the mission to Czechia we found that there is no effective mechanism to mitigate potential conflicts of interest, not for Mr Babiš or other officials. However, the problem is not just limited to the Czech Republic. We need to ensure that in all EU countries, EU money cannot be used by those in power to enrich themselves.

"With the Coronavirus recovery, there will be an unprecedented amount of EU funds that will be distributed

among the Member States in the coming years. We need to make sure that those who decide how this money will be distributed are acting in the common good and are free from conflicts of interest. We need to prevent the misuse of EU funds and ensure it gets to where it's needed, in order to ensure the recovery is successful."

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