



World Association
of News Publishers

To the attention of Mr Petr Fiala

Prime Minister
Úřad vlády České republiky
nábřeží Edvarda Beneše 128/4
Praha 1 - Malá Strana
118 01 Czech Republic

cc Mr Martin Baxa

Minister
Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic
Maltézské náměstí 1
118 00 Praha 1, Czech Republic

Dear Mr Prime Minister and Mr Minister of Culture,

I represent the World Association of News Publishers (WAN-IFRA), the global press organisation representing 18,000 publications worldwide. We believe that freedom of expression is a fundamental right and a touchstone for all our freedoms. And press freedom, enhanced by reliable, independent news publishing companies, is one of its fundamental pillars. Our association is tasked with helping the world's press develop a sustainable ecosystem for media freedom and works to improve the working conditions of journalists in the digital world.

With this letter, I want to draw your attention to an important issue that may have severe consequences for journalism in the Czech Republic and the capacity of local newspaper publishers to perform their crucial role in society.

We have been informed about the latest proposal of the government of the Czech Republic to increase the VAT rate for the sale of newspapers from the current 10 to 21 per cent. Where such measures are familiar in countries with authoritarian regimes, this would be an unprecedented backward step for the Czech Republic, a nation highly respected for its democratic and social values. WAN-IFRA has a long history of defending the industry against unwanted and unnecessary media regulation and making a strong case for the value of an unfettered press. Our experience has shown us that governments are intensely aware of and concerned by international criticism, particularly if they are seen as challenging the core values of democracy and human rights.



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With the hindsight of many years of experience, we can state without hesitation that the Czech government's initiative will worsen the publishers' situation and reduce the availability of the press as a source of quality professional information for Czech citizens. This is a *message that would resonate loudly among our international members and set a dramatic precedent* for other countries that might be tempted to follow your example.

Your initiative, should it be pursued, will open the door even wider to the devastating phenomenon of misinformation that our members are struggling to counter around the world. [This report from NewsGuard](#) illustrates the phenomenon in the context of the armed conflict between Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

We welcome the Czech government's decision to apply a zero VAT rate to the sale of books. However, newspapers and magazines are equally critical cultural assets and a means of spreading education. Professional news publishers also play an irreplaceable role in providing verified, trustworthy, high-quality news and information with the responsibility and integrity that the profession demands.

Therefore, we urge the Government of the Czech Republic to endorse a zero-rate VAT for newspapers and magazines in its upcoming budget proposition. As the minister responsible for the culture department, including the media, we trust that Mr Minister Baxa will support and enforce this

We appreciate the special attention you will give to our concerns.

Yours respectfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Vincent Peyregne'.

Vincent Peyregne
Chief Executive Officer
WAN-IFRA, the World Association of News Publishers

Paris, 24 May 2023

ABOUT WAN-IFRA

WAN-IFRA is the World Association of News Publishers. Its mission is to protect the rights of journalists and publishers around the world to operate independent media. WAN-IFRA provides its members with expertise and services to innovate and prosper in a digital world and perform their crucial role in society. With formal representative status at the United Nations, UNESCO and the Council of Europe, it derives its authority from its global network of leading news



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publishing companies and technology entrepreneurs and its legitimacy from its 60 national association members representing 18,000 publications in 120 countries. www.wan-ifra.org.

WAN-IFRA FR
69 Rue du Chevaleret
FR 75013 Paris

SIRET 784 451 981 00061
RNA W751031933
DUNS 734457377

WAN-IFRA
Rotfeder-Ring 11
DE 60327 Frankfurt am Main

CH-170.6.000.007-8
Handelsregister des Kantons Zug
USt-IdNr. DE 111 607 784