

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-004157/25
to the Commission
Tomáš Zdechovský (PPE)
(22 October 2025)**

Subject: Possible irregularities in the implementation of the project ‘Support for Schools in the Context of Digitalisation’ in Czechia

The project ‘*Podpora škol v kontextu digitalizace*’ (‘Support for Schools in the Context of Digitalisation’), implemented by the Czech National Pedagogical Institute (NPI) and financed by EU funds, has raised concerns about possible unequal access to the market, systemic disadvantage for EU-based suppliers, and the potential preferential treatment of third-country providers.

As a member of the internal market and Consumer Protection committee, I have been following developments in the European digital market for many years. While it is understandable that contracting authorities may seek economically advantageous solutions, the continued preference for non-EU technologies significantly undermines the competitiveness and strategic resilience of the European internal market and industrial base.

In this context:

1. What tools and safeguards does the Commission have in place to ensure equal and non-discriminatory access for EU-based companies to tenders funded by EU programmes, particularly in the field of education and digitalisation?
2. Will the Commission assess whether this project complies with EU public procurement, competition and funding rules, and, if necessary, refer the matter to the relevant investigative bodies, such as the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) or the European Public Prosecutor's Office?

Submitted: 22.10.2025

**Answer given by Mr Dombrovskis on behalf of the European Commission
(12 March 2026)**

1. Directive 2014/24/EU on Public Procurement establishes the framework to enable fair market practices, providing the Commission the power to monitor and enforce compliance among Member States. Through the EU Financial Regulation ⁽¹⁾, the Commission is also tasked with ensuring proper use of EU funds, which includes verifying the adherence to procurement standards to promote transparency and efficiency in spending. The Commission holds the competency to investigate irregularities in the funding process and, if relevant, refer cases to competent investigative bodies ⁽²⁾. The Joint Communication on strengthening EU economic security ⁽³⁾ encourages Member States and partners implementing national or EU budgets to prioritise support to EU businesses that reduce foreign dependencies in critical sectors.

2. The Commission’s main responsibility is to assess whether Member States have fulfilled the milestones and targets set in their Recovery and Resilience Plans (RRPs). The implementing body of the respective Member States is responsible for setting the rules for allocation of RRP grants at national level and for their implementation. The call for proposals ⁽⁴⁾ states that when awarding contracts funded by the subsidy, Czech Act No 134/2016 Coll. on public procurement must be complied with ⁽⁵⁾. Milestones and targets funded under the Recovery and Resilience Facility are closely monitored for compliance with public procurement, competition and funding rules. The Commission may also conduct audits of milestones and targets, including those associated with the implementation of the project in question, based on risk assessments. Should any irregularities emerge, the Commission will work with Czech authorities to address and rectify the issues. Where further examination is warranted, the Commission is prepared to engage relevant investigative bodies.

⁽¹⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/publications/eu-financial-regulation_en.

⁽²⁾ Investigative bodies such as the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) and the European Public Prosecutor’s Office (EPPO). Additionally, for high-value tenders, Regulation (EU) 2022/2560 on foreign subsidies provides a mechanism for the Commission to scrutinise and address instances where bidders might gain an unfair advantage due to foreign subsidies, thereby safeguarding the integrity and competitiveness of the internal market.

⁽³⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52025JC0977>.

⁽⁴⁾ Call for applications under which the ‘Support for Schools in the Context of Digitalisation’ project was awarded.

⁽⁵⁾ Additionally, Member States are required to ensure an effective internal control system, to regularly verify the proper use of the funds and the proper implementation of reforms and investments in accordance with the legislation for the protection of the financial interests of the EU.