

Foreign film productions in Czechia threatened by suspended film incentives

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The Czech Republic's film fund has temporarily suspended incentives to attract foreign film productions to the country. While ongoing international film productions shouldn't be threatened, some experts fear it could discourage other foreign productions interested in filming in the Czech Republic.

In January of this year, the State Cinematography Fund announced it would suspend incentives for foreign filmmakers until the end of March.

The fund has already exhausted the funds from the state budget subsidy for 2021 and it has no funds earmarked for this year, since the Czech Republic is still running on a provisional budget.

The director of the State Cinematography Fund Helena Bezděk Fraňková explained the situation to Czech Radio:

"The film crews that planned to start production in January, February or March and needed to apply for registration during those months, unfortunately cannot submit their request at the moment.

"If they cannot postpone the shooting, it simply won't happen. However, the production and filming of projects that registered for incentives last year obviously continues."

Among the international productions that managed to register new projects before the end of the year is the sequel to the high-budget Netflix film Extraction starring Australian actor Chris Hemsworth.

Similarly, the American studio Lionsgate continues with the filming of its new TV series Dangerous Liaisons, based on the famous novel of the same name.

The series is produced by the company Czech Anglo Productions, which was involved for instance in the Oscar-winning film JoJo Rabbit.

Its executive producer Václav Mottl says other projects the company had in the pipeline will likely be called off due to the current uncertainty surrounding the film incentives:

“We had about three projects lined up with England and America, specifically with Lionsgate. We're going to have to interrupt those negotiations now because if we can't guarantee registrations, we can't guarantee that they'll get incentives and therefore they will go somewhere else.”

According to Mottl, foreign productions cannot wait for the situation to change, since they rely on contracted actors and creative teams and therefore they are forced to move on elsewhere.

He also says the state's incentives budget of CZK 800 million envisaged for this year won't be sufficient and will have to be raised in order to prevent major international productions from leaving the country.

Helena Bezděk Fraňková of the State Cinematography Fund agrees with that:

“When we were drawing up the budget for 2022 in August last year, we already made it clear that it wouldn't be sufficient. From 2019, the demand for filming in the Czech Republic has been much higher because of platforms such as Amazon or Netflix, which have started to produce their own content.”

The generous programme of film incentives brought around CZK 7.5 billion to the Czech Republic last year, compared to CZK 5 billion in the previous year, which was negatively affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. So far the best year was 2019, which saw CZK 9 billion in foreign investments flowing into the country.

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