

SOCIAL MEDIA & TEXT SIMILARITY ANALYSIS

Disinformation Outlets in Czech Republic Criticize the Pirate Party and TOP-09 Over Migration; One Outlet Reposts Czech Sputnik Content with False Attribution

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: We examined over 3,370 posts related to migration that were published between 6 August and 9 September 2021 by 15 Facebook accounts associated with disinformation outlets active in the Czech information space. The Pirate Party and TOP-09 were subject to the most criticism about their stances on migration by these disinformation outlets. The Pirate Party in particular was denigrated for being overly welcoming toward immigrants and the Roma community. Coverage of Prime Minister Andrej Babiš and his ANO Party was mixed—some posts by disinformation outlets discussed the party's immigration platform positively, while others claimed that neither the prime minister nor the ANO Party had done enough to stem migration. Text similarity analysis identified over 40 identical pairs of Facebook posts (80+ individual posts) out of 3,100. The majority of these identical pairs were from AC24 reposting content from *Czech Sputnik*. In addition to reposting *Czech Sputnik* content without clear attribution, AC24 in some instances also falsely claimed that articles were reposted from reputable outlets like the *Washington Post*, or from other outlets like the *Daily Mail*.

REPORT

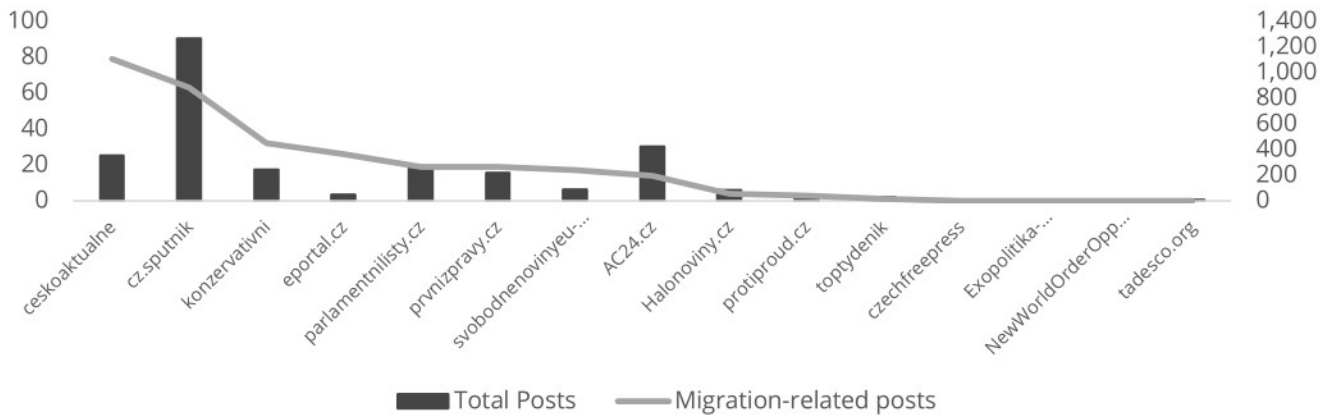
Social Media Analysis

We analyzed the Facebook pages for 15 news outlets active in the Czech information space.¹ Between 6 August and 9 September 2021, the most active Facebook pages were cz.sputnik (1,268 posts), AC24.cz (425 posts), and ceskoaktualne (354 posts). The Facebook pages with the highest followership were cz.sputnik (127,000 followers), AC24.cz (81,000 followers), and parlamentnilisty.cz (51,000 followers). Eleven of the Facebook pages published migration-related content—277 Facebook posts in total. The pages with the most migration posts included ceskoaktualne (79, 22% of all posts), cz.sputnik (63, 5% of all posts), konzervativninoviny.cz (32, 13% of all posts), and eportal.cz (23, 53% of all posts).

Of the 15 pages analyzed, Eportal.cz appeared to have the largest focus on migration (53% of its posts during the reporting period were about migration), and it tended to include Islamophobic rhetoric in its posts. Although only publishing 19 migration-related posts, parlamentnilisty.cz received the most comments of all the pages, at 809. Many of these comments expressed ardent anti-immigration views, suggesting that parlamentnilisty.cz has an engaged audience on Facebook.

The predominant migration narratives identified were: 1) casting ongoing migrant crises in Afghanistan, Belarus, Poland, and Lithuania as a threat to the Czech Republic; 2) criticizing Czech politicians and parties that support migration—such as the Pirate Party and TOP-90; and 3) supporting other European politicians' anti-immigration stances.

Migration-Related Posts Compared to Total Posts



Ongoing Migrant Crises Pose Threat to Czech Republic

Approximately 60 posts mentioned either Afghan migrants or refugees. Many posts expressed concern that terrorists and criminals would be able to move throughout Europe under the guise of migration.² Posts forewarned of a wave of refugees, with articles claiming of imminent “Afghan chaos,” and that “the list {of migrants} is still growing.”³ Posts also drew parallels to the 2015 Syrian refugee crisis.⁴

Thirty-five posts included coverage of Belarus sending migrants to neighboring countries, and the respective responses from Poland and Lithuania.⁵ Posts tended to cast the situation as threatening to the Czech Republic, using phrases such as “flooded with immigrants” and “rough welcome.”⁶ The outlet eportal.cz took an especially fear-mongering tone, alleging: “If the masses of refugees manage to break the Polish border, we can quickly wait for them on our territory.”⁷



Facebook post from svobodnenoviny.eu warning of a wave of refugees. Translated from Czech.

Criticism of Czech Politicians’ Lax Stance on Migration

Both the Pirate Party and TOP-09 received criticism on their immigration stance—approximately 25 posts. The Pirate Party was depicted as overly welcoming to migrants, with posts warning that it would use Czech tax dollars on migrants.⁸ One ceskoaktualne.cz article deployed antisemitic tropes, claiming that the Pirate Party wanted to “transform the world into a “global village” without nations and states, together with Soros non-profits, by accepting migrants.”⁹ One parlamentnilisty.cz

post claimed that "All Roma vote for the Pirates."¹⁰ One comment to this post claimed the Pirate's leader Ivan Bartoš would "move migrants into your apartment."¹¹

TOP-09 chairperson Pekarová Adamová received negative coverage of her recent statement on wanting to accept "proven refugees."¹² One post claimed that Adamová wanted to "open the gates" for refugees.¹³ Parlamentnilisty.cz also provided negative coverage of Adamová's statement that SPD chairman Tomio Okamura, "the descendant of a migrant, is against migration."¹⁴ As we note below, the SPD Party appeared to receive favorable coverage from Parlamentnilisty.cz



Facebook post from parlamentnilisty.cz criticizing the Pirates party's stance on migration. Translated from Czech.

Coverage of ANO and Prime Minister Babiš was mixed. While posts covered Babiš' anti-immigration campaign promises, others claimed that the ANO Party had not done enough to stem migration.¹⁵

Support for Other European Politicians' Tough Stance on Migration

Outlets reported on responses from other European countries regarding immigration. Over 20 posts provided positive coverage of Hungary's stance—most recently Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's refusal to accept any Afghan migrants.¹⁶ An article from protiproud.cz lamented that the Czech Republic did not have its own Orbán yet, i.e., a leader who would take a hard line on immigration vis-a-vis the EU.¹⁷ Other posts congratulated Greece on building a wall on its Turkish border, and shared statements from Italian and Austrian politicians on their opposition to migration.¹⁸

Similarly, 10 posts criticized German Chancellor Merkel and her stance on immigration.

Ceskoaktualne.cz provided especially provocative statements about Merkel, such as "Germany is becoming an Islamic country and Germans will have to get used to it."¹⁹



Facebook post from ceskoaktualne.cz lauding Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's stance on migration. Translated from Czech.

Parlamentnilisty.cz, Cz.sputnik Provide Coverage of SPD and Its "Zero Tolerance" for Immigration

Only two of the 15 accounts provided coverage of the SPD Party—parlamentnilisty.cz and cz.sputnik— (22 and 14 posts, respectively)—which claims a “zero tolerance” for immigration. Both outlets reported sound bites from SPD chairman Okamura’s campaign: “we will sink the Pirates,” “Babiš bowed his head in front of Brussels, but SPD will not kneel” and “If Afghans attack, murder or rape someone in our country, Prime Minister Babiš will bear full responsibility.”²⁰ Additionally, cz.sputnik appears to have interviewed Okamura on 15 August.²¹



Facebook post from parlamentnilisty.cz shares statements from SPD Chairman Tomio Okamura

Misleading Content

We found instances of misleading content across the 15 outlets. Parlamentnilisty.cz quoted aggregate sexual assault stats from Sweden, next to the phrase “gangs of migrants”—falsely implying that immigrants were responsible.²² Svobodnenoviny.eu published the headline “Afghan criminals sneak back into Europe aboard military aircraft” along with a highly-circulated image of 640 Afghan civilians being evacuated from Kabul in an U.S. C-17 plane.²³ On 6 August, Ceskoaktualne.cz posted an article claiming that a migrant attempted to kidnap an 11-year-old child.²⁴ The accompanying video—dated 6 August 2020—contains no footage of a kidnapping, just a man being attacked. This is likely an example of missing context, where an image is taken out of context to advance a narrative.



Example of misleading content from svobodnenoviny.eu. Translated from Czech.

Text Similarity Analysis

Between 6 August and 9 September, 15 disinformation outlets published 3,100 total Facebook posts. We assessed these posts for text similarity to understand if these outlets publish similar articles or if they republish identical articles, and if so, whether they obfuscate the article’s original source. Among these posts, we observed 41 pairs of identical or nearly identical posts (82 individual posts). These pairs were mostly republished articles—news stories from one outlet reposted by another.

The outlet AC24.cz most frequently reposted stories from cz.sputnik—26 of the 41 identified pairs. Analyzing the articles linked via Facebook posts, AC24 did not appear to ever directly cite cz.sputnik, only linking to cz.sputnik in the first line of the article. Moreover, we observed at least six instances where AC24 reposted an article from cz.sputnik and then claimed the source of the story was from another outlet, such as *The Washington Post* or *Daily Mail*.²⁵ Such activity appears to obfuscate how AC24.cz is sharing content from Russian state-funded media.



Example of AC24.cz republishing an article from cz.sputnik. Translated from Czech

AC24.cz also reposted articles from prvnizpravy.cz, but directly cited this source at the bottom of each article—unlike the articles it reposted from cz.sputnik. This observation, omitting the direct linkage, further suggests that AC24.cz intended to hide that a subset of its articles was from cz.sputnik. Additionally, AC24.cz reposted one article from prvnizpravy.cz, which in turn appeared to be taken from *Journalistenwatch*, a far-right German blog that shares Islamophobic and antisemitic content.²⁶ The shared article made claims about Syrian migrants causing unrest in France and was an example of anti-immigration content being shared from a German-language outlet to a Czech-language outlet.

We also observed the outlet ceskoaktualne reposted an article from prvnizpravy.cz. that was originally published by the Russian-language edition of the *Eurasia Daily* (eadaily.com).²⁷ This was an example of anti-immigration content being shared from a Russian-language outlet to a Czech-language outlet.

ANALYST COMMENT: None

References

1

News Outlet	Facebook Channel	Facebook likes (as of 15 Sept 21)	Facebook followers (as of 15 Sept 21)
ac24.cz	AC24.cz	85K	81K
ceskobezcenzury.cz	ceskoaktualne	30K	29K
cz.sputniknews.com	cz.sputnik	61K	127K
czechfreepress.cz	czechfreepress	11K	11K
euportal.cz	eportal.cz	7K	7K
exopolitika.cz	Exopolitika-377359218568	1K	1K
halonoviny.cz	Halonoviny.cz	n/a	1K
konzervativninoviny.cz	konzervativni	5K	5K
nwoo.org	NewWorldOrderOppositionOrganization	14K	14K
parlamentnilisty.cz	parlamentnilisty.cz	50K	51K
protiproud.cz	protiproud.cz	19K	21K
prvnizpravy.cz	prvnizpravy.cz	3K	3K
svobodnenoviny.eu	svobodnenovinyeu-240233692807752	18K	18K
tadesco.org	tadesco.org	n/a	5.4K
tydenikobcanskepravo.cz	toptydenik	<1K	<1K

² <https://www.facebook.com/1388402761260781/posts/3799094536858246#channels;>

<https://www.facebook.com/135144949863739/posts/4528047660573424#channels;>

<https://www.facebook.com/240233692807752/posts/1974258149405289#channels>

<https://www.facebook.com/139079856198676/posts/3852481051525186#channels>

<https://www.facebook.com/139079856198676/posts/3852481051525186#channels>

<https://www.facebook.com/139079856198676/posts/3852481051525186#channel>

³ <https://www.facebook.com/1609110509368821/posts/2982334068713118#channels;>

<https://www.facebook.com/139079856198676/posts/3852481051525186#channels;>

<https://www.facebook.com/340208672684617/posts/4346220818750029#channels;>

<https://www.facebook.com/240233692807752/posts/1969797269851377#channels;>

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=3036486749919877#channels;>

<https://www.facebook.com/143886599126215/posts/1929789043869286#channels;>

<https://www.facebook.com/1609110509368821/posts/3002819113331280#channels>

⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/1609110509368821/posts/3001335336812991#channels;>

<https://www.facebook.com/240233692807752/posts/1969797269851377#channels>

⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=827763817939274#channels;>

<https://www.facebook.com/340208672684617/posts/4355242044514573#channels;>

<https://www.facebook.com/340208672684617/posts/4345422265496551#channels>

⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/1609110509368821/posts/2979344392345419#channels;>

<https://facebook.com/1609110509368821/posts/2982351978711327#channels>

⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1301049083684555#channels>

⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/135144949863739/posts/4488733401171517#channels;>

<https://www.facebook.com/135144949863739/posts/4537029686341888#channels;>

<https://www.facebook.com/297969846922939/posts/4247599151959969#channels>

⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/1609110509368821/posts/2986643311615527#channels;>

<https://ceskobezcenzury.cz/2021/08/zpravy-k-zamysleni/uz-jsou-tady-honicka-s-migranty-v-praze-pekaro-va-coby-prazska->

jednicka-spolu-jim-chce-otevrit-brany-vsichni-jsou-to-pirati-slevove-balicky-i-akcni-ceny-pro-invazi-pokracujici-covidismus-jako/

¹⁰ https://www.facebook.com/parlamentnilisty.cz/posts/4559702777407912#channels_comment_4560127980698725

¹¹ https://www.facebook.com/4559702777407912#channels_comment_4561826040528919

¹² <https://www.facebook.com/176546515755264/posts/4311792712230603#channels>

<https://www.facebook.com/340208672684617/posts/4348352535203524#channels>

¹³ <https://www.facebook.com/1609110509368821/posts/2986643311615527#channels>

¹⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/135144949863739/posts/4531778073533716#channels>

¹⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/135144949863739/posts/4552610078117182#channels;>

<https://www.facebook.com/340208672684617/posts/4413585182013592#channels;>

<https://www.facebook.com/1609110509368821/posts/2994631804150011#channels>

¹⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/340208672684617/posts/4413585182013592#channels;>

<https://www.facebook.com/1388402761260781/posts/3822113997889633#channels;>

<https://www.facebook.com/240233692807752/posts/1969795673184870#channels>

¹⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/143886599126215/posts/1929789043869286#channels>

¹⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/1388402761260781/posts/3787746571326376#channels;>

<https://www.facebook.com/1609110509368821/posts/2997558480524010#channels;>

<https://www.facebook.com/1609110509368821/posts/2996046604008531#channels>

¹⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/1609110509368821/posts/2988275454785646#channels>

²⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/340208672684617/posts/4339754232730021#channels;>

<https://www.facebook.com/135144949863739/posts/4571596976218492#channels;>

<https://www.facebook.com/340208672684617/posts/4436726466366130#channels;>

<https://www.facebook.com/135144949863739/posts/4533889609989229#channels>

²¹ <https://www.facebook.com/340208672684617/posts/4360204570684987#channels>

²² https://www.facebook.com/parlamentnilisty.cz/posts/4552197454825111#channels_comment_4558883757489814

²³ <https://www.facebook.com/240233692807752/posts/1974258149405289#channels>

²⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/1609110509368821/posts/2978514269095098#channels>

²⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/176546515755264/posts/4383722731704267#channels;>

[https://www.ac24.cz/zpravy-ze-sveta/biden-naridil-odtajneni-dokumentu-o-teroristickem-utoku-z-11-zari/;](https://www.ac24.cz/zpravy-ze-sveta/biden-naridil-odtajneni-dokumentu-o-teroristickem-utoku-z-11-zari/)

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<https://cz.sputniknews.com/20210904/biden-naridil-odtajneni-dokumentu-o-teroristickem-utoku-z-11-zari-15716535.html>

²⁶ [https://www.ac24.cz/zpravy-ze-sveta/multikultura-na-jihu-francie-belgicti-rekreanti-zdevastovali-kemp/;](https://www.ac24.cz/zpravy-ze-sveta/multikultura-na-jihu-francie-belgicti-rekreanti-zdevastovali-kemp/)

[https://www.prvnizpravy.cz/zpravy/zpravy/multikultura-na-jihu-francie-belgicti-rekreanti-zdevastovali-kemp/;](https://www.prvnizpravy.cz/zpravy/zpravy/multikultura-na-jihu-francie-belgicti-rekreanti-zdevastovali-kemp/)

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²⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/1609110509368821/posts/3002816329998225#channels;>

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