

Media Crisis

Two ways of solving media crisis in the Czech Statistical Office

Two last crises in CZSO

- media crisis over last Census in 2001
- media crisis around the damaging floods in August 2002



Crisis no. 1: Census 2001 and its Problems

- we could not influence **all** of the problems, but we could at least eliminate or moderate **some** of them
- we have been trying - ex post unfortunately - to define the basic problems accompanying the census and to formulate everything we had underestimated

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1) Public view of state activities

- people began to protect their private lives more
- the State not seen as having the same authority as before
- understanding democracy as a possibility to do what they want

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2) Dealing with media

- we were thinking naively that everybody (including the politicians and journalists) would understand the importance and the necessity of the census!!! → low budget
- we did not inform in advance about the purpose of the results
- we did not publish the contents of the census forms in advance
- we did not explain the reasons for using birth number



Dealing with media - cont.

- good reputation - the publicity of the State Office is not a single matter and it takes a lot of time to build a good reputation – not only few months before the “big bang”.
- the well-known journalist rule; “good news is no news”
- CZSO strategy was = “better not to be seen than receive bad media coverage”



Crisis no. 2: Floods



- the 13th of August 2002, Karlín the most affected part of Prague
- official warning: "water level maximum 70 cm"
- result: "4 m"

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Results ...

- 2/3 flooded because CZSO is just two floors
- Information Services, Library, Internet, Bookshop, Press office etc. ceased to exist at that moment
- blocked the possibility to publish any information



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... two main needs

- try to renovate all activities
- find working places for people

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"Common functionary" again



- dissemination of News Releases restored after 10 days
- all connection through mobile phones
- Karlin - forbidden zone
- now only "at one's own risk"

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Next 14 days ...

- news and press releases handed over on diskette
- its adjustment proceeds every time in different places
- internet begins to work, but slowly



Both crises comparison

- In census crisis we did not get under control
because
- we kept the strategy "better not to be seen than receive bad media coverage"
- In flood crisis we got under control - general public did not recognize any problems
but
- unfortunately they knew little about the level of damage

