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

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
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, Karlin the most affected part of Prague
- official warning: “water level maximum 70 cm”
- result: “4 m”

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
... two main needs

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

“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”
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