

Other Central Administrative Authorities in the Crisis Management System

Kateřina GÖGHOVÁ¹, Alena OULEHLOVÁ²

¹Faculty of Military Leadership, University of Defence, Kounicova 65, 625 00, Brno, The Czech Republic

²Faculty of Military Leadership, University of Defence, Kounicova 65, 625 00, Brno, The Czech Republic

Correspondence: katerina.goghova@unob.cz

Abstract

Other central administrative authorities are part of the crisis management authorities with national competence in the Czech Republic and are subjects of the state security system. Their activities are focused on specialized sections of the state administration, and they have a certain degree of independence, which is why in some cases they are not associated with tasks and activities in the field of crisis management. Other central administrative authorities must also fulfil the requirements of normative legal acts and be able to respond to differentiated risks. Against this background, the article examines the extent to which the requirements of the Crisis Management Act are being fulfilled. Using an analysis of interviews and written inquiries with their representatives, a comparison and evaluation of their involvement in crisis management is made. The results show that the requirements of the Crisis Management Act are fulfilled in each of the other central administrative authorities. However, their level of details is differentiated depending on the scope of their activities.

KEY WORDS: *crisis management; other central administrative authorities; exercises; crisis management units; crisis preparedness; crisis plan; crisis management authorities.*

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1. Introduction

The Act on Crisis Management [1] defines categories of crisis management authorities (the government, ministries and other central administrative authorities, the Czech National Bank, regional authorities, and other authorities with competence in the territory of the region, authorities of municipalities with extended competence and municipal authorities). All these authorities are part of the state security system and play a key role in the performance of national public administration and their interdependence and cooperation is crucial. There are established 17 other central administrative authorities with the national competence in the Czech Republic. In the public administration system, they have the same status as the ministries. This category of other central administrative authorities is the least mapped and published group of crisis management authorities, although they must fulfill the requirements of normative legal acts [1], [2] and be ready and able to respond to differentiated risks.

Based on the above, the article examines the scope of fulfilling activities related to ensuring preparedness and dealing with non-military crisis situations according to the requirements of the Crisis Management Act [1]. The aim of this article is to fill in a gap in information about other central administrative authorities in national crisis management contexts and it provides a division of other central administrative authorities according to their competences in relation to crisis management into two categories. The first part of the article defines the basic aspects of the embedding of other central administrative authorities within the public administration and the crisis management system of the Czech Republic. The main practical part of the article is concerned with the results of the survey itself and deals with the extent to which requirements of the Act on Crisis Management [1] are met for each of the other central administrative authorities.

2. Methodology and Limitations

Due to the issue under research, qualitative research was carried out based on semi-structured interviews or written questionnaires. The semi-structured interview was chosen to allow more flexibility in the conversation. For the semi-structured interviews, priority has been given to officials responsible for crisis management in the relevant other central administrative authority. Due to the low interest of the representatives of other central administrative authorities to answer during the interview, written questionnaires were also used, either on the official emails of the authority or in accordance with Act No. 106/1999 Coll., on free access to information [3]. The reason for the chosen data collection was the fact that information on the researched issue is not freely available on the official websites of other central administrative authorities. Based on the data collection, a comparison was made focusing on the fulfilment of the tasks established by the Act on Crisis Management [1], involvement in exercises of crisis management bodies and crisis management. Out of a total of 17 other central administrative authorities, 2 agencies were not included in the survey, namely the Digital and Information Agency, due to its recent establishment at the beginning of 2023, and the Industrial Property Office, which did not provide any information.

3. The anchoring of other central administrative authorities in the public administration

Other central administrative authorities act as executors of the national state administration with a given sub-jurisdiction. Their list is set out in the Competence Act [4] and the structure and difference between ministries and other central administrative authorities is illustrated in Figure 1.

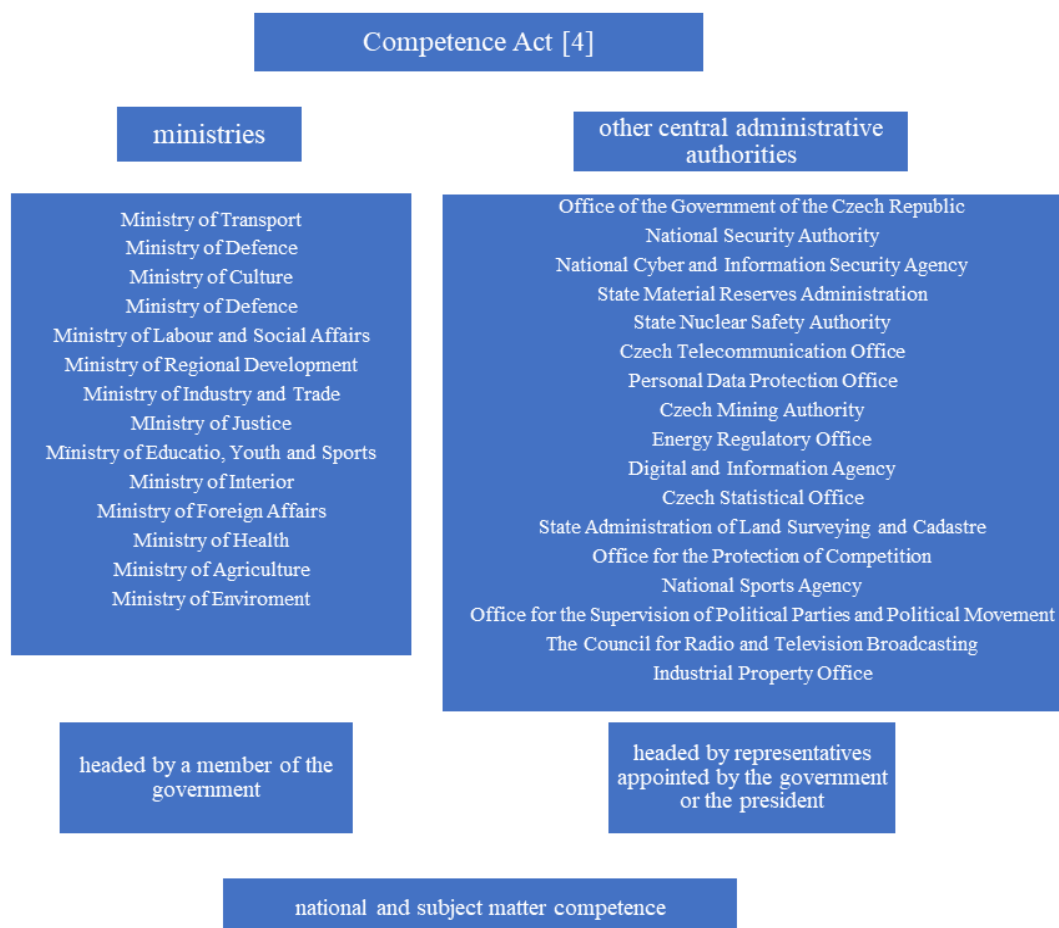


Fig.1. List of the ministries and other central administrative authorities and their differences [4]

The scope of activities of other central administrative authorities, which are a fixed organizational unit of the state besides the ministries, is defined by their substantive competence and is aimed at specialized sections of state administration [5]. Oulehlová describes [6] that their specific competence gives them a degree of independence that is not present in some other central administrative authorities when carrying out certain activities. Those activities falling within their competence are determined by only by law and do not accept any other instructions from any other authority; they are referred to as 'regulators' within their competence. Other central administrative authorities also have their national security obligations enshrined in normative legal acts. The article focuses on the application of the Crisis Management Act [1].

4. Survey results

In the first part of the survey, based on the comparison, other central administrative authorities in relation to crisis management or ensuring state security can be divided into two categories. This classification also indicates that the first category is more proactive in crisis preparedness activities, as it is related to their scope of activities. The first category of other central administrative authorities has a direct link to crisis management or security in one or more of its relevant competences defined by the founding normative legal act (e.g. State Material Reserves Administration, National Cyber and Information Security Agency, State Nuclear Safety Authority). The second category is without such a direct link (e.g. National Sports Agency, Office for the Protection of Competition, Czech Statistical Office, State Administration of Land Surveying and Cadastre). The whole schema of division is shown in Figure 2.

1. category	2. category
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Office of the Government of the Czech Republic• National Security Authority• National Cyber and Information Security Agency• State Material Reserves Administration• State Nuclear Safety Authority• Czech Telecommunication Office• Personal Data Protection Office• Czech Mining Authority• Energy Regulatory Office• Digital and Information Agency (not included in survey)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Czech Statistical Office• State Administration of Land Surveying and Cadastre• Office for the Protection of Competition• National Sports Agency• Office for the Supervision of Political Parties and Political Movement• The Council for Radio and Television Broadcasting• Industrial Property Office (not included in survey)

Fig.2. Categorization of other central administrative authorities [own]

4.1. Crisis management units

Other central administrative authorities are obligated by law [1] to establish a crisis management unit to ensure and implement activities related to the assurance of preparedness and management of crisis. The survey shows that the other central administrative authorities listed in the first category mostly have an independently functioning crisis management unit - the security/crisis management department headed by the Security Director. Their crisis management units have more personnel, with more table positions are created. In the second category, this function is usually held only by one personnel, most commonly represented by the Security Director, who is also responsible for all, setting up and securing the crisis staff within the framework of crisis preparedness. In the second category of other central administrative authorities, there were problems with a lack of staff dedicated to crisis management issues. The work of the crisis management unit is carried out mainly by a single staff member, who combines functions from other areas. In the case of security, this includes personnel, administration, physical, information and communication systems, health and safety at work, fire safety and cryptographic protection. The departments thus comprehensively cover the security issues of the other central administrative authorities concerned. The accumulation of tasks may result in reduced crisis preparedness of the office concerned. These departments also often have to deal with a relatively high fluctuation of staff in these positions.

4.2. Crisis management plans

The necessary planning documentation of other central administrative authorities includes the preparation of a crisis plan, which has clearly defined structure and contains a summary of crisis measures and procedures for dealing with crisis situations [1]. Oulehlová [6] noted that also other central administrative authorities must be prepared for both situations, where due to their own deployment of their subordinate units and departments may be threatened by any danger (e.g. flood, leakage of dangerous chemical substances, terrorist attack) or a situation that belongs to their area of responsibility (e.g. gas supply disruption, cyber-attacks). The survey did not provide relevant information on the existence of a crisis plan for all other central administrative authorities interviewed, but it can be assumed that all of them have fulfilled this obligation. According to Government Regulation No. 462/2000 Coll. [7], the crisis plan is updated regularly in four-year cycles in a normal situation. Only the National Cyber and Information Security Office mentioned a regular 4-yearly update, the other offices did not comment on this issue at all and 3 authorities mentioned more frequent updates, which appears to be very improbable, as these were belonging to the 2. category.

As Göghová [8] mentioned, other central administrative authorities are also responsible (co-responsible) for drafting type plans based on the Threat Analysis [9], which identifies threats with an unacceptable risk to the Czech Republic. In view of the dynamically changing security situation and the effects of climate change in connection with the transformation of threats of a natural nature on the territory of the Czech Republic, an update of the Threat Analysis is now being carried out.

Table 1

Responsibility of Other Central Administrative Authorities for Type Plans [own]

<i>Other Central Administrative Authorities</i>	<i>Type plan</i>
Office of the Government of the Czech Republic	X
National Security Authority	Information security breach of critical information infrastructure
Czech Telecommunication Office	Disruption of the functionality of major electronic communications systems
Personal Data Protection Office	X
Industrial Property Office	X
Czech Statistical Office	X
State Administration of Land Surveying and Cadastre	X
Czech Mining Authority	X
Energy Regulatory Office	X
Office for the Protection of Competition	X
National Sports Agency	X
Digital and Information Agency	X
Office for the Supervision of Political Parties and Political Movement	X
The Council for Radio and Television Broadcasting	X
State Material Reserve Administration	Large-scale disruption of oil and petroleum products supply
State Nuclear Safety Authority	Radiation accident Leakage of a hazardous chemical from a stationary installation
National Cyber and Information Security Agency	X

It is clear from Table 1 that this could at least co-responsibly affect other central administrative authorities than just 4 out of a total of 17 authorities.

4.3. Other requirements resulting from the Crisis Management Act

The paper further examined the extent of compliance with the Emergency Management Act under Section 9. The authorities responded very diversely to the question of what tasks an institution performs within the crisis management system. Crisis management of other central administrative authorities is primarily focused on the organizational and functional support of the authorities' activities in the event of crisis situations. Offices that were classified in Category 1 answered the question in more depth and in the context of their specific subject matter competence. Most authorities claimed that their security departments ensure the development of security and workplace protection plans as part of crisis preparedness, together with the performance of inspections of the premises. The National Cyber and Information Security Agency, for example, has specific responsibilities for analyzing potential cyber security threats, proactively searching for cyber security incidents and then disseminating information to critical infrastructure entities as part of crisis management. The National Cyber and Information Security Agency has the power to declare a cyber emergency, which is communicated to the general public and through the public media. The Czech Telecommunication Office is another office that fulfils the duties set out in the Crisis Management Act [1] within its scope. For example, its separate security department may issue general authorizations, thereby regulating the conditions relating to the protection of personal data for certain sectors of electronic communications, the use of electronic communications networks and services in crisis situations, etc. Two agencies, the State Nuclear Safety Authority and the State Material Reserve Administration, play an important role, as their subject-matter is directly related to dealing with emergencies. Both of them are in charge of 2 type of plans and thus have a number of other sub-tasks, for example, the State Nuclear Safety Authority has to prepare the National Radiation Emergency Plan in case of a radiation emergency abroad, on the other hand, the State Material Reserve Administration, as the central

authority in the field of economic measures for emergency situations and state material reserves, submits a proposal for declaring a state of oil emergency in case of a crisis situation related to oil shortage.

Authorities classified as Category 2 fulfil their duties as defined in the Crisis Management Act [1] marginally. Most of the authorities included in the List have a consultative, educational and monitoring function. The Czech Statistical Office, for example, focuses on the production and distribution of quality, valid and complete statistical data, which is then used by government authorities in preparation for potential security risks and crisis situations. A similar function is performed by the National Sports Agency and the Office for the Protection of Competition, which also collect data in the field of crisis management and provide it on request to ministries and other authorities involved in crisis management.

The questionnaire survey revealed that out of a total of 17 other central administrative authorities, 5 of them actively participate in national and international exercises on a regular basis, namely, State Material Reserve Administration, State Nuclear Safety Authority, National Cyber and Information Security Agency, Office of the Government of the Czech Republic, National Security Authority. The above-mentioned authorities regularly receive invitations to the international CMX exercise, which is organized by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Very occasionally, national and international exercises are attended by Czech Telecommunication Office and Energy Regulatory Office. At the national level, regularly exercise through the Zone and Sources exercises only State Material Reserve Administration, State Nuclear Safety Authority and Office of the Government of the Czech Republic. According to the analysis, other central administrative authorities do not participate in the exercise at all thereby also not fulfilling the requirements of the Crisis Management Act [1].

5. Conclusion

Other central administrative authorities are classified as elements of the executive power and are also crisis management authorities. Normative legal acts [1], [2] show that their role is in all phases of crisis management, increasing in the case of a large-scale crisis situation and requiring a coordinated approach of management from the national level. An example is the COVID-19 disease pandemic, which demonstrated the necessity of increasing crisis preparedness in all sectors of society, and at the same time was the first crisis situation for some other central administrative authorities to address.

The article helped to fill a gap in information about other central administrative authorities in national crisis management contexts. The survey provided and also confirmed the necessary division of other central administrative authorities according to their competences in relation to crisis management into two categories, which was made at the beginning of the research. The primary difference was seen in the degree of involvement of the authorities in crisis management issues, which, however, is mainly determined by their subject matter competence. However, the same legal responsibilities also applied to the authorities under category 2, and their implementation should play a key role. The article also identified the problems that are more frequent in the second category of other central administrative authorities and which, in a way, also result from their more reduced subject-matter competence in relation to crisis management.

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