

New challenges in crisis communication
Results of societal survey in the Czech Republic

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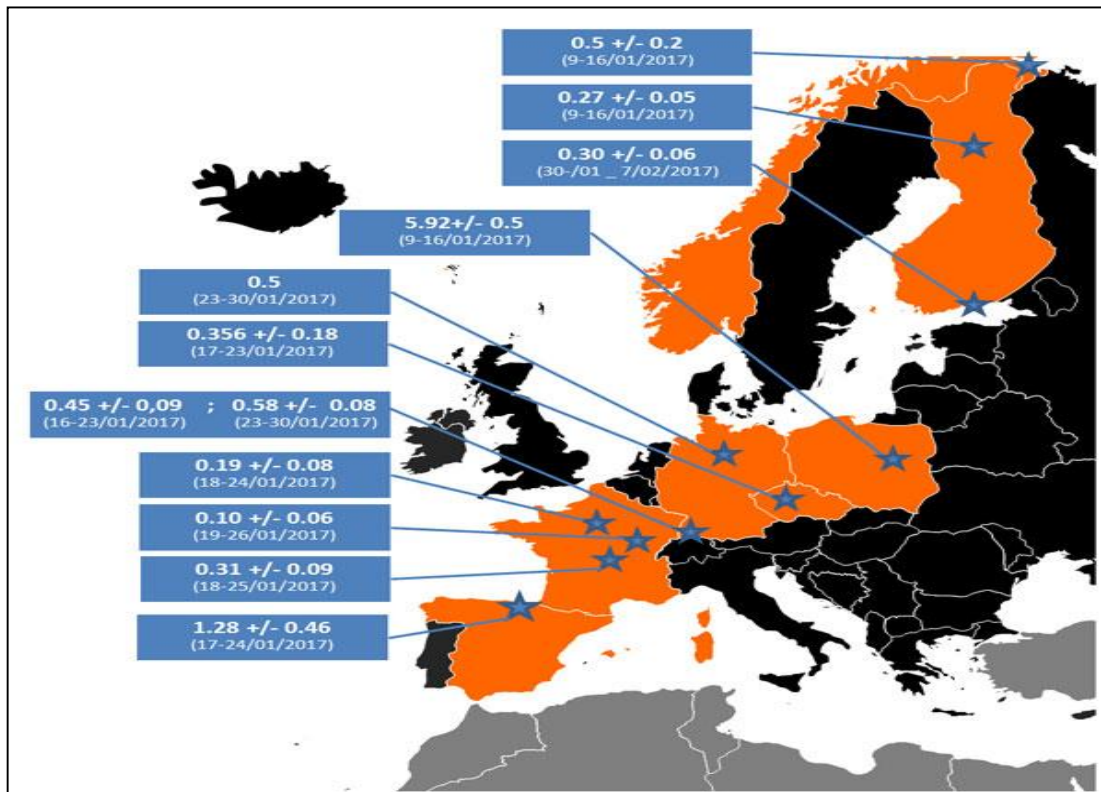
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What happened?

Very low I-131 concentrations (\sim microBq/m³) detected in air in Feb 2017 by EU laboratories network (RO5)

Results were published (forwarded to journalists) by IRNS/France



Nothing new, it happened already in the past

BUT

Although the level of radioactivity was negligible from the point of view of radiation protection the regular media and public reacted not adequately to this situation and State Office for Nuclear Safety (SUJB) received a lot of questions by phone, emails, letters, media,...

We have observed increased public fear.

Despite of statements published by SUJB on the official web site, TV, newspapers, etc..., the concerns of people was almost not possible to rebut and it was, in opposite, growing.

This situation was not normal based on our previous experience with the communication with media and public in such situation.

Finally, based on the reference of some people to the information published on special web sites we have identified that so called propaganda/disinformation web sites presented completely incorrect and fake information overestimating risk from this slightly elevated level of I131 in air

Web sites	Number of publications
parlamentnilisty.cz	6
aronet.cz	3
cz.sputniknews.com	2
ac24.cz	2
lajkit.cz	1
ceskoaktualne.cz	1
czechfreepress.cz	1
krajskelisty.cz	1
ragauian.cz	1
tadesco.cz	1

Types of false information



Disinformation
deliberate lie to mislead

Misinformation
honest mistake

Hoax
“deliberately fabricated
falsehood made to
masquerade as truth”
Wikipedia

Media analysis

total number of 85 news on I-131 were identified in CZ media

websites (all including some misinformation)	68%
(professional disinformation website only)	(22%)
TV	13%
newspapers	12%
radio	7%

Example of disinformation

AERONET (AENews) = professional disinformation website
(part of disinformation system including SPUTNIK, etc)

webpage spreading „well done“ HOAX on I-131 health risk

<http://aeronet.cz/news/nad-evropou-se-vali-radioaktivni-mrak-pochazejici-zrejme-z-podivne-exploze-ve-francouzske-jaderne-elektrarne-vlady-mlci-francie-se-snazi-bagatelizovat-cely-incident-slovy-o-neskodnosti-radionuklidu/>

SUJB has developed a communication strategy and has a relatively good credit within the public and we of course have also some opponent to our decision or opinions as usually and we know them however we have faced first time such situation when we didn't know who is struggling with us and why

...a couple of „messages“ from AENews



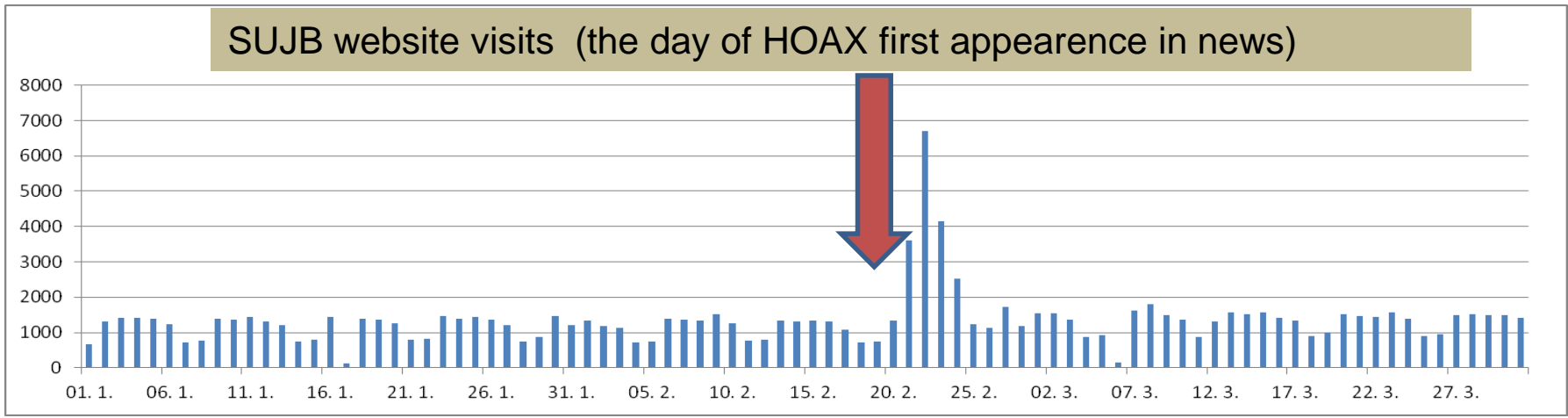
- A radioactive cloud rolls over Europe, apparently from a strange explosion in a French nuclear power plant Flamanville
- Governments are silent, Governments and organizations for nuclear surveillance can not be trusted
- France is trying to downplay the whole incident. No one cares about it. The French government is only interested in preventing Marine Le Pen from winning the presidential election - this would end the Berlin project to build a New Europe according to the so-called „Das neue Europa concept“.
- Any radioactive release ? Governments in the EU will deny everything. The EU regime does not need you to be healthy, the regime only seeks to stay calm.
- **We recommend :**
 - Do not go out with children, do not ventilate, do not to collect mushrooms, blueberries and fruits, root vegetables
 - We recommend to immediately buy iodine tablets and buy dosimeters!
- If someone claims it is harmless, do not trust.

Goals of this disinformation campaign(?):

- obviously the main goal was to manipulate a public opinion and behaviour
- undermine confidence in governmental institutions/EU?
- testing effectiveness of disinformation („hybrid war“) ?
- ???....

SUJB reaction: Statement on SUJB web site, Ministry of Health, Czech Press Office, Ministry of Interior (special team for struggle with HOAX) : strongly warning against this HOAX

- Measured concentrations of activity are not dangerous for human health.
 - news spread AENews, (to buy iodine tablets and dosimetry devices,etc are totally absurd and apparently deliberately wants to cause panic in CZ for some reasons.
 - The purpose of this action is unknown, but the SUJB is considering to initiate a complaint against the distribution of e-HOAX
 - The SUJB appeals to the common sense of the citizens and the media
....etc...after this the situation changed (app. 2 weeks) and they started to create another stories
- More detailed information on measurement results can be found on the SUJB/SÚRO website.



We didn't know how many people were influenced by this disinformation campaign, we had biased picture from the communication only with people contacting authorities (logically those who were worried and believed disinformation)

We have decided to perform sociological survey as quick as possible and we launched the expertise/research in co-operation with Faculty of Social Sciences of Charles University in Prague with the aim to evaluate impact of the disinformation on behaviour and attitudes of the public (CZ)

Sociological survey

- target group: 18 - 65 years, whole Czech republic
- 700 respondents,
- 10 – 18. March 2017 (3-4 weeks after spread of disinformation)

Questions

Have you recorded information on radioactive iodine in the air in the Czech Republic?

When - for the first time?

From which sources?

From which source for the first time?

Do you think the radioactive iodine in the air was really identified/measured?

Do you think the level of radioactive iodine can be dangerous for health?

Does it raise your concerns about the health of you and your family ?

Does the fear continue?

Did you pass the information to others ?

Were you looking for additional information (media, competent institutions..)?

Did you notice an official position of Radiation Protection Authority?

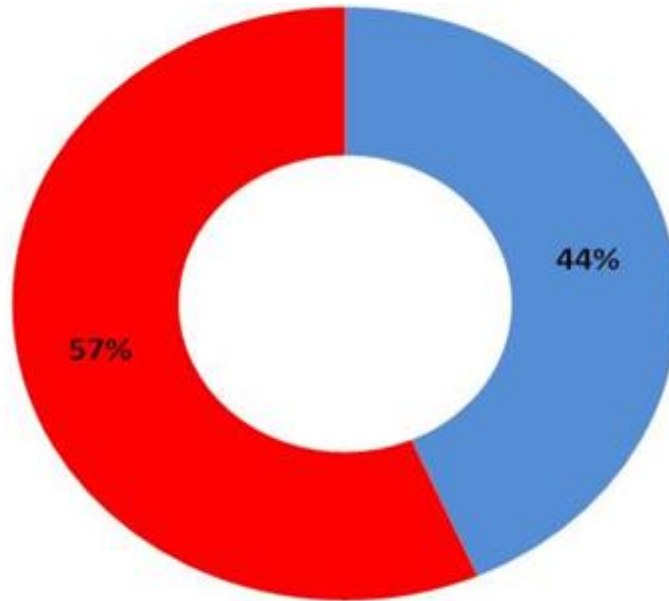
Was this opinion understandable to you?

Do you trust the official statement?

Did you consider any health protection measures? (which?)

SOME RESULTS

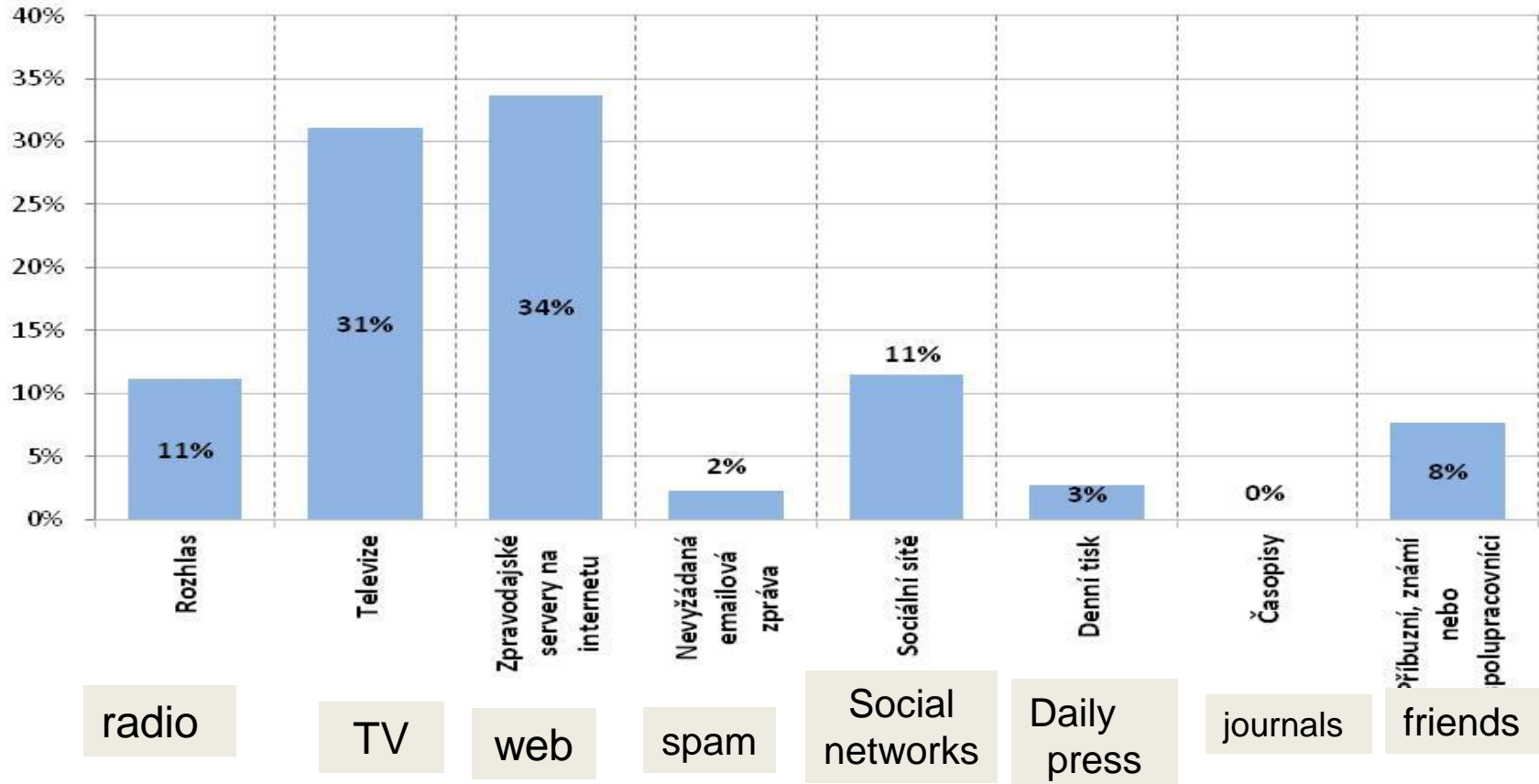
Have you noticed information on radioactive iodine in the air...?



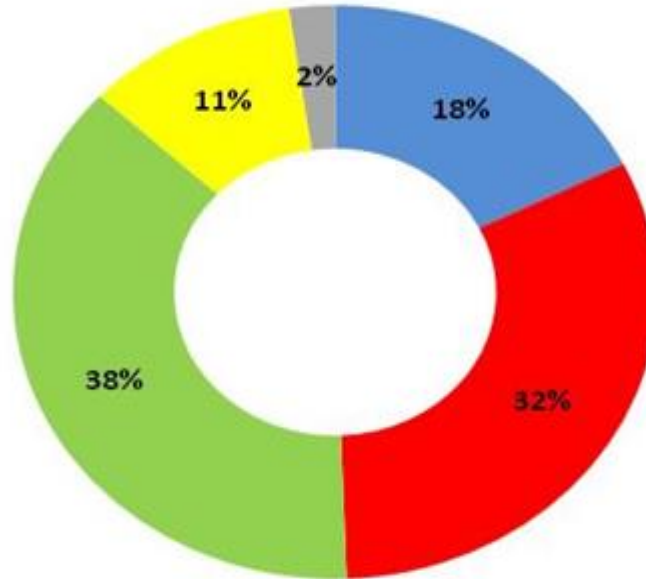
No

Yes

From which media did you notice itfor the first time?



Do you think the measured level of radio-iodine can be dangerous?



Yes,
sure.

rather yes

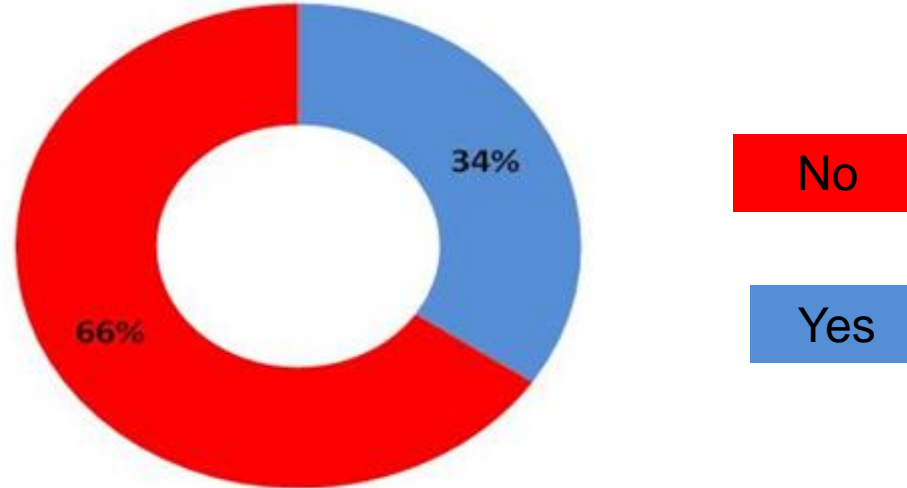
rather no

No.

Don't
know

! Those who first recorded information on the TV - perception of health hazards is lower than those who obtained it from another source!

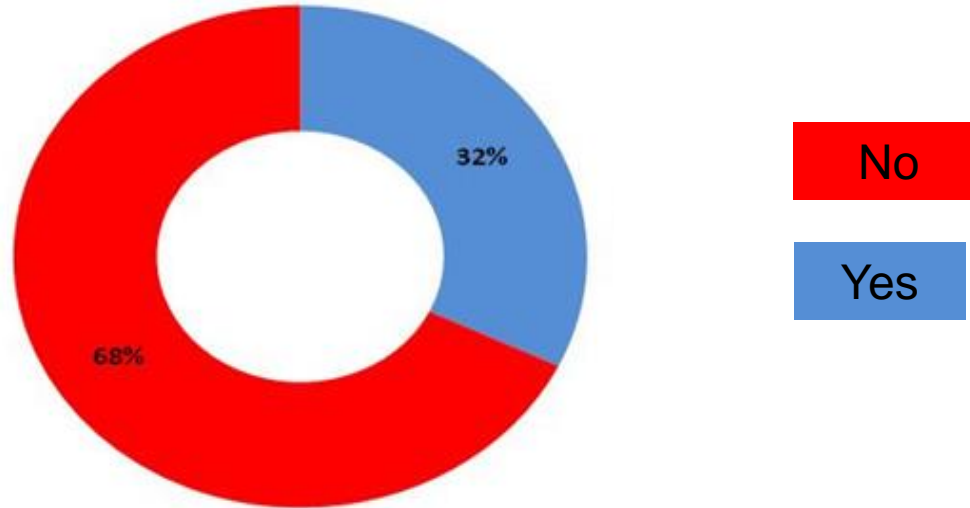
...Fear (from radioactive iodine in the air)



! Those, who got information first on social networks are more worried !

! There are no differences between men and women !

Did you pass information on iodine in the air to other people?

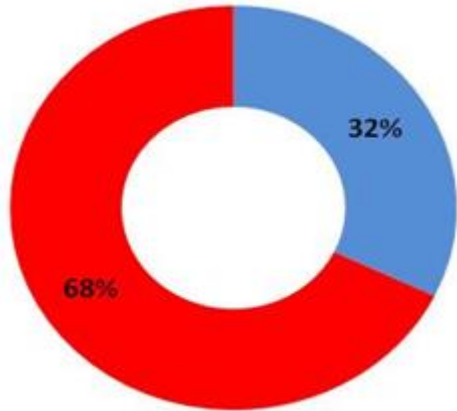


! One third ... forward the information to others.

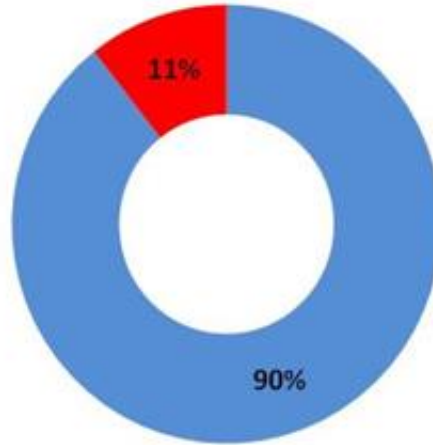
! Information was passed more often by those who received it on social networks or as spam for the first time.

! **High efficiency of hoaxes for spreading misinformation !**

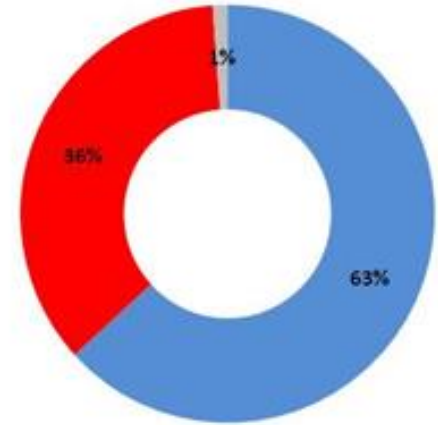
Did you notice the official statement about radioactive iodine exposure ?



Was this opinion understandable for you?

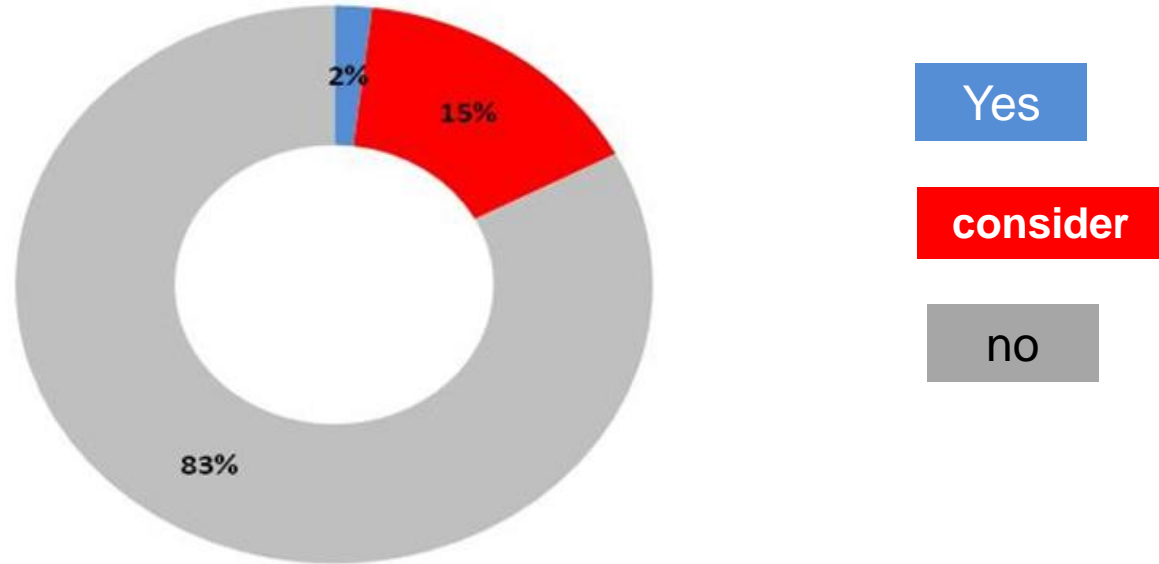


Do you trust the official statement of radiation prot.authority



No Yes

Did you consider any health protection measures ?



! Those who got info from social networks consider more often some measures !

What „health protection measures“ did you do?

Protection measures	%
• Reduce stay outdoors, reduce ventilation	34,6
• Protective - food selection	14,9
• Proactive - vitamins, stop outdoor activities, sports	11,5
• „Ask authority“	4,8
• Buying iodine tablets	8,8
• Collection of information	6,9
• a combination of protective measures	3,5
• nothing so far	8,8
• does not know	6,0

n= 39

Lesson learned?

- We have identified these unofficial sources of information as a new challenge in communication with public in case of emergency or unusual radiation situations
- We must have this new situation in mind and „**be better prepared**“ next time that it can happen again
- In case of any event – even negligible radioactivity/contamination detected... **proactive approach** in media is reasonable
- Use of relatively strong/strict wording can be sometimes more effective, (appealing **common sense/judgement**)
- Involve **academic people**, universities
- Ministry of Interior established a **special team** for fighting with disinformation campaigns (2017) – now building confidence - very important to co-operate within governmental bodies
- Mistrust of some part of public (older people) in official information sources caused by „after Chernobyl no official information/disinformation“ still alive

Thank you for your attention

