Problems with a census in a society transforming from totality to democracy
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Abstract
Population and housing censuses have a long tradition in our lands – the first modern census took place in 1890. In 1980 the Central Register of Population was established – however, it is not of sufficient quality and the Czech Republic still needs censuses. Since 1989 the approach of people to any events organized by the government has changed in transition countries. This also includes the role and running of population and housing censuses. In 1991 – during the first census after the revolution – it was a great problem to convince people to take part in it because they had had a bad experience with various lists and registers, which were held by the state administration and especially the secret police. The newly regained freedom thus effected the results of the census – for instance, there were many people declaring some religious beliefs, declaring other than Czech nationality, etc. (Ten years later we can see how the results were biased.) There was a great effect on the Population and Housing Census 2001 due to a medial crisis caused mainly by the newly established Office for Personal Data Protection and also by a campaign, which was not organized very well. Unfortunately, we could see again that the effect of promotion in our society is still underestimated, and this will certainly influence the results of the census and even the results of various surveys in households. The Czech Statistical Office has underestimated this part very much. What needs to be done to prevent this situation from being repeated?
At present we try to regain the credit of the CSO by being very transparent and providing a continuous presentation of the results of the Population and Housing Census 2001.