



EVROPSKÁ UNIE  
Evropské strukturální a investiční fondy  
Operační program Výzkum, vývoj a vzdělávání



## Czech-German 'Critical Incidents'

### **Situation 1:** *A team meeting*

Mr Müller, one of the leading employees of a German heating company, has been moved to a company subsidiary in Brno. He is responsible for production management and the purchase of company products in Central and Eastern Europe.

Despite initial apprehension he gets used to the Moravian town very quickly, and also gets easily acquainted with some of his friendly Czech colleagues. A few months after his move, the company signs a profitable contract with a local customer. After a while Mr Müller recognizes that there could be a large penalty if they cannot keep the deadline which is given in the contract. Product documentation on the side of a Czech colleague has been delayed.

Therefore, Mr Müller organizes a team meeting and asks that Czech member of the team why he has not stuck to the internal agreement. The Czech colleague had not expected that question and cannot answer conclusively. Mr Müller then harshly criticises him and he requests that the Czech employee should very much perform his obligations from now on.

From there on, the general work climate gets worse, and even previously benevolent colleagues avoid their German superior now.

### **Situation 2:** *The contact meeting*

Czech and Germans from the chamber of commerce organize a congress to get in contact with each other and to establish new connections.

Various kinds of firms and organizations are represented. They want to coordinate and plan joint German/Czech activities. A German and a Czech member are responsible for the organization of the congress. They lead and chair the meetings. During the first day all participants work hard and after they have finished the official programme, they have the evening free. The next day, they will continue their work at 9 o'clock. At night, like all other Germans the German leader sleeps. Not so the Czechs, they sit together, drink beer and wine, and enjoy the evening.

The next morning the Czech leader enters the room a few minutes before 9 a.m. He has agreed with his German colleague that today he will chair the meeting. However, he is very tired and is asks the German if she would chair, as he does not feel well. The German is angry with her colleague and thinks: He spent all night drinking, and now he is trying to shirk his work. As she is interested in the success of the congress she takes the chair over though. Her Czech co-worker remains quiet. The morning proceeds according to the programme and after lunch the congress is finished. All the participants seem satisfied.

The German leader pulls her Czech colleague aside and asks him how his behaviour is to be understood.

### **Situation 3:** *A performance review*

Mr Jünger, a German, is managing a branch of a German Company in the Czech Republic. He recently came to the Czech Republic and gets along with his Czech colleagues pretty well. He has a particularly good relationship with Mr Smolka. When he first arrives, his impression is that Mr Smolka is highly competent. When they occasionally meet, Mr Smolka chats about this and that, he is dealing with or the clients he has been meeting. The two men have an easy and cordial relationship.

After three months everyone in the company has to give a written report on their work. Mr Smolka's report shows a decline in his business. Therefore, Mr Jünger asks him to come to his office for his quarterly performance report. He dives right in by saying "There's been a decline in your business." After having said this, he notices that Mr Smolka feels discomfort, he blushes and looks embarrassed. Mr Jünger is taken aback. During the talk, Mr Smolka keeps almost quiet and looks like he wants to

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escape as soon as possible. He asks no questions and he does not defend himself. Mr Smolka shuts down and he grabs the first opportunity to leave.

From that time on, Mr Smolka deeply disappointed avoids Mr Jünger.

Source: Schroll-Machl, S. and Novy, I. (2009) ‚Beruflich in Tschechien Trainingsprogramm für Manager, Fach- und Führungskräfte‘ Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht



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