

The topic of sexual education often receives unwanted attention from the media. Instead of an “unexcited” approach to the topic, headlines are written in scandalous tones with content seemingly pulled out of nowhere. Misinformation is rampant and statements are taken out of context. Most of all, topics are handled with disproportionate emotionality.

No one can fully prepare themselves for this situation. However, when you are at your wit’s end and the team is in turmoil, a prepared communication plan is very useful. The key aspects are rapid and easily followed procedural steps, information, a plan for who communicates to the public and how, and uniform wording. This is how you can be proactive in exceptional circumstances, instead of being forced to be reactive.

**Generally applicable:**

***What isn’t kept secret cannot be uncovered unwantedly!***

***It is a question of approach. What do we stand for as an institution, as management, as a team? Which values do we live out?***

*Sexual health, when viewed affirmatively, encompasses the rights of all persons to have the knowledge and opportunity to pursue a safe and threat-free sexual life.*

## PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN REACTION

### THE REVIEW

1. A **comprehensive monitoring strategy** is helpful from the get-go: only one who knows what is being said about him/her can respond effectively. Similarly, it is important to know what is happening on social media. Every institution today needs monitoring. There are many tools, some free and some available for a fee, that help with professional monitoring:
  - ▶ *Google Alerts for the name of the institution,*
  - ▶ *the names of the leadership team and*
  - ▶ *a few important key terms from the industry are a good start.*
2. Knowing what information and material about my organization is “out there”: This includes all information and materials, flyers, websites and social media activity even the background information, that never reaches the public. This should be kept close at hand and always up-to-date.

## CONTACT WITH MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES

- 3. *Maintaining contacts:*** Open and trusting work with the press as well as with their contacts online and through other networks is an important element. Those who remain informed and transparent with their work will have better chances in the case of a scandal or something similar.
- 4. *Maintaining the network:*** Having people around yourself who know your work and find it good and important will help you to withstand a temporary storm with much less resistance. Experience has shown that crises often uncover loyal advocates who had stayed silent up until then.
- 5. *Up-to-date mailing list:*** In a crisis, no one has the time to look up addresses, telephone numbers and specializations of press representatives or to search their social media accounts. Therefore, it is important to keep an up-to-date mailing list with the most important media contacts.
- 6. *Regular communication:*** Information about the institution, projects and current offerings should be made clear and available. Additionally, online activity should be up-to-date. Making accounts that will only be used sporadically is not useful.

## PREPARATION FOR CRISIS COMMUNICATION

- 7. *Making internal responsibilities clear:***
  - ▶ *Who speaks publicly?*
  - ▶ *Who can give what information to the press?*
  - ▶ *Who oversees which communication channels?*

## ACTION IN THE CRISIS

- 8. *Editing content:***
  - ▶ *Discuss content and choose carefully (not everything has to be commented on or said):*
  - ▶ *Communicate openly – write your own story*
  - ▶ *Take critique seriously, own up to mistakes*
  - ▶ *Inform comprehensively*

**TIP:**

*Where am I “vulnerable” – which topics might be misunderstood, haven’t been fully developed?*

## ACTION IN THE CRISIS

**TIP:**

*Calmly ask yourself the  
question continually:  
What is the problem –  
what is our stance?*

## LEARNING

### 9. *Communicating externally:*

- ▶ *Use all possible media*
  - ▶ Prepare a press release (maximum 1 A4 page!). Statements and photos of those responsible are helpful.
  - ▶ Prepare the statement for all channels (web, social media, email)
- ▶ *Contact further stakeholders proactively and inform them*

**When communication in a crisis happens openly and in a timely manner, we know that it is possible to recover stronger than before.**

#### *The most important DON'Ts:*

- ▶ hasty denials – if you react reflexively before looking at the facts, you will be immediately labeled as undiscerning.
- ▶ extensive, explanatory statements – stay short, professional and concise with your statements
- ▶ statements about legal questions that have not been discussed previously with a competent, specialized lawyer
- ▶ aggressive behavior and threats – emotional situations will not improve with the addition of more emotion
- ▶ being “right” at any price. In certain situations, it is not about who is right but about calming tempers. The next step can then be a discussion of facts.