

Communication Handbook



Alpine Space Programme
European Territorial Cooperation 2007 - 2013



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Dear project partners,

This **Communication Handbook** has been made to provide some valuable experiences and knowledge on how to successfully plan, implement and monitor communication activities and on how to make communication an integrated part of your project – from the very beginning and at each and every stage.

A well coordinated, target group oriented communication became one of the top priorities of the new programming period. While preparing the new structural funds period 2007-2013, the European Commission stressed the need for more visible projects and results, for better promotion of project activities and transparency of funds. Communicating cohesion policy and informing on benefits of EU cooperation, is an obligation for all of us: programme, Member States and projects.

Like the **Programme Implementation Handbook**, this handbook is as well divided in several factsheets which will be updated and completed whenever necessary. They are grouped in three chapters.

- ∴ **Analysis** will help you to execute your communication as efficient as possible and to adapt your strategy when necessary. Communication is more than information: it shall enable a two-way dialogue essential to make your results long-lasting. This shall be planned well.
- ∴ In addition to all these hints on how to develop a strategic framework, we provide you with tips on various **Tactics**.
- ∴ Finally, **Skills** are outlined as part of a standard tool kit for all partners communicating your project.

During your project implementation you might face questions that are not answered in the handbook. Please let us know about this: it might be relevant for other project partners too and we can update the factsheets appropriately.

You can also share your experiences and/or open questions with the **programme communication network**. Who is part of this network? You! Join the LinkedIn group of project partners dealing with communications and find us on other social media.

Need any information, material or feedback on your project communication?
Please contact the Communication Officer in the Joint Technical Secretariat!

All the best for your successful communication!

Your JTS Communication Officer

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The communication strategy



- The three ingredients for well planned communication strategies: objectives, target groups and messages
- How to define your communication objectives
- What types of analysis to use
- How to involve your teams and stakeholders in the process

Alpine Space projects all have good communication skills. As effective partnerships, we must have strong internal communication. Most of us also have good experience with external communication: conveying information through the media or directly to the public and other target groups. Communication comes naturally.

We have the opportunity to make the most of our communication skills and knowledge at a time when strong external communication can give practical support to our implementation and outputs. To do this, we need to think strategically: what are the ingredients for good communication?

It may help to look at examples of other European Territorial Cooperation projects. Many have been extremely successful with external communication in their closing delivery phase, using it to achieve practical goals like influencing policy and changing behaviour. Others have been disappointed. What makes the difference?

A few themes emerge:

	Successful projects...	Disappointed projects...
Objectives	Communicate with a clearly stated goal in mind	Communicate for broadly defined or unclear objectives
Target Groups Find more information in Factsheet 3	Communicate to clearly defined groups of people	Communicate without first defining and understanding the people who should listen
Messages Find more information in Factsheet 3	Communicate a small number of clear, concise, consistent and memorable ideas	Communicate a large number of different ideas, without sufficient focus, and inconsistently



There are three ingredients for well-planned communication: objectives, target groups and messages.

Objectives

→ Communication needs to be goal-driven. We do not communicate for its own sake: we communicate to achieve or change something. Communication tactics such as press releases, events and media relations activities can be straightforward to organise; the skill lies in ensuring that something useful happens as a result.

A universal mistake in external communication is neglecting to define communication objectives properly in advance. This happens in almost all kinds of organisations, and Alpine Space projects are no exception.

For instance, it is not sufficient for a project to define its objectives as “to raise awareness” or “to communicate our activities and results”. Communication objectives need to be clearly defined, detailed, achievable and measurable.

Take it a step further: Why raise awareness or communicate project outputs? What views or behaviours does the project want to influence? Perhaps one of its ultimate goals is to influence or inform public policy on a particular topic in order to improve public services; or advance technical knowledge on a certain issue and so to improve people’s quality of living.

Well-defined objectives give guidance and structure to all dimensions of public relations activities. The starting point is to understand what you want to achieve.



*Define your objectives by asking:
What do I want to happen as a result?*

Communication planning

→ To develop a strong communication strategy, Alpine Space projects should define their communication objectives, target groups and messages.

After reviewing and finalising your project communication strategy, the next stage is to use it as the foundation for a detailed communication plan. You can create a long term communication plan covering all activities until the end of your project, or a short term plan for a specific event or priority. Depending on the scope, a communication plan may be as short as one page, or as long as 20 pages.

A good communication plan defines how the strategy will be expressed through practical public relations activities. It brings together in one document all of the fundamental ideas that should be driving communication, including objectives, target groups, messages, and an overview of how your goals will be achieved. It sets a clear framework for communication activities and allocates roles, tasks and goals to individual members of the team.

Following are the key ingredients for a communication plan:

1. **Strategic overview**
2. **Situation analysis**
3. **Target groups**
4. **Objectives**
5. **Messages**
6. **Tactics**
7. **Media**
8. **Timeline**
9. **Responsibilities**

Section by section: how to develop a communication plan

Strategic overview

For the benefit of everyone who will be part of the plan, explain briefly the importance of taking a structured and strategic approach to communication.

Summarise your project's overall communication strategy: give an overview of why you are engaging in communication activities, and what you hope to achieve. Then define the scope and purpose of this specific communication plan.

Situation analysis

Perform a SWOT analysis for your project: list all of its Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats in terms of the scope of communication activities covered by this plan. Many organisations of all kinds use a SWOT analysis to audit and assess their current situation as a starting point to determine the best course of action. Use a SWOT to look realistically at your project's communication environment and plan accordingly.

STRENGTHS <i>What are the strengths of your project and its communication activities?</i>	WEAKNESSES <i>What are the potential weaknesses of your project and its communication activities? What could be damaging or negative?</i>
OPPORTUNITIES <i>What communication opportunities are there? Is there anything new, different, interesting or unique in your project that you could capitalise upon for publicity?</i>	THREATS <i>Are there any potential threats that your project could face? What might go wrong? How could this affect your communication and PR activities?</i>

Objectives

Refine and restate your project's overall communication objectives for the purpose of the particular scope of this communication plan. These should be in short bullet point format and clearly indicate what your communication will bring to the project. It is important to define these objectives in order to be able to measure the success of the activities afterwards. Set goals that are specific enough to be measured, but broad enough to allow flexibility and room to adapt to changing circumstances.

Target groups

Find more information in Factsheet 2

If you know your target groups, you can tailor your news and messages to coincide with what matters and interests them. If you don't, you might not like the coverage you receive.

Messages

Find more information in Factsheet 3

State your key messages

Tactics

Find more information in Factsheets 5-10

Define the activities that you will undertake in order to achieve your objectives. How will you go about reaching your target groups? What activities will you undertake to emphasise your messages and meet your objectives? Potential communication tactics include media relation activities such as press events or publicising newsworthy developments, as well as non-media communication activities such as lobbying and seeking speaking opportunities.

Media

Find more information in Factsheet 10

Summarise your target media for media relations activities. This should not be a full media list, but an overview of target media categories. Through what media do your target groups get their information? Which of these media will be most influential for them? Which do they pay most attention to and which do they trust most?

NOTE: If your key target groups are small or select, consider whether it might be more effective to contact them directly rather than through the media. For some target groups such as politicians and opinion-formers, non-media tactics such as lobbying could be considered instead

Timeline

Create a timeline that identifies when each activity will happen, along with advance milestones that you will need to meet during the preparation process. This will help to ensure that deadlines do not slip, opportunities are not missed, and that activities are fully prepared.

Responsibility

Allocate responsibility for each activity and milestone to a named team member. If one person is accountable for a measurable result, it is more likely to be achieved.

Evaluation

Find more information in Factsheet 4

It is important to evaluate the success of communication activities, in order to learn which activities worked well and which should be improved in future. Evaluation also creates useful feedback to share with others in the project and the programme, so that they can learn from your experience. State in your communication plan the criteria by which you will measure its success.

IN SHORT

Make sure you include all of these key ingredients in your communication plan.

☐ Strategic overview

☐ Situation analysis

☐ Target groups

☐ Objectives

☐ Messages

☐ Tactics

☐ Media

☐ Timeline

☐ Responsibilities

Target groups and stakeholder engagement



- The importance of analysing your target groups
- What are stakeholders and how to involve them?
- How to define the stakeholders for your project?
- How to understand what they think now and what you want them to think?
- The importance of defining the benefits that your projects bring to them

Target groups

→ All Alpine Space projects need to communicate with a number of different groups of people each with different characteristics and needs. These groups are called “target groups”. It is important to define target groups that are directly relevant to helping you achieve your communication objectives.

Think about the audience every time you communicate



To communicate effectively and in a results-driven way, Alpine Space projects need to understand their target groups.

Different target groups have different motivations and demographics; they respond to different approaches and means of persuasion. Different target groups are reached by different tactics and different media. Different aspects of a project will be relevant and interesting for different target groups – local communities as opposed to businesses, for instance. Different groups of people will help you to achieve different objectives, if you identify, understand and communicate with them effectively.

Each project needs a clear view of who its target groups are. This analysis will enable an effective tailoring of messages, materials and communication tactics for the greatest impact.

Most projects will already have thought about their target groups and how to communicate with them – they may even be defined in the original application form. Still, it is worthwhile at this stage to take a fresh look to see whether these target groups are still appropriate, whether they have changed over time, and whether you have any new insight about how to reach them.

Examples of Alpine Space projects target groups

Projects themselves will likely share many of these key target groups, but will no doubt also have different ones:

- ::: Regional and local authorities
- ::: Public equivalent bodies
- ::: Regional development and environment agencies
- ::: Universities, research institutes, training and education centres
- ::: Chambers of Commerce
- ::: NGOs
- ::: Economic and social partners
- ::: SMEs
- ::: General public
- ::: Regional communities
- ::: Specific groups with special needs, e.g. families, schoolchildren, the elderly
- ::: Relevant ministries
- ::: Other relevant national bodies
- ::: EU institutions
- ::: European Commission
- ::: European Parliament
- ::: Brussels regional offices
- ::: Committee of the Regions
- ::: Specialised EU networks

Stakeholder engagement

What is stakeholder engagement?

Stakeholders are groups of people and individual citizens who have an interest in an organisation's programmes and can have an influence on its ability to achieve its goals rapidly and efficiently.

Stakeholder engagement means communicating with these groups and individuals in a manner which enables them to understand your project work and to support it enthusiastically. The goal of stakeholder engagement is to make all stakeholders feel that your project is relevant to their personal concerns and cares about them. This only happens when you deliberately set out to identify your key stakeholders, communicate with them and gives evidence that their opinions matter.

Positive, neutral and negative stakeholder attitudes

The result of an effective stakeholder engagement programme is that positive attitudes will be reinforced, neutral attitudes will become positive and negative attitudes will be neutralised. To plan and monitor these improvements, we need to know who our stakeholders are and how they currently feel about the issues that your project deal with.

Stakeholder engagement planning

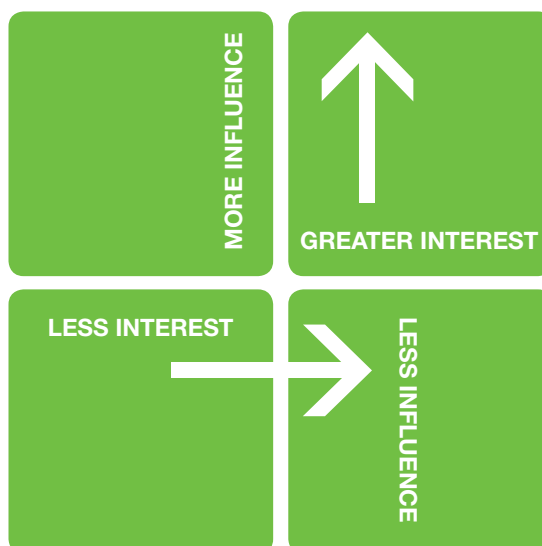
Our resources are finite, so we need to prioritise stakeholders in terms of the strength of their interest and the degree of their influence. This is called **stakeholder mapping**. Some stakeholders are categorised as groups – for example, schoolteachers. Some stakeholders are listed as individuals – for example, the Mayor of a particular town.

List and review all of the target groups that you want to reach out to through communications activities.



Stakeholder mapping

Stakeholder mapping shows us at a glance which categories of stakeholder demand priority attention in our communication strategy.



We use this grid by inserting the names of groups and significant individuals in the four quadrants: those who have considerable influence but not much interest in our project go in the top-left quadrant; those with both influence and interest go in the top-right; those with less influence and less interest go in the lower-left, and those with a lot of interest but little influence go in the lower-right. There should be between five and ten names in each quadrant. Clearly, the priorities for your project are those in the upper-right quadrant.

We use opinion research to create a benchmark for each stakeholder category. This tells us if the general opinion in the group is positive, neutral or negative. Likewise for the individual stakeholders on our list. This knowledge enables us to allocate resources where they will have the greatest beneficial effect.

Message/Target Group Matrix

The tool we use for stakeholder engagement planning is the **Message/Target Group Matrix**. Here is a template for the M/TG Matrix. You can see how the current attitudes of the stakeholder groups and the attitudes we want them to adopt form the first columns in the matrix.

	Think Now	Should Think	Timeframe	Key Channels
Target Group 1				
Target Group 2				
Target Group 3				
Target Group 4				

Stakeholder outreach

Each stakeholder group will be amenable to their own, specific types of communication and involvement. For example, older citizens read newspapers while the younger generation typically depend on the internet; some communities have a social hub while others – especially in the cities - are more dispersed.

A stakeholder engagement plan should allocate the most effective **communication channels** for each target groups. These could include, for example: sponsorships, exhibitions, events, newsletters, public meetings, speeches, internet (online) postings, awards and prizes, consultative forums (symposia), clubs, VIP visits and celebrations. There are over 100 different channels available.

The Message/Audience Matrix has a column for the principal channels you have selected for each audience. It also has a column for timeframe, and here you should estimate how long it will take to change the majority of each stakeholder category from “Think Now” to “Should Think”. The timeframe may be as short as 3 months or as long as five years.

Always bear in mind that the goal of stakeholder engagement is to make citizens – and in particular their most influential representatives – feel **included** in your project outcomes. If you communicate regularly and effectively with them, stakeholders can be your most powerful allies in achieving your goals.



You should promote the benefits of your project and the programme on a targeted local and regional level.

IN SHORT

Remember to consider your target groups' interests and needs.

- **Brainstorm, with your team, a list of your target groups.**
- **Prioritise – which stakeholders have the most influence and interest in your project.**
- **What benefits of your project will have most effect on your stakeholders?**
- **What do your stakeholders think now?**
- **What do you want them to think?**
- **Which media channels are going to be most effective?**

Message development



- The importance of good messages for your project communication
- The key elements of a good message
- How to construct effective messages?

Messages

→ Messages have a special meaning in public relations. A message is not the same as an advertising slogan or a marketing line; a message is a simple and clear idea that acts as a guiding principle for all kinds of communication, from the content of leaflets, brochures and websites to the agenda for a media interview, to conversations with stakeholders.

Messages are a solution to three basic constraints on the way people take on new information.

Problem:	Solution:	Goal:
	Make your message ...	Ensure that people ...
Information overload People are frequently faced with more information than we can handle.	Distinctive Few in number	Notice
Objective limits People can only take on a limited amount of information at once	Clear Concise Simple Consistent	Understand Remember
Subjective limits People only take on new information when they are interested and motivated	Interesting Relevant Personal	Care Act

Distinctive

A good message will be immediately appealing to its target group: it should be strongly worded to stand out from everything else that is competing for their attention. For instance, a journalist who receives several hundred press releases by email or fax every day is much more likely to write a story based on a press release where the message is powerful and immediately obvious. Otherwise, he or she is likely to discard your project press release and look at the next one instead.

Few

Alpine Space projects all have a great deal to say, because they are all doing useful things. Having a lot to say can be a problem, though. If you try to communicate dozens of ideas at the same time, your audience will suffer from “information overload” and end up failing to grasp any of these ideas properly at all. Too many different messages cause confusion, and you risk losing focus.

For instance, if a project website contains dozens of unfocused messages on different topics competing for attention, readers are unlikely to take away a clear view of the project’s benefits. Or if an influential policymaker receives an invitation to Alpine Space projects end-of-project event, he or she is less likely to accept if the letter contains many different competing messages.



*“Less is more.”
Do not use more than three messages at any time.*

Concise, clear and simple

Communication will never get results if it is delivered in a form that requires your target groups to sit down with a strong cup of coffee, a dictionary, a table of acronyms and a calculator just to understand it. The simplest messages are the best. They require no effort to understand.

Consistent

You stand the best chance of determining what impression your target groups will take away of your project if they hear the same message from different sources and on different occasions. Without consistent messages, communication lack clarity and focus.

When different activities say different things about your project, the effect is diluted. When they all say the same thing about your project, the effect is multiplied.



A good communication strategy will approach its key target groups in many separate ways: by generating newspaper coverage for news events like launches, by promoting case studies and features to magazines, by placing a project profile in a trade publication, by lobbying policy-makers – and dozens of other potential approaches.

If a policymaker who is among your key target groups reads a magazine profile about an aspect of your project, then sees a letter to the editor in a newspaper about the same aspect of that project, and is then called on the telephone to be lobbied about the same thing, he/she can't fail to get the message. That's the power of consistency: the whole is more than the sum of the parts.

*Say nine things – they remember none
Say three things – they remember one
Say three things three times – they remember all three*



Simple

There is a strong “bottleneck effect” in most communication activities: no matter how much you say, only a small amount of information will make it to your target group. You can only write 500 or so words on a press release before people stop reading. You can only talk for 20 minutes in a speech before your audience lose interest. A 30-minute television interview may be edited down to 30 seconds.

Messages help to ensure that the important information makes it through the bottleneck. By making messages simple you remove all secondary, less important information that you can afford to live without.

What does a message look like?

A message is a statement, idea, or assertion. E.g.

- ::: “(x) is a problem and (y) is the solution.”
- ::: The work of project (x) is valuable because (y) and (z)
- ::: “It is essential to share knowledge among regions on the issue of (x) because...”
- ::: “(x) must take action on the issue of (y) otherwise (z) will happen.”

Messages are based on facts and information.

- ::: Messages are unlike marketing, advertising, or media “sound bites”.

Messages must align with the project’s overall goals.

Few

- ::: Maximum three messages in total

Concise

- ::: Ideally one sentence per message; maximum two sentences;
- ::: Maximum 25 words per sentence.
- ::: One idea per message

Simple

- ::: Easy for anyone to understand
- ::: Free from jargon

Strong, active, positive language

Interesting

Credible

Making messages

→ Begin by generating a large, unorganised mass of information – everything you want to say – then select and refine only the most essential, powerful and effective ideas remain.

Brainstorm

Get together a broad range of people who are involved with your project for an open discussion about what you want to communicate and to whom. Together, list your target groups. For each target group, state your objectives – what you want to achieve by communicating with them – and also what ideas and information you need to convey to achieve those goals. This is the raw material for your messages.

Look for themes

Usually similar objectives and ideas will appear across several audiences. Group these together under thematic headings. Each of these may be the basis for a key message.

Rank and select

List your draft messages and decide which are the most important. If you could only say one thing, what would it be? If you could say two things, which other message would you choose? And so on.

Refine the language

Can you say the same thing in fewer words? Remove all unnecessary words. Can you say the same thing using simpler words? Remove any complicated vocabulary. Look at each word and ask whether it would be understood by someone who is not fluent in your language, or who knows nothing about the EU, or who knows nothing about the subject matter of your project.

Eliminate overlap

If you find the same basic ideas repeated in more than one of your messages, shift the ideas around between messages so that nothing is repeated. This will make space to say more. Make every word count.

Think media

What media will reach your key target groups? What would be the best possible headline about your project that you could imagine being published in those media? The answer is a good pointer towards a key message.

Think impressions

For non-media tactics such as meetings and lobbying, think: what three things would I like the target groups to remember and tell someone else about my project later?

Test them out

Show your messages to people outside your project. Friends and family will do, but journalists or people close to your target groups are better. Do they understand? Are they interested? If not, try again.

Choose the ones

Select the best three messages. Look at the best of the rest and see if they contain any truly essential ideas. If so, can you incorporate these ideas in your chosen three?

Put them to work

Circulate and promote your messages proactively within your project and be sure that everyone is familiar with how to use them. Every piece of external communication should be planned and executed in line with your key messages. Review, revise and rehearse. Monitor output to be sure that this is taking place.

Audit and feedback

Periodically, take a look at any press coverage that has been generated and gauge what messages your key target groups are receiving about your project. Are your messages getting across? You will need to be persistent and should generally not change messages very often, but if they are not working that can be a sign that it's time to think again.

IN SHORT

- Don't rush the process. Messages take time and effort to create.

- Get them right, and ensure everyone involved agrees and "buys in".

- They need to be universally accepted and used.

- Deploy the same messages through all of your communication efforts, from press releases and media relations activities to websites, brochures, event themes, and lobbying.

- Adapt them for different target groups and occasions, but don't change them fundamentally.

- For messages to have impact, they have to be repeated over and over again.

- Support and substantiate each message with evidence and examples ("proof points").

FactSheet 4

Communication Handbook

Monitoring and evaluation



- The need for monitoring your communication
- How to plan and resource your evaluation
- The main evaluation tools

It is important to evaluate the success of communication activities, in order to learn which activities worked well and which should be improved in future. Evaluation also creates useful feedback to share with others in the project and the programme, so that they can learn from your experience. State in your communication plan the criteria by which you will measure its success.

It is always important to measure the success of any communication activities that are undertaken. Evaluation helps to determine whether communication is working. Are you reaching out to the right target groups? Do they understand clearly what your project is trying to do? If not, you need to find out why at an early stage in order to modify your strategy.

*Are you reaching out to the right target groups?
Do they understand clearly what your project is trying to do?*



Evaluation can also be a crucial tool to communicate and justify the benefits of communication for your project partners.

If you can prove that communication activities have changed people's behaviours or attitudes or have reached more target groups you will get more buy in from partners.

Evaluation can help you to measure the success of your communication team and external agencies and address any team issues quickly. Evaluation can help you to benchmark your project against other projects to make sure that you are getting the exposure you deserve.

It also enables you to learn best practice from other projects, share ideas and perhaps work on joint communication activities with projects that address similar themes across the programme or with other transnational projects.

Evaluation tools

→ There are many methods of evaluating the success of public relations and communication activities. Some are very easy to do in-house, while others are more expensive and complex and might require the help of a specialist external organisation.

This factsheet focuses on key types of evaluation: **questionnaire surveys, focus groups surveys, media monitoring, media analysis, message analysis, web evaluation and advertising value equivalency.**

This is not an exhaustive list of measurement tools: beyond these core disciplines it will be important for your project to find methods that are the right fit for your communication goals and objectives.

You will have to decide if you are able to allocate staff and financial resource to this.



You should allocate some resource and use it as an opportunity to compare practices with other projects.

Questionnaire surveys

The most accessible way of getting feedback about your communication is by asking people with a questionnaire survey.

The advantages

- ::: In-house: Questionnaires are relatively easy to design and can be incorporated into a wider survey of the project
- ::: Sample size: You can get responses from a high number of people
- ::: Distribution: questionnaires can be given out during large conferences or sent out by mailing list

- ::: Time: most questionnaires should be kept to no more than 10 questions – they are relatively easy and quick for respondents to complete.

The disadvantages

- ::: The data: the results cover a big sample but the information is not very detailed.
- ::: Questionnaires provide some good quantitative evaluation, but are limited on feedback about quality.
- ::: Distribution – low return rate: people are not interested in completing them

Focus groups

You can organise a focus group of up to 6 to 8 people. You invite the member of the focus group to 20-minute discussion session.

You encourage, through questioning, respondents to give you their opinions on your project communication. You structure the survey questions from the very general to specific. Your aim is to get rich qualitative feedback from an in-depth interview session with a relatively small number of people.

The advantages

- ::: In depth qualitative information that can reveal very useful trends, issues, opinions.
- ::: These results give you insight that you can act on.
- ::: You are able to use the focus group to engage with your target groups.

The disadvantages

- ::: Resources: These are time consuming to organise and you need a skilled interviewer who has been trained and a note taker.
- ::: You need to very carefully consider the types of questions.
- ::: You can only get responses for a very small sample size.

Media monitoring

Regularly following press coverage about your project is one of the most important tasks in public relations.

You should aim to get regular media feedback. Strong strategy and effective decision making depends on understanding current issues and what your stakeholders are saying and hearing about you.

This may take the form of scanned press articles that are emailed to key people on a regular basis. If the amount of coverage is so large that it would be unrealistic to expect everyone to read all of it, a synopsis or summary report drawing attention to the most important articles may be more efficient.

Always keep hard and electronic examples of press coverage to other project partners, but especially colleagues in your PR and marketing departments, to make sure that everyone is up-to-date with current information.

The process of media monitoring and reporting is a useful task in itself for the partners' PR departments (if available) because it helps you to understand the media environment and gain hands-on knowledge of what makes news in your target media.

Media analysis

A more in-depth look at press coverage will enable you to look at longer-term developments in opinion about your project and the regional themes that you are working with – for example: environment, tourism, urban transport.

A media analysis should be a detailed look at the press coverage you have received, in an accessible format incorporating charts or graphs that make the information easy to assimilate and understand.

Typical areas for attention will include:

- ::: Volume (number of articles) of press coverage about your organisation
- ::: Tone of press coverage: is coverage positive, negative or neutral?
- ::: Prominence of press coverage: small mention in an article, small article specifically about your organisation, large article, etc.
- ::: Presence of desired messages in press coverage (see message analysis below)

If you have a small budget it is fine to do a media analysis yourself, but it can be time consuming and is unlikely to be as objective as it would be if done by an external organisation.

Message analysis

Messages are so crucial that it is worthwhile making an effort to determine the extent to which they are actually being conveyed to target groups. Depending on the budget available, this process can range from simply evaluating whether messages appear in media coverage right up to conducting detailed and direct surveys of your target groups to establish whether they know your messages. Such surveys can take place by telephone, email, online or letter.

Web evaluation

As the communication focus for many types of target groups migrates steadily online, so web evaluation tools are becoming increasingly important. Consult with IT experts before establishing online systems to ensure that their structure will provide you with useful information about users.

Basic web evaluation might involve measuring site visits alongside the timing of public relations activities to establish whether surges and peaks in traffic to your website correspond with interest that you have generated. You can usually do this with "Google Alerts".

Advertising value equivalency (AVE)

AVE was developed as an attempt to compare the value of editorial media coverage with paid advertising. In theory it should enable an organisation to express the value of media exposure in terms of the price they would have had to pay for advertising that would generate an equivalent degree of publicity or exposure. AVE is still in common use in some markets, but it is no longer endorsed by many PR associations who view the concept of putting a financial value on press coverage as inherently unreliable. AVE should generally be treated with caution and is usually less useful than specific and targeted evaluation methods.

In the end it is up to you to decide how much resource you can delegate to this – but we advise that you do include some evaluation and monitoring activities in your communication plan.

IN SHORT

The main evaluation tools are:

- ☐ Questionnaire surveys
- ☐ Focus groups
- ☐ Media monitoring
- ☐ Message analysis
- ☐ Web analysis
- ☐ Advertising value equivalency

Visibility



- What is branding for?
- Things to consider when designing a logo
- How to use photographs and what are “good” photographs

The aim of your logo, brand, image is to get people to recognise your project. If you can use your logo, signature, website, newsletter, press releases effectively you present a coherent and memorable image of your project.

Branding is one of the most difficult disciplines to get right and it is likely that you will need to outsource some or all of the design work to a design company.

Branding is more often associated with the private sector where commercial organisation seek to create trust that will bring their customers back to them. But brand and image is important for Alpine Space projects, too. If you want your target groups to remember your project and to identify with the themes and issues, then a strong image and brand is important.

What is branding for?

→ Many people think that branding is simply a matter of designing a new logo for their project or organisation and possibly a tagline to go underneath it, often barely distinguishing between branding and marketing.

A strong brand has to do with every aspect of a project's relationship with its target groups. The function of branding is to make us feel good by making our decisions easier and safer. It does this by reducing anxiety and doubt and enhancing the trustworthiness of the brand.

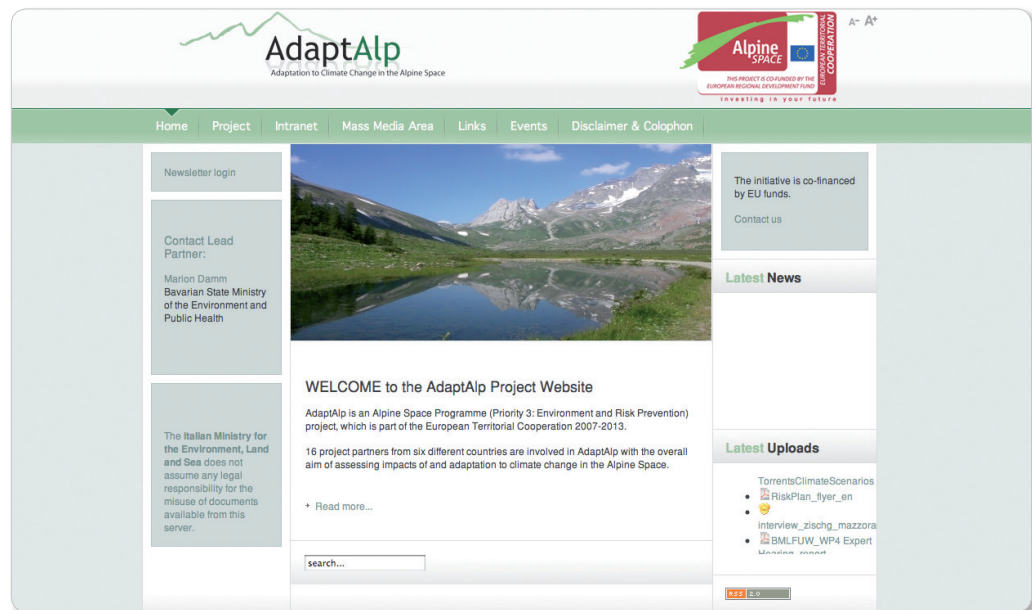
Branding is perceptual management that works with such virtual aspects like values, associations, percepts, beliefs, metaphors and environments. It is a promise and a difference. If marketing is the body of an organisation, then branding is its mind.

The process of branding

The steps that you can follow to establish the brand identity of your project are similar to the process of communication planning.

- ::: What is the aim of your project?
- ::: Who are your target groups?
- ::: What benefits will your target groups get?

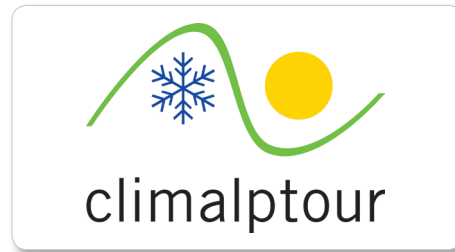
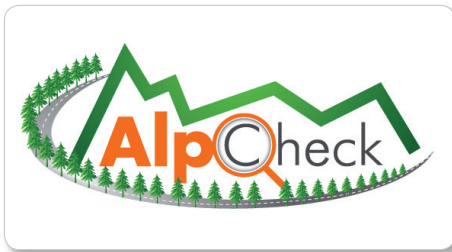
Does this all sound familiar? It should do – your brand identity is part of your communication plan.



Logos

→ Designing good, clear and innovative logos is a very difficult task and you will need to use a design company.

Your name and your logo are usually the first points of contact with your target groups. Having a strong identity is very important. It is essential that the logo is seen as mark of quality and when a brand is marked with a distinctive logo, a target group can trust it to be good.



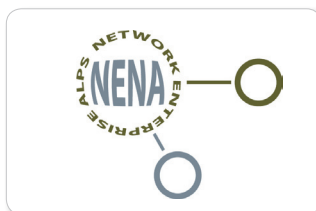
Things to consider when designing a logo

Becoming more involved with your brand and understanding how branding works will help your project communication. Whereas branding is a big subject here are some tips and ideas for logo design to start you going.

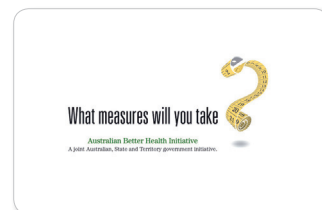
- ::: Avoid negative images and associations.
- ::: Colour is key. Enhance your logo with colours that are meaningful.
- ::: Check other projects for ideas to make sure that your logo is unique.
- ::: Start paying attention to logos and brands around you and learn what works and what doesn't work.
- ::: Logos always work in their context. Don't assess logos from just purely design principles.
- ::: Conduct a focus group within your target groups. What is their first reaction?
- ::: Sometimes the most obvious images can be cliché. Try to incorporate a creative visual into the logo. Remember not all Alpine Space projects are about the summits of mountains!
- ::: Experiment with different fonts to see which resonate with your brand.

If you want to add a tagline you need to create a short and memorable phrase that will sum up the tone and premise of your project brand. If you choose to have a tagline, make it to be seen on all your communications tools or don't use it.

We can directly understand what they are about



On the website of these projects we can't read the tagline



And finally... check that the logo or a similar design has not already been used by another project or organisation.

You will probably need to trademark a logo that you have designed or commissioned. You need to check the trade mark office in your region.

Use of photographs

→ They say a picture paints a thousand words. Good use of photography will enhance the visibility of your printed material and web site. Poorly conceived photographs do exactly the opposite.

Things to avoid

- ::: Avoid using the publicity photo clichés
- ::: One person passing a cheque to another
- ::: Someone breaking ground with a shovel
- ::: Two people shaking hands
- ::: Someone cutting a ribbon
- ::: One person passing an award to another
- ::: A group of people (e.g. project partners), unknown to the target group

Below we have two example project photographs. The first shows the backs of a group of delegates looking at something we cannot see. The second photograph is a group shot of a project team – this may be appropriate for an internal newsletter, but for external target groups it is of no use. Remember that you should be trying to communicate results and impact through your publications. People are not interested in process.



Good photographs

What sort of photographs will editors use?

- ::: Keep groups small – 3 or 4
- ::: People – faces in particular
- ::: People doing something (concrete actions, no plain group pictures)
- ::: Avoid clutter backgrounds
- ::: Fill whole picture
- ::: Use strong colours – reds or yellows
- ::: Relevant

Conference Kempten



“ CO₂NeuTrAlp: Environmentally friendly mobility is feasible - by means of renewable energies! More on: www.co2neutralp.eu ”

Around the world in a Solar Taxi

In July 2007, Louis Palmer started his journey around the world with a solar powered vehicle.

During the following 18 months, Palmer crossed numerous countries with his solar taxi, raising a lot of attention from media and politics. Between more than 500 interviews, Palmer also found time to take some famous passengers on board – among those UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon. “Admittedly, as a regular citizen I cannot change the world but I can demonstrate to the world just how dire the global climate situation has become and how many sophisticated solutions to lower the greenhouse gases already exist.” Palmer took the participants of the conference on a fascinating journey. For 2010 he plans a solar race around the world.



A reliable political framework as key to success

Prof. Dr Rainer Rothfuss from the University of Tübingen insisted that the challenge to provide sustainable mobility is global in scale.

Fuel prices will keep increasing in the long run as the majority of the world population lives in countries with strong economic growth and a huge unsatisfied need for motorised mobility. After “Peak Oil”, fuel prices will not rise in a smooth and reliable process but, threatening the world economy, in abrupt ups and downs boosted by conflicts and speculation. Therefore, Professor

Rothfuss calls on politicians at EU and national level to provide maximum security for the market development of renewable energies in transport. Knowing that one litre gasoline will most probably cost 5 Euros in 20 years, taxation shall secure that this increase is made in a constant and predict-

able process, thus sending signals to investors and consumers to invest in time in energy efficient vehicles. Municipal leaders with a strong vision will be needed to demonstrate how solar mobility can be practically implemented in innovative pilot cities. In an intelligent intermodal system, short-range individual e-mobility will be ideally complemented by long-range rail-bound public e-mobility.

Imprint: Texts: Vivien Führ, B.A.U.M.; Prof. Dr. Rainer Rothfuß, Universität Tübingen; Volker Hoffmann, FGM-AMOR; Pictures: B.A.U.M. Consult Munich and FGM-AMOR; Design by FGM-AMOR

Intelligent Mobility for the Alpine Space

www.co2neutralp.eu

Project visits

Alps Mobility II

The project visit to the Gemeinde Werfenweng, one of the Alpine Pearls of the INTERREG IIIB Alps Mobility II project, has been a brilliant occasion to see how it is possible to consider mobility and tourism in an environmental friendly way.

The Alpine Pearls are mountain villages and resorts which have adapted innovative ecotourism and eco mobility solutions. After a presentation by the mayor of Werfenweng, the participants had the opportunity to try various soft means of transportation, which are being used by the local population and the tourists in Werfenweng.



IN SHORT

● The aim of your logo, brand, image is to get people to recognise your project.

● Logos: designing good, clear and innovative logos is a very difficult task and you will need to use a design company.

● Colour is key. Enhance your logo with colours that are meaningful.

● Check other projects for ideas and to make sure that your logo is unique.

● Good photographs depict the results, outcomes or impact of the project, not the process.

FactSheet 6

Communication Handbook

Website



- What design to use for your website?
- How to structure your website to make people stay longer?
- Differences in how people read text on the screen and on paper
- Example of the hierarchical website structure
- Other online tools

Your website will be the first source of information about you for many people outside your project, so it needs to contain the right information in a clear and accessible design and structure.

Design

→ Many organisations spend a fortune on the aesthetic design of their websites, a luxury that is beyond the reach of most Alpine Space projects. If you do have budget to commission a professional web design company, be aware that many will try to sell you a service that is unnecessarily complex and expensive. A simple “brochure” site may be sufficient for many Alpine Space projects.

Alternatively, it is relatively cheap and easy to configure and publish a straightforward website using inexpensive off-the-shelf software. Most web publishing programmes include a range of generic website templates that can be personalised easily. Keep the design minimal and professional, avoiding any sound, movement or clashes of colour. Avoid information overload: leave enough empty space. Clarity, accessibility and ease of use are vital.

Structure

→ Good websites have a system of links among the pages that is intuitive, straightforward, and reflected in a clear navigation facility that makes it obvious to users where in the site they are, and how to get to wherever else they want to go.

The easier it is to use, the longer users will stay at the site and the more they will see. Links to all key pages or sections of the site should be displayed on the front page, and every page should contain a standard set of links to other key pages or sections since not all users will arrive at the front page.

Make your structure hierarchical and as shallow as possible: no page should be more than two clicks away from the home page. (See sample website structure below)

Content

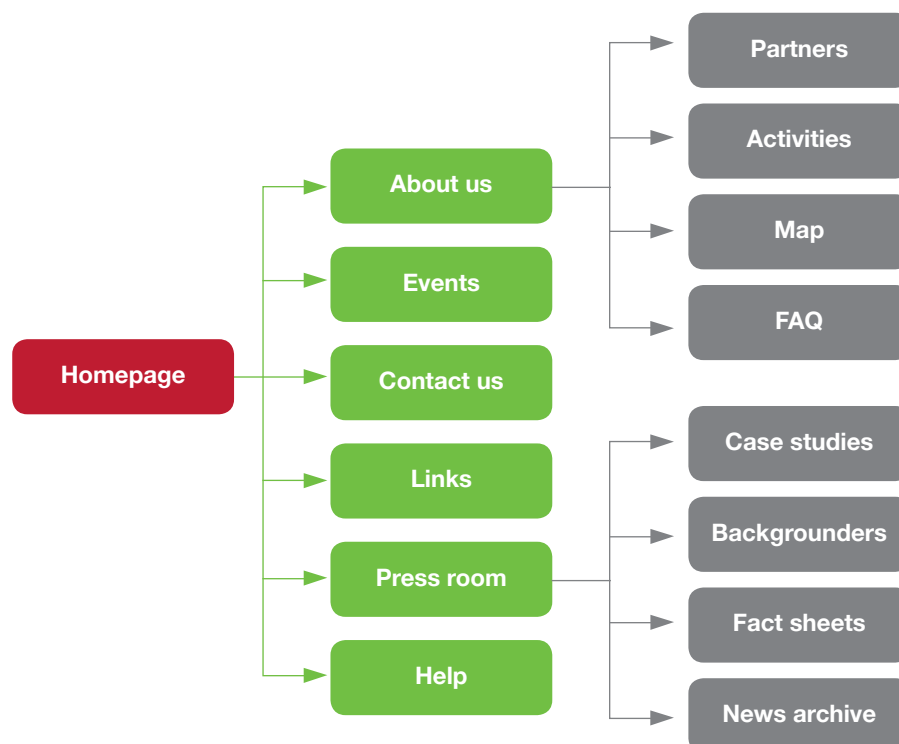
Research has shown that people read text very differently on websites from the way they read on paper. On paper, people read sentences fairly predictably from left to right, and persist through long sections. On screen, people's eyes scan around unpredictably and settle on interesting keywords. On paper, people are more likely to read to the bottom of the page. On screen, people lose interest more quickly and many people do not bother to scroll down.

Break up your text with sections and bullet points

Highlight key words in bold

Be concise. Avoid long texts that require users to scroll down

Example of a hierarchical website structure



Programming

Websites – content management systems

Most organisations use websites with content management systems (CMS) which enable you to manage your website, add or delete articles, news, events, and change or update information by yourself. Most of the content management systems are easy to use and enable you to control the process of updating content. There are plenty of free open source content management systems available with ready-made interfaces, functions and modules.

Creating your own website

Creating your project or project event website might be fairly easy. You can use blog platforms which are free and easy to use. They have different themes to choose that might be modified and tailored to your project. They also have content management so you will be able to update your information continuously. WordPress is a commonly used platform.

www.wordpress.com

Hosting

→ Your website can often be hosted directly by your webdesign/programming company or they can suggest another company for you. If your project is part of a large organisation or local authority, there might also be an opportunity to host your website internally. Look around to find the best hosting option for your project.

Blogs

→ Blogs are an easily created and regularly updated website that works a bit like an online diary, discussion board and news forum. A blog can contain personal or project information and facts or opinions on any topic. An author will usually write about something topical and allow other users to post comments or rebuttals to the person's comments.

Creating a blog is a great way to showcase a project, and can be a way to get people involved dynamically in its development. Your blog can be hosted on your website's server or you can set one up for free or a very small charge with a blog hosting service. The Alpine Space project Open-Alps for example, developed a nice blog in addition to their website.

Open Alps blog

<http://blog.openalps.org/>

If you create a blog for your project, make sure to update it regularly and encourage other people in your project to participate.

Note that you should not blog if:

- ::: You don't have the time to commit to posting on a fairly frequent basis;
- ::: You aren't a writer. Some people feel comfortable with the written world, while other struggle;
- ::: You have nothing to share on a different forum than on your website.

Bloggin checklist

What makes a successful blog?

- ::: **Publishable:** anyone can publish a blog. You can do it cheaply and post often. Each posting is instantly available worldwide;
- ::: **Findable:** through search engines, people will find blogs by subject, by author or both. The more you post, the more findable you become;
- ::: **Social:** the blogosphere is one big conversation. Interesting topical conversations move from site to site, linking to each other. Through blogs, people with shared interests build relationships unrestricted by geographic borders;
- ::: **Linkable:** because each blog can link to all others, every blogger has access to the tens of millions of people who visit the blogosphere every day.

Internal communication

Project Management Systems

For internal communications for your projects you can use online Project Management System (PMS) The PMS allows all authorised project partners and their teams to view progress, set milestones, give responsibilities and set deadlines, share documents and contact information, receive automatic email updates, and communicate centrally within the project.

For example www.2-plan.com

IN SHORT

When designing or commissioning design of a website ask yourself these questions:

- ☐ What is the aim of having a website for your project?
- ☐ Who will use it?
- ☐ What does it need to do?
- ☐ How interactive does it need to be?
- ☐ What features does it need to have to achieve your aims?
- ☐ What features are not necessary?
- ☐ How important is a website for your project communications?
- ☐ What impact will the website have on your project?
- ☐ How will evaluate the effectiveness?
- ☐ Are you going to outsource or try to design in-house?
- ☐ What is your budget?

Social Media



- Listening and monitoring what happens online
- Identifying online audiences
- The main social media tools

Complementary to the website, the social media are precious online tools for project communications. Most of the public organisations and companies have Facebook profiles, Twitter and LinkedIn accounts.

If you decide to go for any of the social media, you should add icons linking to your social media pages on the homepage of your website to attract visitors.

Foreword

There are three vital things to know about social media for communicating transnational projects

- ::: Where is your audience? Go to the places where they like to be;
- ::: Non-engagement is not an option. Once you start you have to continue;
- ::: Don't worry about criticism. Worry about human resources.

Listening & monitoring online

→ To begin with, an essential element is learning to monitor what stakeholders, and your target groups are saying online about your project, your field of action.

By understanding what people are saying about your project, you have the opportunity to choose to respond, or not. This gives you more control over managing reputation and awareness, and can help you improve your standing among stakeholders and influencers.

Top tips: Listening online

- ::: Use Google Alerts and subscribe to the RSS feeds of key websites and blogs in your project theme;
- ::: Show you are listening by commenting on key bloggers' and social media posts;
- ::: Search for hashtags* and key words on Twitter to see what people are saying about a topic of interest;
- ::: Search other social media sites like Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn, Flickr and YouTube, to see if people are talking about your thematic area.

Monitoring project's interests and website visits

Stay informed

Set up **Google Alerts** at google.com/alerts: generate a list of key terms to be monitored: particular organisations, categories, topics, people, trends and issues. Google will monitor the Web for mentions of your key terms and send you email alerts for when they appear online.

You can as well subscribe to **RSS feeds** of relevant websites.



RSS (Rich Site Summary) is a format for delivering regularly changing web content. Many news-related sites, weblogs and other online publishers syndicate their content as an RSS Feed to whoever wants it. Look for the symbol to determine if a website or blog is RSS enabled. Click this button and enter your email address to get the latest posts.

There are various online sources that show you how to subscribe to RSS feeds:

For example: <http://rss-tutorial.com/index.php>

Stay informed

You can monitor your website visits to improve the quality of your website and get a precise idea on what pages are most visited and appreciated.

Some website traffic monitoring tools: Piwik (<http://piwik.org/>), Mint: (<http://www.haveamint.com/>), Clicky: (<http://getclicky.com/>), AWStats: (<http://awstats.sourceforge.net/>), google analytics (<http://www.google.com/analytics/>).

Identifying online audiences

Remember a key principle of online communications is to go to where your audiences are.

Who is your audience, what do they currently think and what do you want them to think in the future? Where are they?

- ::: Can these audiences be found online in LinkedIn groups, Facebook groups, Twitter, Google+ circles?

* Hashtags (# symbol + keyword) are used on Twitter and other social medias to indicate keywords, facilitate the search and categorize tweets. See: <https://support.twitter.com/articles/49309-what-are-hashtags-symbols#>.

- ::: Can you identify who the influencers are and make a list of them?
- ::: Do they have many followers on Twitter or many Facebook friends and likes?
- ::: Who are their friends/followers, and are the friends/followers also relevant as your audience?
- ::: What issues are important to this audience?
- ::: Have you Googled, and searched Twitter and Facebook, to see what topics relevant to your project are being noted online?
- ::: Which media does this audience use and trust the most?
- ::: What are the best ways of reaching this audience?

A guide to the main social tools



Actually Twitter is one of the most powerful and widely used professional communication tools available and is particularly useful if you are looking to engage with people who have a joint interest – i.e. your thematic areas.

It is a microblogging tool, i.e. the conversations are quick and go directly to what matters.

It allows at the same time: news reporting, communication and story telling, conversation monitoring, stakeholder relations and real-time search.

One of the most relevant social media tool for the projects.

Good practices: <https://twitter.com/manfredproject>; <https://twitter.com/pumasproject>

Pros

- ::: most active community;
- ::: used by many professionals;
- ::: ideal to inform and get informed quickly;
- ::: building a community of followers is relatively fast (if you follow a few tips).

Cons

- ::: very limited writing space, you have to be very synthetic;
- ::: no formatting options and quite poor integration of media content;
- ::: most time consuming: you have to tweet regularly to be interesting for your followers.

Tips

- ::: subscribe to many accounts dealing with your project's issues;
- ::: subscribe to partner regions accounts and local/regional press;
- ::: use hashtags such as #topic to appear easily in search results;
- ::: mention other accounts (using @nameofaccount), re-tweet and respond to others;
- ::: take part in trends such as #FF (Follow Friday: recommend to follow a list of interesting accounts.);
- ::: use TweetDeck or similar to monitor accounts, topics and manage several accounts.

Read more

- ::: The Beginner's Guide to Twitter: <http://mashable.com/2012/06/05/twitter-for-beginners/>;
- ::: Quick tips for Twitter: <http://huff.to/fnKubC>.



Google+ (G+) was launched in September 2011. One year later, it had a total of 400 million registered users of whom 100 million are active on a monthly basis.

Google+ is fully integrated with all Google features such as Google Docs, Picasa, Google Search, Google calendars and contacts. Its variety of intuitive sharing options via the “Circles” enable you to use the tool for internal as well as for external communication.

This social medium is used by several networks and relevant organisations for the projects such as the European Commission. It is an interesting tool to experiment as well and which can improve the project’s visibility.

Pros

- ::: very active and rapidly growing community;
- ::: used by many professionals;
- ::: formatting options available, editable posts;
- ::: an interesting mix of Facebook and Twitter features;
- ::: easy integration of links, pictures and videos;
- ::: easy management of contacts and pages in circles, possibility to share with selected circles;
- ::: possibility to have several page administrators.

Cons

- ::: many people do not trust the potential of G+;
- ::: often described as a community of computer geeks;
- ::: an extra account to manage on a daily basis.

Tips

- ::: G+ is a very active and open community, interact with people and you will quickly reach a good visibility;
- ::: mention +European Union and +EU & Alpine Space in all your posts and it will be re-shared to thousands of people;
- ::: always illustrate your post with media content;
- ::: use the formatting options;
- ::: try to be active on a daily basis with 1 or 2 posts a day.

Read more

- ::: Google+ Complete guide: <http://mashable.com/2011/07/16/google-plus-guide/>;
- ::: Google+ for newbies: <http://bit.ly/VyqqtC>.



Facebook describes itself as a “social utility” and is constantly changing, with more multimedia options, and more integration with other networking services.

Facebook is a great way to share links to your new website posts or newsletter, or let people know what your Twitter name is, and is also a powerful place to set up fan pages (rather than groups) for your project. Fan page allow people to join without being seen as interfering with the people-to-people communication which is, as such, a valued part of the service.

The scope of using Facebook for transnational projects can be limited because many of your target audiences may not be using Facebook for professional reasons and as your project will not last more than three years.

Good practice:

<http://www.facebook.com/HomerProjectHarmonisingOpenDataInTheMediterranean>

Pros

- ::: largest community on the internet;
- ::: possibility to have several page administrators;
- ::: management of milestones on the timeline;
- ::: good visibility of the project’s brand thanks to profile picture + cover picture;
- ::: easy integration of links, pictures and videos.

Cons

- ::: mostly used for private communication, few people use it professionally (but this tends to change a little);
- ::: it takes a long time to build a community of subscribers (see tips to improve your visibility);
- ::: no formatting options available in posts.

Tips

- ::: subscribe to many accounts dealing with your project’s issues;
- ::: subscribe to partner regions accounts and local/regional press;
- ::: be active on the pages you subscribed to by liking, sharing and commenting posts on a daily basis;
- ::: mention people and pages in your posts;
- ::: try to be active on a daily basis with 1 or 2 posts a day;
- ::: always illustrate your post with media content.

Read more

- ::: The Beginner’s Guide to Facebook: <http://on.mash.to/JhnUCe>;
- ::: Setting up a page on Facebook: <http://bit.ly/yocAJn>.



Business professionals use LinkedIn to connect with others, and to learn and share information. The interface has become more like Facebook recently, allowing for status updates, and offering groups for people to join. Unlike Facebook, LinkedIn is purely for professional communications and networking, and people using it do not generally mix personal life with its community. It also offers the opportunity for people to “recommend” your services, by giving a testimonial about your professional success. You can search for groups on LinkedIn to join that will be informative for your project.

Alpine Space Programme LinkedIn account: <http://de.linkedin.com/pub/eu-alpine-space-programme/14/234/868>

Pros

- ::: Excellent tool to create networks (Groups);
- ::: Excellent recruitment tool;
- ::: Excellent research tool;
- ::: Good tool to emulate discussions by being active in your groups;
- ::: No “trolls”, no junk email (trusted relations), used only by professionals.

Cons

- ::: not the most innovative and intuitive social media;
- ::: most people use Facebook, Twitter and G+ on a daily basis and check their LinkedIn account once in a while;
- ::: the visibility to the general public is quite limited, your communication remains in a circle of professionals who already know about you.

Tips

- ::: join the Alpine Space Programme Communication Network, where you can exchange on your project’s communication with other projects and with us;
- ::: join groups dealing with your project’s topics and issues;
- ::: be sure to make a complete profile.

Read more

- ::: The Beginner’s Guide to LinkedIn: <http://on.mash.to/KU2lwx>;
- ::: LinkedIn learning center: <http://learn.linkedin.com/new-users/>.



Sharing photos and videos from your project adds rich media content to your communications, and helps everyone in your network get to know your project better. You may want to set up a Flickr account to share photos, and remember that you can tag the photos with keywords to help others find the images and mention copyrights. You can also join Flickr groups, and submit photos to these themed groups. You may want to experiment with video blogging, by filming project activities using a video camera, or a web cam, and uploading the clip to YouTube. You can also share videos from other organisations.

Youtube channel of the Alpine Space Programme:

http://www.youtube.com/user/eualpinespace?feature=results_main

Flickr account of the Alpine Space Programme:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/eualpinespace/>

Pros

- ::: These free services enable you to animate your project communications with lots of photos and short videos (keep them short though);
- ::: Free (no limit) and high quality service;
- ::: Comments are possible.

Con

- ::: Difficult to moderate.

Tips

- ::: Embed videos located on Youtube in your website;
- ::: Share YouTube videos and Flickr galleries on other social media.

Tips for all social media

- ::: The Alpine Space Programme is present in all the above described social media. Visit our pages to see how we manage our communication on a daily basis;
- ::: If you decide to join one of these social media, browse the list of accounts and pages we follow to start building your own community;
- ::: In case you join one of them, remember to connect with us, we will promote your page/account to our followers and re-share your posts;

Publications



- How to design effective leaflets, brochures or other publications keeping in mind graphics, images, text, format, messages?
- How to use third party leaflets to reach wider range of audiences?

Leaflets and brochures

→ General leaflets and brochures need to convey a rounded impression of your project in a way designed to draw attention and create interest. The first step is to choose or commission a design that will encourage a person from your target group to take the time to read it.

Effective designs tend to be relatively simple and make good use of **graphics and imagery** that are both eye-catching and relevant to your subject matter. Use bold and striking pictures, preferably including some action or an interesting view or place, rather than bland portraits, group team pictures or handshakes.

Be realistic about **how much information** can be conveyed in the space available. There is no point cramming everything you want to say into a design so crowded that it becomes unattractive or effectively unreadable. Accessible designs include a substantial amount of white or empty space to make the content easier on the eye.

Determine how much space you have available before beginning to write. Imagine **how people will read** the leaflet and brochure. Not many of them are likely to sit down and give it their full concentration for a long period of time as they might with a book. People flick through brochures until something catches their eye; leaflets get even less attention, so be clear and concise.

Vary the format of your content, avoiding large blocks of text that will put readers to sleep. Use boxes, lists, bullet points, graphics – any way you can imagine to encourage readers' eyes to linger on your key information.

Build the content around your **messages**, with a clear view to angles that are likely to be interesting to the target audiences that you have in mind.

If your leaflet or brochure is destined for a use where it will be competing for attention with a large number of similar publications from other organisations, consider using a format that will help it to stand out, such as an unusual size or shape (this can be as simple as using landscape rather than portrait orientation), a novel material such as a textured paper, or a fold-out layout.

Probably the most common error with leaflets and brochures is to invest a great deal of time, effort and budget into an expensive design, layout and print job but direct much too little attention towards the **quality of the content**. The goal is to engage an audience and influence their views or behaviour in line with your communication strategy. In this context a beautiful brochure is no use if it is boring or unclear. Use your best writers and devote enough time to the task to create truly powerful prose; if necessary, commission professional copy-writers or copy-editors.

Before printing, consider greening aspects. Publications can be disseminated electronically. To avoid waste, printing of publications should be implemented only if strictly necessary and corresponding to a sound dissemination plan. A specific shorter version of a publication can be created for printing and publications should be printed on both sides and on recycled paper. Remember to communicate about the greening measures you implement (for example in a specific greening section at the end of your publication). This is a further element to maintain good reputation for your project.

Third party newsletters

→ The readership of newsletters compiled by other organisations can often be interested in Alpine Space project activities, and this is a great opportunity to reach out to a new segment of your target group.

It will be useful to research potentially interesting newsletters that you could contribute to, for example a newsletter published by a chamber of commerce, NGO, a newsmagazine of a transport provider. Also consider internal newsletters such as interministerial newsletters targeted to ministries.



NEWSLETTER

Summary

- 2 • WP5: Climate Change Impact
- WP4: towards the operational system at a good pace!
- 3 • Opinions of Costantino Sirca, Kerry R. Anderson, Andrea Camia
- Opinion of Nicolay A. Korshunov
- 4 • Invitation for the last meeting of the project
- Partners, Observers and Local Partners

WP6: another cross border exercise took place in the Mediterranean Alps, between Piedmont and France, for the cooperation in case of wild fire emergency. There were big participation of personnel and means coming from the two countries. The exercise was an opportunity to look at the colleagues during the work, to share equipments, to learn techniques and to get to know each other!



12th and 13th October 2011
Entracque, Cuneo, Italy.



Dear readers,

as we are entering the final semester of the project, we would like to take stock of the activities developed in the different Working Package (WP) of our project. You can find, further on, the summary of some activities which were carried out.

The meeting in Desenzano del Garda, Italy, has just ended. We enjoyed, in it, the unusual and much appreciated participation of some external experts. They were consulted on different issues, which had previously emerged in the different working groups. The experts gave us an authoritative word-wide comment widening our viewpoints to a dimension well beyond our Alpine Region!

You can find, here to follow, their opinion on ALP FFIRS. For more information we invite you to have a look at our website:

WWW.alpffirs.eu

WP8: information and publicity activities have been well developed by the project partners. Many scientific articles have been published: more than what was initially forecasted.

Recently the partners have worked to improve information through activities addressed to the schools (Regione Piemonte) and for the publication of an educational calendar (Regione Veneto).



Next months we will focus on the spreading of the results of the projects, in favour of the operative structures.

Rolando Rizzolo, Regione Veneto, Italy.

Alp-Water-Scarce

- 1 -

Stakeholders that support the project with their knowledge on water problems in their respective regions. In order to guarantee the information flow a project website (available in EN, FR, G, IT, SI) has been created and is maintained by Z_GIS, Austria (www.alpwaterscarce.eu).

Stakeholder Interaction Forum

The Alp-Water-Scarce project is based on - and will be supported by - a Stakeholder Interaction Forum. Every partner within the five countries of the Alpine Space is participating in knowledge exchange with local actors working on water issues. These actors will become stakeholders in the project and have the opportunity to interact with one another and to help the project progress. To confirm their participation in the project, stakeholders are asked to sign the "Stakeholder Declaration".

The first step of stakeholder participation involves the distribution of a questionnaire addressing water resources in their respective region of the Alps. This questionnaire is identical for all stakeholders from the five countries of the project to allow maximum comparability and exchange. It has been translated into five languages and can be downloaded from the Alp-Water-Scarce website.

So far, 60 responses have already been received for the project as a whole. We finished this first data collection stage at the end of June and have begun the analysis.

Several workshops and meetings will be organized for awareness raising, to promote the first findings of the project and give stakeholders an overview of what activities are in progress in their region and at the transnational level. At these meetings we will also launch a dialogue between stakeholders at the local level and seek their feedback on the results so far.

Some partners have already organised local meetings for example:

Project partner 9, Provincia di Trento, organised a large meeting with 70 stakeholders on 23rd April 2009.

Project partner 4, STMK, organised a stakeholder meeting in Graz with 70 participants, on 5th December 2008.

Advisory Board

The Advisory Board ensures that the project complies with its objectives and supports and strengthens the collaboration between politicians, policy makers, scientists, and local and regional stakeholders. The members of the Advisory Board come from different institutional levels and countries and have a broad scientific background:

Raimund Mair, Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, Division VII/2 International Water Policy, Austria
Natacha Amors, Office de l'Eau, France
Tania Cegnar, Ministry of Environment, Slovenia
Benno Hain, Federal Environment Agency, Germany
Shahbaz Khan, Unesco, Division of Water Sciences, France
Maurizio Rosso, Politecnico di Torino, Italy



Agricultural water use, Savoy, France © Ch. Mourembles

Alp-Water-Scarce



Newsletter September 2009

IN SHORT

Communicating projects through publications requires a particular attention to detail.



Ensure that one person is designated with the overall responsibility for commissioning the design, layout and wording of print publications.



This single person should be in charge of editing (single wording use) and visualisation.



For each publication, project partners should develop a concept (including a dissemination plan) from the start



Try to develop a series of publications that contain a logical order of issues.



Quality check the layout, colours and font before approving a print run.



Decide how many copies you will need. Who is going to receive them and when? When do you plan to distribute them? What is the end date for these? When will they expire?



For your publications use the language the most relevant to your target groups or English.



If you need a translation get it done professionally. If possible use the same translator for all translation work.



Consider greening aspects and print only the necessary number of copies to fulfill your communication plan. Use recycled paper and communicate about it.

FactSheet 8

Communication Handbook

Promotional products



- Common types of promotional products and how these fit your project communication
- Questions to consider when ordering promotional products
- Greening of promotional products
- Branding and image spread by promotional products
- Creative ideas for using promotional products

There is an important role for promotional products in communicating your project to your target groups. However, it is important to question which products will be appropriate. Too often, a lot of money is wasted on promotional merchandise. For EU funded projects you cannot afford to spend on items that are not useful.

The most common promotional products that can be sourced and branded almost anywhere and on-line include, ball point pens / pencils, coffee mugs, mousemats, USB flash drives, conference bags, umbrellas, key rings, tea shirts, conference folders, notepads and diaries.

This is a rather random selection – which illustrates the disorganised nature of promotional products. Many of these items have little or no practical value and most of these would not add much value to your project communication.

The other problem is ‘promotional product fatigue’. Most people don’t need or want a new mousemat. Are promotional products a useful addition to your project communication? Because they are easy to source does not mean that they are useful.

Questions to consider when sourcing promotional products

Fit with your project goals

::: Are they in line with the messages that you want to convey about your projects?

What do they say about your project? Do they fit with the themes, the outputs, the deliverables or are they simply merchandise that are useful for people to have?

::: How do they support the promotion of your project?

Is there a creative angle to the product that makes it really memorable?
Will people 'want one'?

::: Who are you going to give them to? At what event or occasions?

You don't want your project to come to an end and then find a cellar full of expired promotional materials. On the plus side, block notes, good pens, bags are really useful items at conference.

::: What do they say about the features and benefits of your project?

Branding and image

::: Are you able to brand these in line with the image of your project?

If purchasing products on-line, can you get the exact specifications of your logos and the EC identity standards? Sometimes you have to adjust settings of images to fit the specifications of the products offered.

Colours and quality of images differ on various media. Are you able to check that the colours that you specify come out right on different materials such as paper, glass, textiles? Sometimes the result is not as you anticipated.

::: Can you fit the logo and message onto the product?

Some products are too small to be able to represent your logo or message in an appropriate way.

::: Will they actually work and continue to work?

Cheap ball point pens rarely work for a long time if at all. But a USB stick can be a good way to provide your stakeholders with the results of your project and offer a long lasting and useful give-away.

::: Timing – are there any dates contained in your product which will render them redundant after a particular time – e.g. diaries, conference dates on pens, branded stationery?

::: Is the source of these in line with the greening and ethical policy of your project?

People are increasingly aware of the environmental impact of products and so it is vital to check that the products you buy are from appropriate sources and, if possible, made of recycled or natural material. Many companies that provide cheap high volume promotional products will not be as up-to-date with greening and ethical issues as you expect them to be.

Distribution

::: Who are you going to give these to? On which occasions?

Do people want to receive promotional products or will they end up in the bin?

::: Do these have a limited or long shelf life?

Some simple canvas or cloth conference bags, that are well branded, are really useful to people after the event now that more and more supermarkets charge for carrier bags.

Conference folders can be used for years after the event.

A sturdy good quality umbrella will be used for a long time and will continue to show off the name and brand of the project.

Promotional products - ingenious carriers of message

Ideally you should only purchase promotional products that are able to carry the message of your projects in a way that other media can't.

::: Florescent bicycle clips are cheap, easy to brand and really relevant to a project that deals with sustainable urban transport. They are useful too.

::: Reusable water drinking bottles are a striking and imaginative give-away for a project promoting responsible use of water.

Here is an example of a campaign where the use of a promotional item was inspiring and creative.

Thames Water

Thames Water, a water supply and sewage disposal company, was struggling to present an interesting and appealing image to target groups. Thames Water wanted to create a more dynamic reputation and enhance its relationships with the key politicians and opinion leaders who shape its regulatory environment.

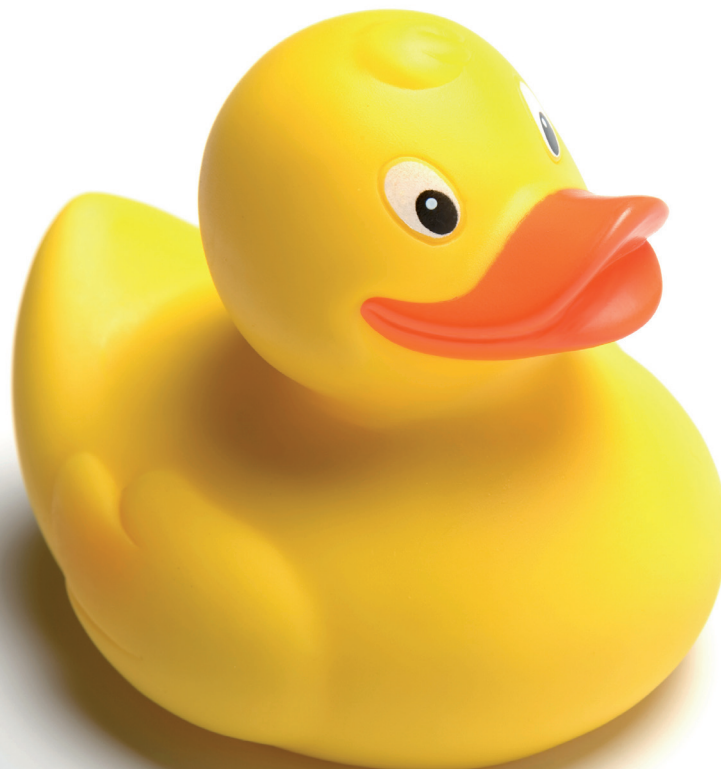
What they did

Thames Waters' messages were that through the efforts of Thames Water, the River Thames had achieved the status as the cleanest metropolitan river in the world.

To highlight this in a memorable way, they organized a Parliamentary Charity Duck Race as part of a wider political outreach program.

Members of Parliament were invited to throw large plastic yellow ducks from Westminster Bridge into the River Thames.

The ducks floated along side the Palace of Westminster and the first one to pass the finish line (the steps of the House of Lords) won a donation to a local charity for its Member of Parliament. Through mailings, including gifts of bath-sized rubber ducks; event branding; pre-race festivities and a post-race reception, Thames Water had ample opportunity to spread its positive environmental messages, as well as to develop personal relationships with Members of Parliament.



IN SHORT

Only spend money on promotional products if they fit with your project goals.

- ☐ Are they in line with the messages that you want to convey about your projects?
- ☐ How do they support the promotion of your project?
- ☐ Who are you going to give them to?
At what event or occasions?
- ☐ Did you take into account greening and ethics in the production of the promotion materials?
- ☐ What do they say about the features and benefits of your project?
- ☐ And finally... make sure you use them before they expire.

FactSheet 9

Communication Handbook

Events



- How to organise a successful event: planning, budget, theme, programme, two-way communications, speakers, moderators, speaker invitations, timings, venue, ensuring attendance?
- Events logistics (speakers, greening, audio visual requirements, documentation)
- How to organise events involving media?
- How to organise successful press conferences?
- Event planning checklist

There are many opportunities to hold or take part in events that bring together your project's personnel with key target groups in the right environment to communicate your key messages directly to them and generate awareness for the value of the work that you and your partners do.

This factsheet focuses on a range of ideas and practical knowledge that will facilitate the organisation and management of effective events.

Planning – first stage

→ Project events can sometimes be weak because they are seen as an objective in themselves rather than as a tool to achieve a bigger objective. An event needs to be conceived and planned with a clear purpose in mind. An event is usually a significant cost investment, so it needs to deliver some value that endures longer than the hot air generated by the speakers on the day.

Planning has been the key for projects that have organised successful events. It depends on a clear understanding of the purpose of the event and the target group, matched to an appropriate event plan. For instance, if you want to influence policy on a regional level, it will be very important to plan an event that will be appealing to regional policy makers. One important aspect of planning will be to decide whether to hold an internal or an external event.

Internal events – Sometimes due to the nature or stage of development of your project, an event should only be for the lead partner and project partners. For instance, this may be in order to give you an opportunity to share experiences and best practice, and to keep up to date with what is happening within the partnership. This is fine where appropriate to your objectives. However, remember that many Alpine Space projects have broader goals beyond their practical internal business. Some goals, such as raising awareness of issues and ensuring that progress continues after the project ends, cannot be served well by a purely internal event.

External events – Events for external target groups are a very important way to keep stakeholders up to date with what is happening within the project, what you are doing to tackle a priority area, and why it is important.

Event outputs

When planning your event always consider your event outputs. What is it that you can do that will make people remember your project, or perhaps even allow you to engage with important stakeholders such as politicians after your event? For example, some projects have created a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with politicians and policy makers who attend their events, while others have signed one and circulated it to key politicians and policy makers in their regions after the event. Other INTERREG projects have found it useful to develop a list of key statements calling for something or agreeing to take a certain action.

There needs to be a clear purpose for your event and finishing with a “call to action” enables you to engage further with your target groups and shows that your project and the event has achieved something.

Target groups

Think laterally when considering target groups for an event. Which groups of people can you interest in attending? Which groups of people have the potential to help you to achieve your practical and communications objectives if you can reach out to them through an event? Who has a stake or an interest in your subject matter? Who is already involved, but could become more committed or useful to your project if you engaged with them more closely?

It never hurts to be ambitious in planning a list of people you would like to attend. There are no guarantees that they will come, but you can improve your chances a great deal by thinking hard about how to make the event attractive for your target groups. Think about what they are interested in. Why would they want to come? How can you make your event appealing to them?

Concrete planning items

Budget

Most projects will already have a set budget for their project events and will normally not be able to exceed this. Your budget will ultimately determine where you hold the event, the number of people you invite, the quality of the support material (such as presentation handouts, press packs, brochures, etc.) and the overall quality of the event.

The budget will determine the overall size and scope of the event, but within the budgeting process there will be decisions to make about the allocation of resources to individual elements. For instance, for some events it may be more important to invest in an interesting venue in order to boost attendance; for others, a high-profile external speaker might be more valuable; in other cases, the priority may be to accommodate as many attendees as possible.

Draft an initial budget using a spreadsheet and allocate one team member to be responsible for it and monitor all costs as they occur. Include a contingency for emergencies. Be aware that some suppliers may need a deposit in advance.

Theme

The headline theme of an event defines its identity and is an important factor in helping people decide whether or not they want to attend. The theme must fit your project's goals and objectives. Keep it short, simple and easy to understand. If your project is about developing parks in urban areas then "Spatial planning and trans-national cooperation for the effective use of green spaces in urban centres" would be difficult to understand for many external target groups. A conference theme such as "Improving green spaces in European cities" would be much more effective.

Programme

The format of your event should be based on the needs and interests of your target groups. Before approaching anyone to speak at your event or inviting people to attend you will need to draft a programme. Organise sessions and arrange speakers in a clear and logical order.

For example:

- ::: General introduction to the topic
- ::: Specialist views/case studies/different perspectives on the topic
- ::: Workshops on different aspects of the topic
- ::: Summary and conclusions

Two-way communication

As a general principle, do not rely excessively on one-way communication. When you have one speaker or a succession of speakers delivering presentations, audiences tend to lose attention quite quickly. It helps to include regular interactive elements in the programme, such as:

- ::: Panel discussions
- ::: Workshops: some people feel more comfortable in smaller groups which in turn helps to stimulate interaction
- ::: Break-out sessions for discussions
- ::: Breaks: be sure to build in regular breaks to encourage networking possibilities and for busy attendees to answer phone calls, send emails, etc.

Speakers

Interesting, knowledgeable and skilled speakers are one of the make-or-break factors of any event. High-profile names, or people from well-known organisations, will help to make your event appealing to target groups. Individuals who are naturally good at presenting to groups can also transform the atmosphere and impact of the event itself. Depending on the nature of your project and event, interesting speakers to invite might include:

- ::: European policy: people from the Commission or Parliament
- ::: National policy: people from Member State governments or organisations
- ::: Regional policy: people from regional assemblies, local authorities, etc.
- ::: Experts: academics, researchers, think-tanks, etc.
- ::: NGOs: with an interest in your project
- ::: Industry: many projects have some link with industry and it is often important to involve them in some way with your project – offering a speaking slot can be useful
- ::: Trade associations: relevant EU or Member State-based bodies

Moderators

A good event can become great with the addition of an excellent moderator. Make sure that you have someone who is able to manage the event, lead discussions and debates and make the event interesting and relevant to participants. If necessary you may consider hiring a professional moderator, which could cost anywhere from €500 - €5,000 depending upon who they are. Many journalists also make good moderators; ask some of your media contacts if they know of someone suitable.

Speaker invitations

When inviting speakers you will need to provide them with more information on the event, normally in the form of a draft programme, a briefing on the types of people attending the event and a summary of what they are expected to do. Invitations to speakers can be sent by a formal letter or a less formal email invitation or telephone call. Use your judgment when issuing an invitation depending on the level of the speaker. For example, when inviting a politician or senior official it is always best to send a formal letter together with the programme. Always follow up proactively in person afterwards: do not assume that people received, read, or registered your invitation or that they will respond to you.

Timing

The date chosen should not conflict with any other events that your target groups might also be interested in attending. This is almost impossible to guarantee but research it and check for major political events, public holidays, conferences etc. Check with your project partners to ensure that there are no events on a local level that could conflict.

Venue

Determine what facilities you will need and choose a location that offers everything you require. Be imaginative and choose somewhere that reflects the nature of your operation and the theme of the event. Unusual or expensive venues may increase attendance, but make sure it is accessible for the people you want to attract.

If the event is to be held outdoors, make a contingency plan in case of bad weather.

For suppliers, check whether you have to use the venue's own caterers and equipment or if you can provide your own. This can sometimes be cheaper. If the venue cannot provide all the things you need, ask them to recommend suppliers with whom they have worked before.

If you are going to provide food, a buffet is a good idea as it allows people to mix and talk. For a stand-up buffet, choose food that does not need to be cut up with knife and fork. For the benefit of any journalists attending, remember that it is almost impossible to juggle a plate, glass, fork, pen and notebook. Allow places for people to sit down.

Visit the venue with your team and all suppliers present. Use this visit as an opportunity to walk-through the event from start to finish and envisage all eventualities.

Venue search

You have a couple of options when looking for the perfect venue for your event – find it yourself, or commission a company to find it for you.

Most cities and countries have professional companies that specialise in locating venues for events. Usually there is no direct cost to you and this option could save you a lot of time. Search companies tend to know most local venues and can usually negotiate better rates than you could acting alone.

The way they operate is that you approach them with your requirements and then, on your behalf, they research potential venues, provide a list of what is available and arrange for you to view the suitable places on offer.

Check the terms and conditions in advance of employing a venue search company, but you are normally under no obligation to them. They are usually paid a commission by the hotel or venue if and when they make the booking.

Once the search company secures a venue for you, you then will deal directly with the venue. Some search companies can also negotiate discounted rates on accommodation for attendees at your event.

How to find a venue search company

The best way to find a venue search company is through a recommendation from someone who has organised events in your designated city or through an internet search, such as Google – use terms such as “venue search” and enter the name of the city, or “conference venue” and the name of the city.

Negotiating with venues

Fees are always up for negotiation and it is good practice to shop around to find something that suits your budget. Often venues or hotels will quote a “day delegate rate” rather than charge you for the space and food. This can be useful as it helps you plan your budget and ensures you don’t have any unexpected surprises. Do not be afraid to ask for a discount, especially if you feel that the fees are too high or are over your budget. Avoid revealing your maximum budget if possible.

A day delegate fee will normally include three tea and coffee breaks (welcome, mid-morning and mid-afternoon), water throughout the event (refreshed during breaks) and a two- or three-course buffet lunch.

A venue will normally charge extra for the following:

- ::: Alcohol consumed at lunch or a cocktail reception
- ::: Break-out or workshop rooms
- ::: Technical equipment (data projectors, televisions, DVD or video players, screens, etc.)

Areas that you can negotiate on:

- ::: Free use of conference facilities in the evening, which is useful if organising a dinner
- ::: Hotel rooms for conference staff or speakers
- ::: Room upgrades, e.g. to an executive room or business suite
- ::: Break-out rooms
- ::: Free newspapers for conference delegates
- ::: Free or discounted fees for on-site amenities such as the gym or business centre
- ::: Minibus to take delegates to or from airport or conference events
- ::: Late check-out
- ::: Gifts for delegates in their hotel room such as chocolate, wine, movie, etc.
- ::: Extra equipment like data projectors, televisions, screens, etc.
- ::: Wireless internet access, normally for conference staff
- ::: Reduced day-delegate fee for staff working on the conference, for example you might only have to pay for their lunch

Venues for small events and budgets

If your budget is small and you cannot afford to hire a venue, consider using a meeting room in your office. This might not be suitable for all events but for small seminars, briefings etc. it will be fine. In fact some of your audiences may well like to see where you operate.

Ensure that the event will not be invaded by colleagues who might not have a genuine role in the proceedings and that you will not be interrupted by telephone calls.

Ensuring attendance

Consider carefully the purpose and scope of your event when deciding whether to invite media, NGOs, politicians, dignitaries, officials, etc. If the information you wish to communicate is not of general interest, be selective when sending out invitations. Only invite those who will benefit from your information and whose attendance will benefit you. Always consider that attendees may have their own agendas which may overshadow what your spokespeople have to say.

Invitations

Develop the invitation as soon as you have the venue details and timing. It is important to give your guests as much notice as possible. If you have not finalised the details, consider sending out a save-the-date email or letter, so the guests at least have the event in their agendas. Include a fax back reply form, dedicated email address or online registration to capture responses.

Event website: Promoting the event

It is common practice now when organising most significant events to have a dedicated website. This is also valuable for Alpine Space project events. A website makes it easier for participants to find out more information about the event, its speakers and the content, and it saves you having to continually update people by email, post or telephone.

Depending on the nature of the event, delegates often like to see who else is attending the event. It might be useful to publish a list of attendees, or at least mention their organisation's name somewhere on your website.

Standard practice is also to have online registration for the event. This makes life easier both for delegates and for event organisers. People submit their details online into a database that you can normally access through a private site and output into Excel in order to keep track of delegates. A website that has a content management system will allow you to add, delete and update event information yourself without the need of a programmer.

To develop a website with a registration database option you should usually budget between €1,000 and €3,000 depending on your requirements.

To inform people about your event it is best to use a combination of email notification, letters through the post and telephone calls. Emails designed and formatted with HTML coding can look more attractive, professional and interesting.

Remember to keep it simple and easy to understand. Also make sure that it tells your target groups "why I should attend."

Event logistics

Speakers

- ::: Ensure that your speakers arrive on time, in good spirits, refreshed and prepared.
- ::: Brief speakers if possible, and obtain and assess all their materials, such as presentations and hand-outs, well in advance of the event.
- ::: Arrange all necessary logistics such as transfers and accommodation.
- ::: Arrange and check the necessary technical equipment and set-up, e.g. lectern, video projector, laptop, etc.
- ::: Arrange for their arrival in sufficient time for a dry-run and any last-minute changes.
- ::: Meet speakers on their arrival and introduce them to the technical/AV person
- ::: Thank all speakers at the end of their speeches or the end of the conference
 - both verbally and later in writing
- ::: Be sure to have discussed and confirmed fees, travel expenses etc. in advance and for prompt payment

Greening

Greening meetings and events provides a significant and highly visible contribution to the project's commitment to sustainability.

- ::: Ensure publicity of greening measures implemented to prepare and during an event so that all involved, including participants, are proud of the achievements and results. Furthermore, information before, during and after the event help ensure success and a lasting legacy.
- ::: Be sure that meetings with international participation requiring travels take place only if necessary. Beforehand, possibilities for phone or video meetings should be explored.

Many simple greening measures can be implemented allowing savings and an improved image for the project. Find out about these measures in the Factsheet 6.13 of the Programme Implementation Handbook and green your event!

Audio visual requirements

At events where there will be presentations or speeches requiring visual support and/or amplification, the AV set-up is crucial. Ideally, your AV supplier should support you on the day of the event as well as with preparation work.

Brief them well and arrange a site visit in advance. However, as with any suppliers, listen to their suggestions – they are experts in their field and may offer practical and innovative solutions to any challenges faced.

Ensure that the AV supplier:

- ::: Provides expert support, technicians who are knowledgeable with PowerPoint and other presentation software
- ::: Has somebody in the presentation room at all times
- ::: Has arranged set-up times and details with the venue in advance
- ::: If possible, ensure that all presentations are pre-loaded in one large presentation file on the presentation laptop – run one after the other, including links to any external media.

Documentation

Although delegate packs and paper handouts are regularly used and expected by attendees, there is a slow move towards providing such documentation electronically.

Electronic support materials can be:

- ::: Downloaded from the event website – using passwords to protect unauthorised access
- ::: Emailed – in compressed format
- ::: Sent out CD following the conference
- ::: Provided on a USB stick

Printing

For an event you will need a good printing company who can professionally produce event brochures, leaflets, registration materials and delegate packs. To get the best price and quality, get quotations from three printers and select the one that gives you the best price and who you feel will provide you with the best service. If you particularly like one printer but they haven't given you the best price, ask them to match your lowest price. Remember, you need a good reliable printer to deliver on time (to be inline with public procurement law).

Try to get all your printing done at once because this can secure big cost savings. If you are organising an event in another country, it is greener and may be more cost effective to produce materials there.

Accommodation

Please refer to the Factsheet 6.13 of the Programme Implementation Handbook for easy-to-implement greening measures for accommodation.

- ::: You need to decide will participants do the booking themselves (still: Pre-booking and negotiation of special conference prizes necessary) or will you do the booking with a booking request.
- ::: If participants are booking themselves, insist that delegates book accommodation well in advance, particularly for destinations where hotel rooms are in short supply. Many people tend to leave accommodation to the last minute, which can be too late.
- ::: When expecting a group, try to arrange pre-check-in with the hotel to avoid waiting time in the lobby.
- ::: When confirming breakfast numbers, calculate carefully. Many people don't have breakfast – preferring coffee and pastries outside the conference room
- ::: Pay particular attention to the reply sheet details – twin rooms, king size beds, non-smoking rooms, disabled requirements, etc. Reconfirm with the venue.
- ::: Ensure that you know the venue – e.g. location of the toilets, cloakrooms, telephones, gym, etc.)

Food

Please refer to the Factsheet 6.13 of the Programme Implementation Handbook for easy-to-implement greening measures for catering.

- ::: Ensure that you allow for all dietary requirements (vegetarian, religious needs, allergies, etc.)
- ::: Keep it light and simple
- ::: Choose something the venue can provide easily

Media events

Inviting media

If you are inviting mainly trade press and/or weeklies and monthly publications, then try to alert them to the event about three weeks in advance. If you are trying to attract national news outlets you can invite the media nearer to the event.

Follow up the invitation by telephoning all invited media to ensure attendance. It is frequently possible to persuade reluctant or otherwise busy journalists to commit to an event by speaking to them directly. (See below for an example of a media invitation)

Possible media events

Media events might include:

- ::: Press conferences to make an important announcement, attended by a number of journalists. (See section below)
- ::: Media briefings for one or more journalists, either to inform them of secondary news or to provide background information for use at a future date.
- ::: Media visits to facilities or operations to help the media understand your activities.
- ::: Seminars or round-table meetings with a group of opinion leaders discussing an area or explaining a complex development, product or service in more depth to the media.
- ::: Speeches at an industry conference that might be attended by the media.

Media events – timing

For media events it is a good idea to contact one or two journalists whom you intend to invite to see if the event clashes with any other.

If you are inviting journalists, select the time of day carefully. Journalists work to deadlines and these must be taken into account. If you want to attract national news media and want coverage on the day of the event for TV and radio, or the following day for print media, the morning is best – any time from 09:30 is ideal.

If you want to attract weekly or monthly publications, then a lunchtime, afternoon or early evening gathering is good as long as you do not hold the event on any publication's press day (the day the publication is finished and sent to be printed), when it is hard for editorial staff to leave their desks.

Press conferences

Press conferences are a standard feature of many public relations programmes, but they need to be considered carefully. You must assess the pros and cons and then decide if it is the best method for communicating the news you have. It might be better to hold a media briefing or issue a press release.

A press conference should only be held if there is news of real interest to the target media or when the only way you can respond to a whole range of questions posed by a large group of media is by holding an open conference. They can be a major logistical exercise and can bring significant costs if you need a special venue, such as a hotel, and want to provide refreshments for a large group. So you must be certain that it will be a useful exercise.

Consider the following:

- ::: Is the story strong enough to justify holding a press conference?
- ::: Is a press conference the best way to communicate with the chosen media?
- ::: If only a very small, select group is involved, would individual briefings and interviews be more effective?
- ::: Could the story be better covered by distributing a news release or telephoning media contacts?
- ::: Are the project representatives who would hold the conference prepared to respond to any sensitive or controversial issues that might be raised in an open press conference?
- ::: Are they sufficiently senior, trained and briefed to front such an event?
- ::: Is a photo-call prior to the conference appropriate and might it increase the chance of media coverage?

Potential impact

If you are satisfied with those conditions, a press conference can be effective in a range of ways:

- ::: Communicating a news story to target media simultaneously.
- ::: Communicating the story with authority and excitement.
- ::: Providing a platform to enhance the status of your work.
- ::: Providing a controlled environment for dealing with media questions, which have been anticipated in advance and responses developed.
- ::: Providing an opportunity to meet a variety of media contacts, develop and strengthen relationships, which may have a long term benefit as well as delivering short term coverage.

Example of a media invitation shown for an event
held by an imaginary EU project



Media Invitation

You are invited to attend an organic banquet at Kilkenny Castle for the launch of an EU-funded project that aims to help struggling rural communities to benefit from the recent surge in demand for organic food. The feast is one of nine being held simultaneously across Europe to celebrate a new network to help farming economies develop in a sustainable way for the environment and society.

The event will:

- Be attended by a number of high-profile individuals including the Irish Economy Minister and the Mayor of Kilkenny.
- Offer a delicious array of organic food from across the region as well as the other SPROUT regions for journalists and visitors to sample.
- Give a taste of how poorer regions can benefit from the knowledge and experience of richer areas through enlightened European cooperation.

Friday, 5 June 2009

TIME: 1.00 pm – 2.30 pm

LOCATION: Kilkenny Castle

- ☐ I will attend
- ☐ I won't be attending
- ☐ I can't attend, but _____
will come in my place

Please send me a press kit

Name _____
Publication _____
Telephone _____
Email _____

Please return this form by email to: s.lynham@iem.gov.ie
or by fax: +353 123 123456 no later than Thursday, 11 May 2009.

EVENTCHECKLIST

Planning

- ::: Clarify purpose of event
- ::: Why are you holding the conference/seminar/workshop/meeting?
- ::: What is it meant to achieve?
- ::: What messages do you want to communicate?
- ::: Write down these objectives and ensure all involved are in agreement
- ::: Determine your target groups
- ::: Who is the event for?
- ::: What are those people interested in?
- ::: Will this conference be interesting for them?
- ::: Put together a detailed plan as soon as you can and circulate it
- ::: Allocate roles to team members
- ::: Ensure all relevant colleagues and partners are behind the event and know what's expected of them
- ::: Keep them informed and committed
- ::: Schedule regular meetings or conference calls for all involved in advance
- ::: Issue agenda in advance of each meeting and send out contact report following – even if it's in bullet point form
- ::: Implement greening activities and communicate about them

Date

- ::: Select dates
- ::: Check all relevant employees and spokespeople can attend
- ::: Check for clashes with other more newsworthy events: political events, holidays, regular press briefings, etc. Call journalists, government departments to check for clashes.
- ::: If it's a media event, don't hold it on a Monday or Friday unless you've got a really hot story

Theme

- ::: If appropriate, develop a theme to fit objectives and strategy
- ::: Brainstorm ideas to increase creativity
- ::: Theme whole event to maximise impact – right down to the invitations
- ::: Whatever the theme, remember to comply with the ASP information and publicity requirements

Venue selection

Before researching suitable venues have some idea of:

- ::: How many people you expect to attend
- ::: How many rooms are needed
- ::: If you need workshops or breakout rooms
- ::: What kind of food you want (Breakfast, lunch, dinner, cocktails, coffee breaks, water, etc.)
- ::: Be imaginative to capture interest, but choose a venue that is appropriate and accessible
- ::: Create a briefing document to give the venue as much information as possible

Visit several venues before making a decision:

- ::: Ask what's included in the price
- ::: Can you see other events being held at the venue?
- ::: Are staff friendly and helpful?
- ::: Negotiate on the price and contract (avoid paying up front – credit card guarantees sometimes work)
- ::: Ask for extras
- ::: Do you need an alternative indoor venue if it's raining/cold?

Once venue is selected

- ::: Check whether you have to use venue's own caterers, equipment suppliers or can provide your own (it's often cheaper to provide your own)
- ::: Check venue has personal liability insurance – if not organise through own insurer (usually will advise as to the amount necessary)
- ::: Visit site with all other suppliers present
- ::: Use site visit as an opportunity to walk-through event from start to finish so you can prepare for all eventualities
- ::: Check WC facilities – do you need more?
- ::: How many of your staff do you need – should you hire host/hostesses, cloakroom attendants, etc.?
- ::: Do you need on-site accommodation? If not, are there enough hotel rooms close by and do you need to provide a shuttle service?

Invitation

- ::: Develop concept as soon as you have venue and timings
- ::: Consider a save-the-date-fax if official invitation printing is delayed
- ::: Ensure all partners are happy with the final version. Fonts and sizing can change on email
- ::: A fax-back reply slip and dedicated email address are the easiest way to ensure replies
- ::: Remember map, reply-by-date, contact email/phone number, envelopes
- ::: Send out invitations as soon as you can – the longer an event is in someone's diary the better. If necessary send a reminder closer to the date
- ::: With media events, consider that forward planning diaries run months in advance but you'll also need to send a reminder a week before the event for their Monday morning planning meeting
- ::: Have a specific person to be in charge of maintaining invitation list and all replies
Remember to include all the necessary logos (project, programme, EU)

Equipment

- ::: Assess what you need in terms of equipment
- ::: Liaise with venue as to what they have and what you can use
- ::: Hire a technical person or use company IT/tech department
- ::: Microphones – lapel, podium, handheld, cordless

Presentations

- ::: Projectors, lap-tops, screens
- ::: Connection cables, power sockets, transformers, adapter plugs
- ::: Get presentations 48 hours in advance and upload onto laptops for checking

Moderator / Presenter

- ::: Who will introduce the event, provide links between speakers, moderate a Q&A session, close the event?
- ::: If needed to moderate a discussion, consider hiring a professional

Branding / Signage

- ::: Check what's required
- ::: Do you need to get it made or can you use existing materials?
- ::: Ensure that your event complies with the information and publicity requirements of the Alpine Space Programme: ensure the display of project and programme logos
- ::: Ensure all spokespeople have names and organisation name displayed

Photography

- ::: Consider hiring a professional photographer (only if necessary and can be justified. Please refer to eligibility of expenditure)
- ::: Think diversity when choosing models or a shoot
- ::: Have props available for use in photos – branding etc.
- ::: Make sure all photography is captioned. Include names and titles of people in the shot (indicate left to right), along with the date and location
- ::: Most news organisations, if interested in the story, will want a photo. If you don't send a photo with your press release be ready to send one electronically upon request. Assuming you have access to a scanner, you'll want to send a high-resolution file
- ::: Have EU flag on display for event photos.

Equipment to take with you from the office

- ::: Name badges / place labels
- ::: Signing-in book
- ::: Pens and paper
- ::: Contact list of all suppliers
- ::: Fully charged mobile phones
- ::: Binder with all information including receipts, confirmation of bookings
- ::: EU flag

Budgeting

- ::: Be thorough and stick to budget
- ::: Allocate fees and costs
- ::: Keep some contingency budget for emergencies
- ::: Be aware of public procurement procedures and the time needed to contract services within legal requirements.
- ::: Start a spreadsheet as soon as an event is planned – column for quotes, column for actual prices, etc.
- ::: Make one team member responsible for tracking costs
- ::: Ensure eligibility of expenditure
- ::: Keep track of all paperwork (emails, letters, quotes, contracts etc.)
- ::: Check suppliers' contracts before signature
- ::: Check how much needs to be paid in advance as deposits etc. – arrange this with your accounts team
- ::: Check invoices correspond with contractual agreement before payment

Meet and greet

Upon arrival attendees should receive detailed instructions. This might include a welcome pack with:

- ::: Name badge
- ::: Agenda
- ::: Accommodation details
- ::: Map
- ::: Press pack
- ::: Tourist information
- ::: Contact phone numbers

Media communication



- What makes news
- Hard new and soft news
- The media landscape
- The journalists' agenda
- How to choose appropriate media for your project.
- Creative ways to get media coverage

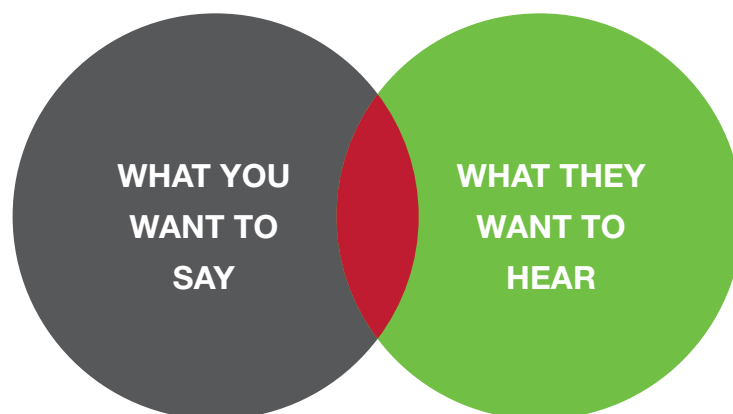
Making news

→ Most of what Alpine Space projects do from day to day is more interesting to people working on the project than people on the outside. Most projects quite rightly devote most of their time and attention the mechanics of getting the job done: organising meetings, reporting, drawing up best practice guidelines, sharing knowledge, and so on.

It will always be difficult to generate interest in this aspect of a project's work because people outside Alpine Space projects are not interested in the **process**. They care about **results** and **meaning**.

The intersection

A key principle is to **look for the intersection** between what you want to say and what they want to hear. When this type of projects fail to communicate effectively it is often because they are talking about things – like process – that fall in the circle on the left, but not the circle on the right.



The very big and the very small

What kinds of ideas and information tend to lie in that intersection?

At one end of the scale, **“the very big”** issues are always interesting: the major themes like health, quality of living, jobs, the environment and climate change. These ideas are in the news and in people’s minds and conversations every day. All Alpine Space projects address big issues in one way or another. Communicating about how you are part of the solution to big issues will get you into that intersection.

At the other end of the scale, **“the very small”** issues are the local results and impact that people feel on their doorsteps and notice in their everyday lives. These are the results, the concrete impacts and changes that Alpine Space projects make in the real world – not the theory of territorial cooperation or the process of cooperation, but tangible outputs like better paid jobs through innovation or safer houses through flood protection.

When projects find it hard to generate interest, it is often because they are talking about neither the very big nor the very small, but the process and bureaucracy by which projects turn one into the other. Important, but boring.

What makes news?

By the fax machine in most newspaper and broadcast newsrooms is a small in-tray for promising press releases that might become news – and a large bin overflowing with the rest. Most press releases are bad because they are not news. The same goes for electronic news delivery services and email – most messages that journalists receive are ignored or quickly deleted.

There is one reason for this enormous waste of effort: most of the stories that projects want journalists to write and broadcast are not news. There is no point writing a press release or calling a journalist with a story idea if it is not news.

Messages will not make the news if they just say how worthwhile and important a project is. To get published or broadcast, a project must shape and adapt its messages inventively to be newsworthy.

Newsworthiness is relative, flexible and subjective. A small story can make the headlines on a slow news day; a big story can disappear without trace if somebody else makes bigger news the same day. A great local story might be of no interest to national or international media. A great story for print might be useless for television if it has no visual element. A great story for trade media might be much too technical for mainstream media. A story about industry trends may work for financial newspapers but not general press. Something that happened three days ago is news for a weekly publication, but ancient history for a newswire.

Most importantly, many developments that are fascinating and very important to people within the project world are not newsworthy outside the project world – at least on the face of it. This is where news angles become important. Think hard about how to touch your target groups. What do they care about? Why will this matter to them?

To generate interest in your project and its activities you need to develop creative PR angles that will capture the interest of your audiences over the activities of other organisations. This can be hard, especially if there seem to be no obvious creative angles that you can use.

Focus on the audience

The key to writing a good press release, for example, is to identify and focus on an aspect of what you have to say that will engage your target groups. This is what journalists do when they choose a “news angle”: they are looking for a way of explaining a news event that makes it relevant and interesting to their target group. To make yourself newsworthy, you should do the same. Look for an angle that will connect your agenda to something that your target group cares about.

The first thing that goes through a journalist’s mind when he or she reads your news release is always: “So what? Why should my readers care?” Think hard about what journalists and their audiences would be interested to read. Why should they care? Take the information you have, and tell it in a way that makes them care.

News values

→ Perhaps your project needs to promote something that is newsworthy but dull, or you want to promote something that simply is not newsworthy.

The trick is to make your audience care.

In general, news is about people rather than things, and concrete events rather than abstract ideas.



Beyond that, there are essentially two kinds of news:

- ∴ **Hard news** is information that people need to make decisions. People need to make decisions when something has changed. Almost all news is about what is new, what has changed: so concentrate on novelty and change. Tell me what is new that will change my life and inform the decisions I need to make.
- ∴ **Soft news** is entertainment. People like news that touches them emotionally, amuses them or stimulates their mind. Soft news is just as important as hard news and to manage it we must think in terms of human interest. Make me feel something about this story and I will remember your project.

HARD NEWS

Novelty

Change

Controversy

Conflict

Surprise

Secret

Money

Problems

Solutions

Practicalities

Current affairs

Business

Workplace

SOFT NEWS

Human interest

People

Humour

Emotion

Fun

Compassion

Children

Celebrities

Animals

Romance

Mystery

Family

Sports and leisure

Creative news

→ Below are some ideas to get you and your team thinking of new creative ideas.

Hold a brainstorming session. These are great ways of generating a large number of ideas from a group of people in a short space of time.

Speak to a journalist. Ask a friendly journalist what they would consider newsworthy about your activities. You'll probably have to spend some time explaining what you do, but they may come up with something you hadn't even thought was worth a news release. They might also be able to help with news angles for the story.

Use the PR story check list (see below). This list contains 50 news angles that you can further develop into news stories for your project. Use it as an aid to brainstorm for PR activities.

Link your activities or project to other news stories. Use other news stories as a way of generating news for your project. For example, the August vacation period means that journalists are looking for news about tourism and holidays – has your project increased the appeal of your region to tourists?

Look for other potential news stories that you can use to interest the media in your activities, for example

- ::: Significant dates – public holidays, anniversaries, religious holidays
- ::: Sporting events
- ::: World events – World Habitat Day, Children’s Rights Day, etc
- ::: Industry events – e.g. conferences
- ::: Seasonal events – holidays, start of the school year, winter
- ::: Political news – on EU, national and regional levels

Media opportunities

From time to time, almost every person within your organisation will come across an event or an idea that is newsworthy. Sadly, not everyone will recognise it when they see it! Here are a few guidelines for spotting a PR opportunity.

- ::: Think **interest** – will this be interesting to other people?
- ::: Think **news** – how your local paper or radio station report?
- ::: Think **local** – how does it involve people locally?
- ::: Think **people** – the media are usually more interested in what people are doing than in what organisations are doing.
- ::: Think communities – what contribution has your project made to a community initiative or activity?

News devices

→ The opportunities for generating PR stories for the media and other audiences are almost endless. These are useful ‘devices’ for creating stories:

PR STORY CHECK LIST

Advice	“Ice to the Eskimos” A service to an unexpected group of people	Press briefing
Animals		Press conference
Award	Improved product	Press visit
Bid for a tender or EU money	Improved service	Personal profile
Briefings	Interview	Project profile
Calendar events	Investment	Quotable quote
Case study	Job advert	Report
Celebrities	Letter to the editor	Seminar
Children	Link to current event	Slow news days
Columns	Link to forthcoming news	Holidays and Sundays
Competition	Man bites dog Something upside down	Speech
Conference		Spokesperson
Employee activities	Management appointment	Sponsorship
Event	New contract	Supplement
Exhibition	New premises	Special report
Expansion	New process	Survey
Expert opinion	New product or service	
Human interest	Picture story	

The media landscape

→ Europe is home to an enormous number and range of news media, each with a different target group and its own news values. It is not possible or desirable to target all of them.

Projects should consider two factors when deciding which media to target:

- ::: Which media do our own target groups pay most attention to?
- ::: Which media will consider our messages newsworthy?

The answers to these two questions will usually be similar, because media define news as information that their own target groups want to know.

Audience selection

Following are some examples of how different sections of the media reach different audiences:

Local newspapers

Local policymakers, politicians, communities affected by project activities or issues.

National TV and radio

Policymakers at local, regional and national level, opinion formers, businesses, regulators, researchers

Specialist/trade magazines

Experts, proponents and analysts in a particular industry or area of knowledge, e.g. EU affairs, regional development

International newswires

Newswires supply all other substantial media with news, so their final audience is the broadest of all

Pan-European PR

→ The nature of Alpine Space Programme operations means that PR activities must take place on many levels: local, regional, national and pan-European. This document focuses on the organisation and management of these activities. The definition of pan-European PR is a programme of public relations activities executed in one or more countries.

Usually a co-ordinator is needed to ensure:

- ::: There is a level of consistency in communication across all countries
- ::: The individual public relations programmes are executed well
- ::: Cross-fertilisation takes place and best practice activities are shared
- ::: Reporting is carried out in the required way and in a timely manner

Where just two countries are involved, the handling and co-ordination of PR activities is not usually too complex or difficult, as communication between the two can be straight forward and they can work in close cooperation. When a larger number of countries are involved things start getting more complex as lines of communication get longer.

Using a news distribution service

Utilise one of the news release distribution services to issue your news releases to the key media outlets in your target countries. These companies may also provide translation services for your news release, as well as help select the appropriate media for your news story. However they will not develop news angles for your story or write the news release – they are purely a distribution service. Bear in mind that it is always advisable to contact all the media outlets that receive your news release to further explain and help ‘sell’ your news story.

Targeting the news agencies and wire services

If you have a strong news angle, which has relevant cross-border appeal consider pitching the story or issuing a news release to one or more of the news agencies in your country. Remember to include the correspondents of the foreign news agencies in your country. If it appears on their service, it has a chance of being picked up by newspapers and TV stations in countries where the story has relevance. If you have appropriate material, distributing it to this group could be your means of achieving coverage in many countries.

Road-shows

Consider arranging a road-show of similar activities, such as round-table events or news briefings with journalists, which can be taken to a number of key cities in your target countries if this ties in with your planned activities. Clearly this type of activity will need to be adapted slightly to each country and possibly each city, but fundamentally the content can remain the same.

It is important to consider the following points if you intend to carry out activities of this type:

- ::: The languages your spokespeople speak – they will need to be competent in the languages of each city to be visited. If they don’t speak the necessary ones, investigate with local contacts if English can be used. In some areas the business communities, politicians and journalists are happy to work in English.
- ::: Translations of any support materials, such as invitations, media advisories, back-grounders and news releases, into the local language.
- ::: It is also advisable to get some local help at each venue to advise on some of the cultural expectations, help with finding a suitable venue and liaising with suppliers. A local PR agency could help with this if there is no one from a partner organisation who can assist you.
- ::: Take advantage of the local presence and contacts of any partners based in that area.

PR manual

It is a good idea to have a PR manual that lays out all the ground-rules for PR activities, but also has background information of all countries involved. Suggested contents might be:

- ::: Contact details of all involved in the work
- ::: Procedures and expectations, including approval process
- ::: Overall strategy
- ::: Key messages
- ::: Summary of suggested tactics
- ::: Target audience and media - including priorities
- ::: Evaluation, reporting required with associated timelines

Pan-European PR programme template

To provide consistency and aid reporting, it is useful to have templates for activities in each country. The one below is a basic example.

PROGRAMME TITLE _____

OBJECTIVES

- ::: To promote maximum awareness of partners' activities.
- ::: Use the partners' programme as a 'news hook' to generate general awareness of Alpine Space project activities
- ::: Etc. _____

TARGET GROUPS

- ::: Main media in each region
- ::: Politicians
- ::: Etc. _____

GEOGRAPHIC EXECUTION

- ::: Regions involved

TIMING _____

IMPLEMENTATION

- ::: Series of press releases and other material to be developed and distributed to the media
- ::: Media interviews – spokespeople to be put forward on programme-related topics
- ::: Etc. _____

MEASUREMENT/EVALUATION

ANALYSIS OF MEDIA COVERAGE

BUDGET _____

REGION CONTACT _____

PROJECT PARTICIPANTS _____

Promoting your messages to media in different countries

→ Key facts you should know about when dealing with the media in other countries:

- ::: Local spokespeople and local angles are essential.
- ::: Be prepared to answer why your news is important to a specific country, however give the activity wider significance, for example in a context of collaboration between the participating countries.
- ::: When pitching to national media, be prepared to speak the language of the country.
- ::: Media materials must be in the format, style and language of the country's media.
- ::: Media materials need to be adapted from country to country.
- ::: Phone calls and e-mail are the most popular way to pitch.
- ::: Be ready to respond instantly with facts, statistics, visuals, spokesperson, etc. Photos of activities and pre-recorded TV footage can extend coverage.
- ::: Press conferences are only for big announcements. One-on-one meetings with journalists work well.
- ::: Use the snowball effect - the most devoted readers of newspapers are journalists themselves. Use coverage in one country as a vehicle for getting it in another one.
- ::: There is no such thing as "Off the Record" in any country.
- ::: Remember to place your project in context by explaining how it fits in with Alpine Space Programme and the European Union.

IN SHORT

- The media cares about results and meaning not process.
- Think about the very big issues and the very local small ones.
- The media will only give you coverage if you have a story.
- Know the difference between hard news and soft news.
- You need to look for potential news that relates to your project.

Writing skills



- Fundamental concepts and skills of good writing
- What you need to think before starting to write (audiences, messages, research)
- How to organise your information systematically
- Language and content you should be using while writing about your project (style & tone, jargon, evidence, numbers, etc.)

This factsheet runs through the fundamental concepts and skills that good journalists use to write powerful and effective prose. Many of these ideas are universal and can be applied to all kinds of writing, from press releases and case studies to project or Alpine Space Programme internal correspondence.

Planning

Audience

There is no such thing as simply good writing. Writing is only good if it gets the right message across to a specific audience. An article full of scientific detail and jargon might be perfect for an academic journal, but useless for a community magazine. Therefore, a writer's first step must

be to identify the intended readership. Audience analysis determines the tone, style, pitch, angle and content of every article. It determines what knowledge can be assumed and what needs to be explained. It determines what news angles will work. Write what your audience wants to read, in a way that will interest and appeal to them. A good writer always keeps that audience at the front of his or her mind from the very start.

Messages

What key information do you want to communicate? Narrow it down to two or three basic messages that will form your theme. Build the article around these messages using evidence, quotes and colour. Messages can be explicit (clearly stated as information) or implicit (intended for subliminal or emotional impact). For instance, an article about an Alpine Space project may contain explicit messages about the scheme itself, and the implicit message that pan-European cooperation is valuable and positive. Messages sit alongside audiences at the heart of the writing process.

Research

Good writing requires thorough research and knowledge of the subject matter, which should be clear to the reader through those same three building blocks: evidence, quotes and colour. Gather and organise these materials before starting to write. Be sure to have evidence to back up all of your main statement, in the form of recent statistics or official information, and cite sources to give credibility to your arguments. Check your facts.

Organisation

→ After determining your audiences, your messages and a strong news angle to tie them all together, it can help to organise your information systematically. Well-written prose alternates between statement and quote, between numbers and colour. It gradually unfolds, with copy flowing logically between elements, so that the end of each sentence announces the beginning of the next.

Consider what facts need to be introduced first to put quotes and other information in context. Generally speaking, rank and order your ideas in descending importance. This approach emulates the classic “inverted pyramid” journalistic story model, so-called because it is top-heavy with all the important information at the start. A good press release reads somewhat like a news story: this helps the journalist to see it as news.

The headline

The headline is right at the top of the inverted pyramid, so in many ways it is the most important part. The headline is your chance to sell your story. It is the first thing your reader sees. If it's bad, it's also the last thing they see. A perfect headline will encapsulate all of the messages and key facts and also capture readers' attention. In the real world, we sometimes have to compromise, but always should aim to achieve as much of that as possible.

The headline should be no more than 10 words and should contain an active verb. Write the headline first: the process of getting it right is an exercise in organising ideas and distilling the essence of the story, which often makes the rest of the piece much easier to write. Don't write it last as an afterthought. Stick to one main point – don't try to fit too much in. Keep it short and snappy. Use strong vocabulary to make every word count. Play with words, substitute and replace until you get it just right.

The lead paragraph

The lead paragraph is particularly important for “newsy” writing such as statements and press releases. For longer articles like features and extended case studies, the same principles apply but can be spread over two or three paragraphs.

The lead paragraph must tell the reader what is essential about the story: what is new and why it matters. Don't encumber the reader with unnecessary detail to start with – give the broad picture first and bring in supporting information later. Agonise over the lead paragraph: if you get it perfect, the rest of the piece can seem almost to write itself because everything important flows from the lead.

Build blocks

Try to group all of the information relating to one element of your piece in one block of paragraphs. Do not talk about the same thing in completely different sections, except in a thematic way. Put the most important block of information first. This should be the longest block, and should form the middle section of your piece.

The second, third and fourth blocks should contain progressively less important information, arranged as an inverted pyramid. The last block should contain the least important angle, and it should be possible to cut it out without harming the piece overall.

Write sequentially

Within these blocks, each sentence should connect to the next like a link in a chain.

For example: you make a statement, expand on it in the next paragraph, illustrate it with a quote in the third paragraph, and give some figures or background in the fourth paragraph. Then you move on to the next “block” by using a signpost sentence.

Use signposts

Signposts warn readers that you are moving to the next theme. A signpost is a transitional word or sentence that marks the end of one block and the beginning of the next. It can be as simple as “but” or “however”, or can be a short sentence which summarises and announces what is going to follow, like the last sentence of the paragraph above this one. Think of them as the cement between the blocks.

Language and content

Keep it simple

Be concise. One word is better than two. Use as few words as possible: this will concentrate your message and make space to say more. Cut out the waffle. Examine each word and ask if it is essential or redundant; if you can do without, cut it out. Use simple grammatical constructions, avoiding multiple sub-clauses, commas, semicolons (and brackets too).

Keep it short

Short sentences and short paragraphs are clearer. Two short sentences are better than one long sentence. Sentences should usually contain no more than 30 words, because any longer than that and they become hard to understand and remember since readers have to hold too much information in their short-term memory, which starts to strain the mind just as this 49-word sentence is starting to do. Paragraphs should contain no more than three sentences and one basic theme or idea.

Use strong language

Replace dull words with lively synonyms. Choose words that convey movement and dynamism, while avoiding clichés and ornate or flowery terms. Write as if you care. If you don't sound interested, your readers won't feel interested.

Use straightforward language

Write with normal words such as you use in everyday business life. You are communicating with normal human beings. Your goal is clarity, not to impress readers with clever words.

Vary your vocabulary

Avoid repeating words and phrases. This can be a challenge when writing at length on one theme; try to find synonyms and alternative formulations to avoid the jarring effect of reading the same terms over again.

Write with verbs

Weak writers sprinkle their copy copiously with flowery adjectives and adverbs. Good writing revolves around simple, strong, straightforward verbs. Deploy powerful **verbs** in active, declarative formations. The passive voice should be used sparingly. Overusing participles (verbs in forms that end in “-ing”) is a mistake.

Cut out jargon

Picture the least sophisticated member of your target audience and remove or explain any technical terms that they would not understand. That includes corporate or management buzz-words as well as industry jargon. Avoid or at least spell out acronyms and abbreviations.

Style and tone

Write in a style that is appropriate to your audience. In-house corporate communications can sometimes be chatty in tone, whereas publications for outside audiences should usually be more formal and couched in businesslike language.

Be balanced and objective

A press release emulates the impartial tone of a news piece. It is not marketing or advertising. Don't sound overexcited or "over-sell" your message. By all means inject energy into your writing, but don't overdo it – avoid hype.

Read it out loud

Well-written copy sounds right when spoken. If it strains your voice, simplify it. If you run out of breath, shorten the sentences. Reading out loud often uncovers mistakes that are difficult to spot by eye.

Use evidence

Assertions become convincing when backed up with facts. Give context, comparisons and sources, and be precise.

"Thanks to this INTERREG project, local authorities have spent less than half as much on widgets recently" is not very useful or convincing for a journalist. It would be much better to say: "Thanks to this INTERREG project, average spending on widgets by local authorities fell by 75 percent to € 200,000 in 2006 from € 800,000 in 2005, according to an independent survey by ABC polling in May 2007".

Context

Alpine Space projects do not exist in a vacuum, they interact with other systems and people's lives in complex ways. Often a good news angle can be found by stepping back and looking at where a development in a project fits into the bigger picture. All stories are part of the bigger picture, and it is this link with other events that makes them relevant.

Stories are put in perspective by events that happened before or elsewhere, or because of the impact they may have on events later or elsewhere. This perspective is what we call context. Context is the reason why readers would want to read your story, it is the "so what?". Always ask whether what you are describing is part of a bigger theme. A trend, anywhere in the world, always makes for good context.

Context is important enough that it should usually feature in the lead paragraph and also persist lower down the piece.

The most elementary form of context is rank. **Superlatives** such as "the world's biggest" or "the fastest-growing" provide crucial context. **Milestones** are as compelling as superlatives. When something happens, readers want to know if it's the first time or the second time, or how long ago it last happened, or how long since something similar happened.

Edit and rewrite

Few of us get it perfect first time. Many of the best writers return to their prose repeatedly, bringing a fresh mind to the task. Write a first draft, leave it, and come back to it. If the deadline is tight, don't panic: time pressure can actually help you to crystallise what is important and write it clearly.

Quotes

→ Quotations add legitimacy and emphasis to your messages. They can also inject humanity, personality, emotion, immediacy and colour – but only if they are lively and clear. Quotes are a good way to make abstract ideas seem concrete, personal and relevant to the real world. You can get away with slightly more lively, informal and opinionated language in a quote without losing a balanced tone overall.

Be sure to quote people with authority over your subject matter. These can range from project managers with a broad overview to personnel with more hands-on experience where appropriate. Quotes from third parties such as people whose lives have been touched by a project can be especially valuable.

Journalists need quotes to bring their story alive. A strong quote is valuable to any project because it is the part of a press release that is most likely to be reproduced unchanged in print. Good quotes sound like **realistic spoken language**. Avoid hype, slogans, corporate buzz-words. Do not just put quote marks around written prose. Written English uses longer sentences, more formal vocabulary and more complex grammar. Spoken English uses shorter sentences and simpler, brighter vocabulary including contractions. Written English is punctuated logically; spoken English is punctuated “respirationally” – to give pauses where people naturally breathe. Use words that people actually spoke, or speak your rewritten quotes to ensure they sound natural.

- ::: Talk to people as part of your research: spoken words are much more fertile ground for gathering strong quote material than written words. Encourage people to speak enthusiastically about the subject. Listen out for powerful and descriptive words and phrases that you can use in quotes.
- ::: The first quote in your story is very important. It can make the difference between a reader reading on and giving up. Try to get a quote in by the third or fourth paragraph, if not the second. Delaying much longer than that without a quote can leave a piece of writing with a dry, academic tone.
- ::: Double-check the spelling of the name and job title of everyone you quote. Mistakes make people angry and undermine your credibility.
- ::: Don't waste quotes on purely factual information. Use quotes to give reasons, explanations or judgments and express opinions or emotions. Quotes are for illustration, decoration and emphasis, not conveying new information.
- ::: Make them personal, using phrases such as: “I believe...” or: “For me, this is...”
- ::: Most people most of the time are not very eloquent. PR professionals have the luxury of rewriting and inventing quotes that sound more effective. Check that the person being quoted is happy with the quote, whether the words are theirs or yours.
- ::: Adopt language and tone appropriate for the person being quoted.
- ::: Don't use too many quotes or quote too many different people. Spice up a story with a few good quotes, and keep them short.
- ::: Make available a photo of the person quoted, where appropriate.
- ::: “Put full sentences inside the quote marks.” Broken sentence fragments in quotes are “worse than useless to” a journalist.

IN SHORT

The seven “C”s of modern professional writing



Conversational

Try to write the way you speak. Get rid of old-fashioned phrases. Why say “Due to the fact that ...” when you can write “because..”? Would you normally say “the aforementioned information”? Why not “the information” or, if you need to refer back to a point, “the previous information”? Don’t say “motorized mobility” – when you would normally say “cars”



Clear

The reader should be able to understand precisely what you are saying. The language should be adapted to the reader. Use specific examples that the reader can relate to. Don’t assume that your reader understands the jargon of your project area.



Concise

You should eliminate any unnecessary words. Why use four words, “in as much as,” when you can use one word, “because” ? This is not to say that you can’t write long articles, but the longer the report or article, the more ineffective it becomes.

People are unlikely to finish reading a long report – especially if it is on a website. Try to punctuate your articles with images, pictures and charts.



Complete

Make sure you have included all the relevant information the reader needs to know. The biggest problem with leaving out information is that the reader has to make assumptions.

Use dates, figures, data to ensure your text is based on the facts.



Constructive

In modern writing, use words or phrases that set a positive tone. Constructive words are like smiling when you greet someone. They leave a good impression. Words such as “failure”, and “error” tend to distance the reader from the writer and gives a negative impression of the project. Words such as “Agreeable”, “Proud” and Success” help create a positive tone.



Correct

The last step in any writing process is to proofread it. You automatically check your image in a mirror before meeting someone. Your writing is your image on paper. If it is full of spelling and typographical errors, it will detract from what you are trying to get across.

Presentation skills



- How to prepare for presentations and speeches:
 - Messages
 - Efficient use of time
 - Structure
- How to keep the audience involved?
- Physical, vocal and visual delivery
- How to handle nerves and fears?

Great presentation skills are particularly important for project representatives as projects approach conclusion, with end-of-project events to manage and results to present. These skills are also scarce and difficult to build – partly because there are many rules for what goes wrong, but no set rules for what works well every time. This factsheet lays out the core guiding principles to build skills appropriate to each person and the wide variety of situations in which we need to perform. It draws on perspectives from psychology, linguistics, sociology, and hard practical experience to help you create simple, clear and compelling presentations and deliver them effectively.

The **content is the key**. In the professional world most audiences are much too sharp for superficialities of presentation to make much difference. Effective presentation content depends on identifying a handful of clear and memorable **messages** around which to build everything else. While it is important not to squander a good presentation with a limp delivery, the key to a great presentation is the preparation, structure and planning.

A key theme is the need to operate as a **communicator rather** than a presenter. That means being planning and responding to the needs of those on the receiving end, and performing collaboratively by paying attention to feedback. The heart or thrust of your presentation should be about your audience, not about you.

Planning and preparation

→ Preparation is crucial for delivering a great presentation. Many of the best natural presenters appear relaxed and spontaneous precisely because of how much effort they put in beforehand. Even with material and situations with which you are very confident, neglecting the planning stage is always risky.

Messages

Human beings are surprisingly inefficient at taking on board new information in a limited amount of time. For instance, a typical newspaper story or broadcast news item will revolve around only two or three basic ideas. Much more than that, and readers, viewers and listeners become confused or bored. The same principles apply to presentations, which should be constructed around **no more than three key messages**.

Structure

→ Your key messages will provide a frame for the content of the presentation. But how much information can you fit in? That will be determined by the time available. In some cases you will have a defined time slot; in others you can determine this for yourself. Either way, it is important to be concise in order to convey as much information effectively as possible. Bear in mind that people's attention will start to wane after about 20 minutes.

Making a short presentation can be just as challenging as a long one precisely because of the need to cut it to its bare bones and yet remain compelling and get the message across.

The introduction

→ Audiences make judgments very quickly based on first impressions. Psychologists call it the “primacy effect”: given a list of pieces of information, human beings consistently recognise and remember the first items best. The introduction is crucial because it must grasp their attention and establish your credibility, fast. The introduction should develop a relationship with your audience and orient them to your topic. An introduction should take 10 to 15 percent of your speaking time. The intro must settle these five questions:

1. Are they listening?
2. Do they want to keep listening to me?
3. Do they want to know more about this topic?
4. Do they understand where I'm coming from?
5. Do they understand where I'm going?

Hook their attention

The first few moments really are crucial to the success of the presentation: even before you speak, in the moment that attention orients to you as you prepare to start. Develop a rapport fast that prepares your audience to listen to you. Plan first actions and sentences very carefully. Command attention from the first words. The first sentence you use, as in a novel, should immediately capture the imagination of your audience. It has to be one of the strongest sentences in your tale. It's the hook to help you reel in those whose imagination you're trying to capture. Be imaginative or dramatic, and consider the following approaches to the opening few words:

Suspense | Novelty | Humour | Conflict | Story | Quotation | Startling statement | Provocative question

The conclusion

→ **The conclusion has two main goals:**

Logical closure: make sure they understand and agree

1. Summarise the main ideas of the speech
2. Re-establish the connection of the topic to a larger context: pull ideas together into a pattern, refer to broader implications or ramifications.

Psychological closure: make sure they feel and care

1. Remind the audience how the topic affects their lives
2. Make an appeal: a **call to action**.

The call to action is extremely important: it is your best opportunity to change the audience's behaviour or attitudes once they leave the room, which is usually the core aim of a presentation.

Attention and interest

→ It takes more than a snappy introduction to maintain interest, and you have to do more than just talk. Too much uninterrupted talk can lead to boredom even if your information is first class. Depending how alert your audience is, you will need to intervene to stop them wandering off at least once a minute, if you want undivided attention – which of course you do. Show a visual, tell a story, use a prop, move around, change the tone of your voice, change the pace, ask the audience to do something, write on a flip chart or demonstrate a process.

Gestures

The overall energy of a presentation is enhanced by the use of gestures and limited movement. When under the spotlight, and concentrating hard, the temptation is to remain rooted to the spot. Dynamic gestures and movements reinforce the ideas of the speech. Make gestures larger to a larger crowd – without overdoing it to the point where it appears contrived or conspicuous. Don't stand as if with two frying pans tied to them. Gesture as you normally would in conversation.

Posture

Stand or sit with a relaxed but alert and purposeful posture. Standing is better while presenting: it focuses attention on you and gives you a better view of the audience. If you can be comfortable without a lectern, great. If the psychological support helps, take advantage of it.

Vocal delivery

→ Speak clearly, correctly and conversationally: don't put on a performance. A presenter's voice should sound like private speech, but exaggerated to fill the room. Vary your voice for interest and emphasis. Try to eliminate useless space-filling sounds and phrases: Um. Er. You know. I mean. So to speak. Etcetera. Speak loudly enough for everyone to hear, and loudly enough to sound especially confident: usually louder than normal speech. Broadcast your voice to the furthest corners of the room; you will naturally keep your head up and open your mouth wide. Speak at a rate the audience can follow, which is typically a little slower than in normal conversation. In any case, being loud and enunciating distinctly will require more pauses for breath. Go more slowly than you think you need to, particularly with as adrenalin tends to speed us up. Your audience need the time to assimilate and interpret what you are saying. Practise words that are unfamiliar or easy to stumble over. Change and movement are interesting, so vary your voice.

1. Vary your pitch to convey interest and confidence.
2. Vary your rate of speaking to establish a mood or add emphasis. Slowly sounds thoughtful or deliberate, or imparts a sense of drama. Speaking fast shows excitement and activity.
3. Vary your volume: raise or lower for effect, usually for a punch-line or attention grabber before something important.

IN SHORT

Plan and structure your presentation so that it can be followed easily by your audience.

Before you finalise your materials examine these key questions:

☐ Who is your audience and what preconceptions do they bring?

☐ What precisely is the central issue?

☐ To what degree does the audience understand the issues and terminology?

☐ What are the main ideas that need to be expressed and which ideas can be left out?

☐ How are you going to structure your content so that your messages are consistent and clear?

Being interviewed? Preparation tips



- DOs & DON'Ts for preparing and giving media interviews.

General advices

→ Interviews are strange, contrived situations that are unfamiliar to most people who don't take part in them regularly or professionally. They can have a similar dynamic to normal meetings with colleagues at work, or normal conversations or debates with friends, but don't be fooled. An interview is a game, an intellectual challenge, and ultimately a contest between the interviewer and the interviewee for control of the story.

At the beginning it can feel as if the interviewer holds all the cards. He or she gets to choose what questions to ask and what answers to use in print and broadcast (unless it is live). By journalistic custom, you have very few rights. You should be able to ask to see your own quotes and to know when, whether and in what form and when it will be broadcast or published; but you have no right to see the whole piece before it is aired. You can ask beforehand what themes and subjects the interview will cover, but you have no guarantee that the journalist will stick to those topics on the day. You can ask for a list of questions, but almost always the answer will be no.

This is where issues of control come into play. You have power to the extent that the journalist needs access to you and your information. These are your bargaining tools in setting the terms for the interview.

However they may seem, journalists are not your friends, and they are ultimately loyal only to the story. Nevertheless, treat them with respect, because whether consciously or otherwise their feelings towards you will colour their treatment of you during the interview and subsequently their treatment of your interests in the story itself.

Treat all journalists equally well, regardless of how lowly their publication. Obscure local or trade publication articles might have little immediate impact, but can easily come to the attention of bigger media. When major reporters are preparing to cover you and your organisation, they will search through previous coverage for their background, and what they will find will be exactly these little and obscure stories. Finally, major journalists were all minor journalists once – with long memories.

Most interviews bring together conflicting interests: yours and those of the journalist and any other players in the story of which you are a part. Expect to be asked aggressive, melodramatic, or ignorant questions: the journalist wants to improve the story with drama, conflict and (over) simplification. These are not usually in your interests, so don't rise to them. Remain calm, confident, and measured. The bottom line is that you cannot control the reporter and should not seek to do so. All you can control is yourself and your own behaviour. Above all:

DO

Push your messages. Your messages should be a thread running through your contribution to the entire interview. Consistency and repetition are your way to ensure as much as possible that the journalist takes away the right information and the right angle, and puts these into print or broadcast. Make a point of trying to include one of your positive messages in every answer you give. It can be an intellectual challenge to turn questions and conversation around in this way without sounding strained, but it is an invaluable skill to master. But beware the perception of spin.

Use facts, examples and anecdotes to illustrate, substantiate and bring to life each of your messages. Use examples that are appropriate to the media that will publish or broadcast your interview.

Give good quotes and sound-bites. Besides information, what a journalist is really looking for in an interview is a set of strong quotes to illustrate the story. The same goes for text as for broadcast: quotes add colour, authority, immediacy, personality, humanity. Give good quotes. If you come up with a good phrase while practicing for the interview, remember it. Use strong and lively language and short sentences so that your words can be edited easily. Your quotes are your only opportunity to appear verbatim in the finished product – so make them shine. You will probably only get a few sentences of your own direct speech in a print article, or 15 seconds in a news broadcast. The reporter will choose the quote that best illustrates their story – so make sure it is one that helps your agenda.

Be humble, open, friendly, non-defensive, accessible, normal, calm, and human. You want the journalist and viewers or readers to warm to you and empathise with you: this will translate into attention and trust for your messages.

Be honest. Giving a little ground where you can do so without causing damage makes you seem reasonable and inspires trust in whatever else you say. Honesty is a very powerful positive signal.

Body language is particularly important for television interviews, but also plays a role in any face-to-face interview. If you sit up straight, make eye contact and speak naturally, you will more readily inspire trust. If you cross your arms, avoid eye contact and swivel in your chair, your lack of comfort will be apparent and this will hurt your credibility.

Start and finish well. Go in strong and don't let up at the end. How you start sets the agenda for the whole interview; the interviewer will be taking notes for ideas to return to. Your final comments will be the ones people remember most readily, so no matter what mistakes have been made during the interview, you may be able to rescue it with a good positive finish.

Don't raise issues that you don't want to talk about. It might sound obvious but it is surprising how many people, having prepared to cover their weaknesses, voluntarily start talking about them when they might not have come up at all.

Keep it simple. Don't get bogged down in unnecessary detail.

Use basic universal language and no jargon. Technical terms and abbreviations that are everyday to you will often be meaningless to outsiders. Pitch your language for the level of expertise of the lowest common denominator, the reader or viewer of the media in question with the least specialist knowledge. A useful mental discipline is to picture your grandmother or grandfather and imagine explaining it to them in a clear and engaging way. It is almost always possible to break down jargon into clear language without "dumbing down" or patronising too much. If you succeed, the result is much more clear and accessible.

Be succinct. Make your point quickly and directly; then stop talking. Watch for signals from the journalist that they want to move to a new topic. Time is limited, especially for broadcast, and succinct language makes the best quotes.

Forget process, talk action. Internally, communication about process is very important. For anyone on the outside, process is very boring and usually irrelevant. Don't talk about institutions, procedures or bureaucracy – talk about action, people and results.

Bring a press kit where appropriate to give the journalist all necessary background information.

Participate actively. Do more than just answer the questions – raise questions. While answering, think about the next question and drop suggestions or dangle information that will invite a new line of enquiry and guide the conversation towards topics that suit your messages.

Correct yourself immediately if you make a mistake. It is easy to forget and find it has become a matter of public record.

Use your brand. Wherever possible (and without seeming contrived), use your brand name – project, programme, or Europe in a broad sense. Don't say "I feel strongly that ...", say "[BRAND] feels strongly that ...". Get your name out there. Too many spokespeople get the message right but forget to say who they are. When that happens, audiences do not register your brand and therefore don't change their views or behaviours towards it.

Object to loaded questions. If a question is based on incorrect information or a biased proposition, say so. Otherwise you may seem to accept this view implicitly.

DON'T

Don't digress. Politicians, for instance, have a maddening habit of making party political points in interviews on non-partisan topics. The same goes for any kind of agenda you may have beyond the scope of the story that the journalist is working on. Unless you think they will be genuinely interested, you can be confident that changing the subject will annoy the journalist and not make it into print anyway. If it's a live broadcast, it will annoy the listeners or viewers too, because they are in the middle of being told a story about something else.

Don't rise to it. Journalists can be aggressive or even obnoxious in their questioning, and you may not be used to being spoken to in this way. Don't take it personally; don't get angry or defensive or emotional. They may be trying to make the story appear more dramatic, or trying to make themselves appear more probing, or trying to intimidate or unsettle you, or perhaps they really are just ignorant. The obnoxious question may even be edited out so all anyone hears is your indignant or defensive answer. Likewise in a broadcast panel debate, do not engage in personal animosity with other panel members – this is also a digression.

Don't be unsettled by rapid interruptions. Some journalists try to unsettle their interviewee by asking many questions very quickly one after the other, without allowing the time to respond fully. Keep your cool and set your own pace. Take your time answering each question, or use a phrase such as: "You have asked a lot of questions. Let me go through them one at a time". If you really have to get a point across without being interrupted, don't draw breath between sentences – roll straight into a linking phrases such as, "... and what that also means is this:..."

Don't be intimidated by repetitive questioning: the reporter may be trying to trick you into discrepancies, but equally may be giving you a chance to say the same thing in a better quote or sound-bite. In any case, stay cool and respond with using messages as normal, trying different examples and tactics each time.

Don't be afraid to give an honest answer even to a negative question. It can be as simple as saying, "Yes, but..."

Never say "no comment". It makes you sound defensive, evasive, and as if you have something to hide. There is always a better way to say nothing, such as "I can't confirm or deny that for the moment. What I can say is..." If you can't comment on an issue for reasons such as the law, confidentiality or commercial sensitivity – or if you just don't have the information – then say so.

Don't be intimidated by a tape recorder. It can feel like having evidence taken down against you in a police interview – but it is there to protect you. Good journalists will usually use one to check quotes and information.

Don't be taken by surprise. Journalists will sometimes call unexpectedly or ask for an interview without warning. If you don't feel prepared, ask to meet or speak by telephone later – even if it's only a few minutes to give you a chance to collect your thoughts. Note down the journalist's name, publication, deadline, and ask them what kind of story they are working on. That will help you prepare for the news angle. And do call them back.

Don't speak "off the record". If you don't want to see something in print, don't say it. Some journalists are more scrupulous than others, but to be safe you should assume that everything you say, whether on or off the record, might be published. You need a very good reason to speak off the record, and a journalist you trust utterly.

Never say "to be honest" or "to tell the truth". It implies that you weren't before or that you aren't always.

Don't use negative vocabulary. Single words like "unfortunately" are powerful in setting the tone for your entire position. Be positive.

Don't repeat negative material from questions. For instance, following riots recently a police chief was asked: "Have you lost control of law and order?" He answered "No, we have not lost control of law and order". This set a negative and defensive tone, so the focus of the story became: Police chief denies losing control of law and order. If he had answered "No, we acted decisively to make sure law and order was never even in question," the angle is positive. A negative quote easily becomes a damaging sound-bite, as Bill Clinton found out after pledging "I did not have sexual relations with that woman."

Don't be afraid to say "I don't know", if you couldn't be expected to know. It is better than rambling or digressing – and it is honest. You can always offer to get back in touch with the journalist with more information if necessary.

Don't overdo it. While it is important to push your messages and remain positive, do not exaggerate or engage in hyperbole. Remember, journalists are suspicious of hype, and they respond to facts rather than hot air. Use your proof points. Do not be perceived to spin.

Don't be defensive or engage in argument with the journalist. The journalist controls the terms, so you will probably not win the argument. Even if you do, you will lose in the court of public opinion. Instead, be positive, open, humble and honest.

Don't speculate. You don't know what will happen in the future, so avoid responding to questions that ask you for a prediction. Your words may be used against you if things don't turn out as expected.

Don't over-answer. For some people a natural response to the anxiety of being interviewed is to talk more than they usually would. Saying too much can dilute your message, or take you into unintended territory. Make a conscious choice to stick to your messages, then stop talking. When you hear yourself say something good, that is a signal to stop while you are ahead. If there is silence after you have finished speaking, don't feel obliged to fill it by rambling on – wait for the journalist, or say, "what else would you like to know"?

Don't let your guard down – particularly after a good answer.

Don't criticise third parties. Conflict and controversy make great news so journalists may try to encourage you to criticise or disagree with views attributed to a third party. This will rarely serve your purposes.

Don't be forced into a false dichotomy. Some journalists will try to make you choose between two blank options when in fact the situation is more complex. If you don't like the options, don't choose: explain.

Don't assume the journalist knows anything. Journalists sometimes pretend they know more than they really do, in order to get you to confirm sensitive information. It's a classic investigative journalism technique known as "fishing". Never assume a journalist knows anything that isn't in the public domain unless they have clear evidence.

Don't assume a journalist is really that ignorant or clever – mock-ignorance can be an act to get you to drop your guard; purported expertise can be bluster.

Don't joke unless you're really sure it would be funny in any context.

Never, ever lie. In an interview, you are creating a public record, and untruths have a habit of coming to light and returning to haunt you.

IN SHORT

Media interview checklist

DO

- Push your messages
- Use facts, examples and anecdotes
- Give good quotes and sound-bites
- Be humble
- Be honest
- Body language
- Start and finish well
- Don't raise issues that you don't want to talk about
- Keep it simple
- Use basic universal language and no jargon
- Be succinct
- Forget process, talk action
- Bring a press kit
- Participate actively
- Correct yourself immediately
- Object to loaded questions

DON'T

- Don't digress
- Don't rise to it
- Don't be unsettled by rapid interruptions
- Don't be intimidated by repetitive questioning
- Don't be afraid to give an honest answer
- Never say "no comment"
- Don't be intimidated by a tape recorder
- Don't be taken by surprise
- Don't speak "off the record"
- Never say "to be honest" or "to tell the truth"
- Don't use negative vocabulary
- Don't repeat negative material from questions
- Don't be afraid to say "I don't know"
- Don't overdo it
- Don't be defensive
- Don't speculate
- Don't over-answer
- Don't assume the journalist knows anything