



# MEMO

HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH MEDIA



BELGIAN BIODIVERSITY PLATFORM





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## REFERENCES

- Booklet: "Gérer les relations avec la presse- Guide pour les communicateurs fédéraux COMM Collection"
- Training: "Communiquer avec la presse" IFA/OFO
- Interview of Ms. Sophie Petitjean, journalist for Europolitique

## INTRODUCTION

Journalists are undoubtedly important 'influencers' or 'opinion leaders', and it is important to create and maintain good relations with media in order to inform, engage and build confidence with citizens.

In Belgium, professional journalists have rights (e.g.: free access to all sources of information) and obligations (e.g. respect for the truth, rejection of any form of pressure) formalised in the *Declaration of Duties and Rights of Journalists*.  
(See NL version: <http://www.rvdj.be/sites/default/files/pdf/journalistieke-code.pdf>  
See FR version: [http://www.deontologiejournalistique.be/telechargements/04\\_3\\_01\\_declaration\\_droits\\_et\\_devoirs.pdf](http://www.deontologiejournalistique.be/telechargements/04_3_01_declaration_droits_et_devoirs.pdf)).

Journalists are also required to abide by the *Code of Ethics*: <http://www.codededeontologiejournalistique.be> which includes the following rules: inform with respect for the truth, inform independently, respect the privacy and human dignity, etc.

Journalists may work for different type of media, yet they intend to reach the same goal: collect and process information and transfer it to the public as quickly and accurately as possible. Journalists are well trained in how to conduct interviews and might be experts on the topic they cover. However, as the latter may not always be the case, make sure to provide them with the clearest and most complete information you have at hand, do not infer they already know all about your topic. Consider also, the context in which journalists work: be aware of their time (often very short) and answer quickly to their requests when feasible.

Consider the journalists as partners, always respect them and maintain collaborative relationships. This implies respond to their requests as soon as possible, be attentive to their needs, be proactive, propose them new subjects, do not provide false information or make promises you can not keep. Be sure to maintain good contacts with journalists, especially with the specialised journalists who may recontact you for other interviews.

For a news to be considered as "news-worthy", the following criteria usually are considered:  
-A good story (whether positive or negative)

- Crisis, conflicts, controversy (positive or negative: a negative situation can be an opportunity to present a positive news).
  - Proximity (the public is interested in what is happening in their own environment, close to their house).
  - Related to main news headlines (up to date information linked to a major headline/ a specific event/ a special day).
  - A surprising news (people like to hear about new topics, information that will attract their attention, drive them out of their daily lives).
  - Identification (people like to identify themselves with others, especially with faces they know: the implication of famous people in your story will help it become interesting for the media).
  - Emotions (all information that create vivid emotions are potentially interesting for the journalists).
  - Figures (figures and statistics can constitute a news in itself).
  - Temporality (the public is more interested by the present and the short-term future than by the past).
  - Images (the people like to visualise an event or a news: think of pictures/ videos/ photos/ locations for interview that can illustrate your message -these illustrations may be used for the press, but also by TV journalists who can add them into their video).
  - Topics of interest to the public (environment, health, security, work, consumption are among the favourite topics of journalists as they have a direct impact on citizen's lives).
- In any case, your news has to be a news, not a communication: i.e. selling the idea that your project finishing a 4-year period today is not a news, this is a communication. Telling that your project is starting and has such and such intention or that it is ending and had such and such results/ such and such impact is a news.

There is a variety of tools to communicate with the press. These include press releases, press conferences, interviews, and social media. These tools are presented in the following pages.



## PRESS RELEASE

### WHAT IS A PRESS RELEASE?

A press release is a short, compelling news story. The goal of a press release is to draw the interest of a journalist to one's story. The press release is to be sent to newspapers, press agencies, and individual journalists.

Everyday, journalists receive a myriad of press releases (for instance, Ms. Sophie Petitjean, journalist for *Europolitique* receives between 150 and 200 email-news per day -that includes many press releases-, out of which only 2 or 3 will be selected to be covered). There is therefore a challenge in bringing the journalists to read and spread your news. Since journalists mainly read the press releases from the sources they know and trust, it is important that you start your media relations with good press releases, relevant for the press, and structured in a proper way. To have more chances of being published, select the newspapers/ media to whom you send your news: know the type of media and the type of journalists working for this media, and contact them personally: by targeting a media that can potentially be interested in your topic, you will be more successful than by sending your press release in a bulk mailing.

### WHAT IS A GOOD PRESS RELEASE?

Journalists never have time. You will therefore have more chances to have your news spread if your press release is clear, well written, short, to the point, if it contains clear information, a good story, and if it is complete. If you send it to different type of media (press, web, audio...), adjust the format to their needs. Make it attractive: add pictures/ video/ audio files/ links.

The fundamental question to ask yourself is: why is this relevant? Why should a journalist and by extension a citizen be interested in this? This is your starting point and your endpoint. When drafting a press release, make the case for action in a clear and convincing way, instilling in the journalists who reads it the idea that your news is important and relevant.

In terms of contents, when writing the body of your press release, think of it as a news story. Use the "Inverted Pyramid Style of Writing": first say what is the most important. Your "lead" (see below) must answer to five essential questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

### HOW TO STRUCTURE A PRESS RELEASE?

A press release starts with a short eye-catching headline (if not relevant to the journalist, they will read no further), followed by a lead paragraph that sets out the message. Whenever useful it should contain 'sound-bite' such as quotes of people. In the second part of the press release are found more details on context and background information. The press release ends with a call for action (i.e. invitation to an event; finding out more by contacting the author...). The contact details of the author of the press release (name, phone number, e-mail) are crucial: they can be added at the very beginning of the press release (above the headline) or at the very end (with a clear visual distinction). Embedded videos are a good additional option.

In terms of contents, the press release should contain all the essential information for the journalist to easily produce their own story (who? what? where? when? how? and most importantly, why?). A press release should outline the scientific/ policy message in a user-friendly, interesting and convincing way.

The structure of a press release is the same as a press article, i.e.:

- 1/ Source: who is communicating? (name of organisation + logo) (on top, above the headline)
- 2/ Date: mention the date of your press release and the sentence "For immediate release" (except if there is an embargo: see [ANNEX 2](#)).
- 3/ Title: the title must draw the attention and provide the essence of the message: a good title is informative and attractive; it must be very short -if possible, shorter than a full sentence.
- 4/ Lead: your lead is the first paragraph: it is the most important. Journalists often read no more than the first five lines. It is therefore very important to provide the key information within these first sentences. Answer to who? what? where? when? why? how? The information must be very clear (black & white). If you want to add details and nuances, do that in the following paragraphs, never in your lead. A lead must easily be copy-pasted into a newspaper and get published as such.
- 5/ Body: the following paragraphs: they provide the additional information. They usually provide more details to the questions Why? and How? or they inform on the general context of the news. Each paragraph of your body must contain one main idea, so create different paragraphs for different ideas. Your

body can have two, three, or four paragraphs and more but do not go beyond A4 format. Remember that the main ideas come on top of your press release, the accessory information come at the end of it. Also, nowadays, press releases are shorter and shorter: most of them are not more than 10 lines and contain only one idea. Regardless of the complexity of your message, make sure to use a simple language. You can also add some sub-titles or quotes which could be published as such (this also makes the work of the busy journalist easier).

6/ Contact: put your contact details at the end of your press release with a clear visual distinction (or at the very top of it: above the headline; together with the source -organisation name). Who publishes this message and who can the journalist call/ e-mail for more information? Put the name of someone who will actually pick up the phone (Mobile number is highly recommended) and of a person who knows about the press release and the topic (it is better to put the contact of someone who knows the topic very well and who is available for questions and requests than someone who is a CEO or high in hierarchy but very busy and not well aware of the contents of the press release): a contact point is very important in a press release, and it must be available to answer questions.

7/ Boilerplate: a small paragraph, at the end of the press release, which presents, in a few lines, your organisation, its mission and main activities. You can use the same boilerplate for all your press releases.

! A press release is not an advertising message: no need to show off with your project, product or service. Be objective in the description of your achievement. Journalists highly dislike hidden advertisement. However, do not be too humble about the service you offer: your project might be fascinating; what you offer might be of great use to citizens so do not hesitate to highlight the benefits of it.

Do not ask for an embargo\* (see the meaning of embargo in [ANNEX 2](#)) of more than two days. Use the embargo only for good reasons that you can explain to the journalist. If you ask for too many days of embargo, you'll have a leak risk.

Please refer to [ANNEX 1](#) to see an example of a press release.

#### HOW TO SEND A PRESS RELEASE?

Send it via e-mail. Add your text in your email body text: it will have more chance to be read.

Put the title of your press release in the subject of your e-mail (do not put "press release" as your subject e-mail). Add your full press release in attachment (PDF) but also put the whole text in the body of the e-mail because journalists usually do not have time to download the press release to read them. As for the sender's email, best is to have the name of the organisation rather than your personal name; because journalists are then suspicious that you are a consultant/ advertising on your own business/ sending a communication (not an information)/ a spam... and therefore may not open your e-mail.

Also, note that many professional journalists put a default setting in their email box to consider mailings (grouped e-mails) as spams. So if you planned to send your press release in Bcc to the whole list of press contacts of your organisation, that is not a good idea because many journalists will not receive your press release. You should send your press release individually, to each journalist.

In terms of timing, you may take into account the deadlines of the journalists. Send it early in the morning (ideally, before 9 am) if you wish to have a chance to be published on the very same day. Indeed, their daily routine is as follows: journalists usually arrive at the editorial office, they look at the press releases they received via e-mail and go through the morning news; then, they decide which subject they will cover during the day; after that, they have a daily editorial conference with the other journalists and the copy chief, where they discuss which topic they will cover (between 10 am and 11 am, depending on each media) and then, they start writing to publish the day itself or the day after. They may have to write two or three articles a day (on different topics), so timing is very tight; hence better to send your press release in the morning. (note that even if the journalist is convinced that your topic is interesting, it may not be chosen as this is discussed with the copy chief who may not wish to publish on this subject).

After having sent your press release, be next to your phone (always give your mobile number in the press release: a phone number in a press release is a phone number where journalists can reach you). Answer the questions of the journalists. Do not hesitate to ask them by email if they received your document (they are very busy so a gentle reminder is absolutely fine), tell them you are available for more information. You can also call them to 'push' your press release: a short call to ensure they received it and that you are there for any question they have.

Send the press release to your media contacts list. If you would like to receive guidance on how to develop your own press contacts list, refer to the following guidelines: <http://www.kalamos.be/uploads/boite/fichier/liste-de-journalistes.pdf> You can also call editorial secretariats of the media you target and ask them the contacts of the journalists potentially interested to cover your topic. Ideally, a press file should be updated every three months.

## PRESS CONFERENCE

### WHAT IS A PRESS CONFERENCE AND WHY ORGANISING IT?

A press conference is a media event in which newsmakers invite journalists (and only journalists) to hear them speak and, most often, ask questions. In a press conference, one or more speakers may make a statement, which may be followed by questions from reporters. Sometimes only questioning occurs; sometimes there is a statement with no questions permitted (especially for crisis situation or sensitive political issues).

Journalists receive invitations to press conferences everyday. They will ask themselves whether it is worthy or not to attend your press conference. Journalists attend press conferences only when there is a controversial issue at stake (and hence want to ask the views of the officials) or if they need clarifications from experts). Therefore, organise a press conference only for 'official stories' or 'big news', or if there is a need for more information from experts: there must be an added-value for the journalists to come and attend your press conference. The information provided during the press conference must go beyond the information of your press release. If you have good reasons to organise a press conference (i.e.: the information you want to share can not be summarised in a press release; the news will make a "big story"; the journalists need to interview experts...).

There are alternatives to the "press conferences" such as "press point", "press lunch", "press briefing" (e.g.: "press points" are used on a weekly basis to state the points discussed during the Council of Ministers). The format of your "press conference" will depend on the type of news you want to announce. In any case, do not invite

other people: if you organise a press conference; then only the press is invited (journalists highly dislike ending up in a 'communication' meeting presented as a press conference).

### HOW TO COMMUNICATE DURING A PRESS CONFERENCE?

A press conference usually is composed of a series of speeches by different speakers. However, to make your press conference more interesting, you can plan an action or a visual event (when relevant): e.g. the Minister who gives an award to a scientist. Make your message visual and attractive. A famous person or your Minister will help giving more weight to the message. However, make sure to keep the focus on the message: the main messages must be well communicated during the press conference.

### PRACTICAL TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL PRESS CONFERENCE

-Date: Choose a strategic date: do not organise a press conference on the same day as an other important event or another press conference on the same topic (see [www.belga.be](http://www.belga.be) for information on other announced press conferences or call this Belgian press agency to ask about the relevance of the date you picked). You can associate your press conference date with a symbolic one (e.g.: Biodiversity Day).

-Hour: Ideally, organise your press conference by around 10 or 11 am. A press conference can not last more than 1 hour: maximum 20 minutes for the speakers (the journalists are not interested in the formal speech, they will read the press release during the formal speeches to learn about your topic). Journalists are mainly interested in the Q&A session. The press conference lasting one hour includes speeches and Q&A. Time for private interviews should also be allocated.

-Guests: Think about who you will invite: refer to your press contacts file or contact relevant media to get the contact details of journalists specialised in your topic. Better invite less people, but the right ones.

-Invitation: Make sure that the invitation to the press conference includes all important details via email (location, date, topic, agenda, interviews opportunities, contact point), ideally two weeks prior to the event. One to two days before the press conference, contact (phone or email) the journalists to ensure they received the invitation and if they plan to attend it.

-Scenario: Prepare the programme of your press conference (e.g.: speech 1, speech 2, Q&A, time for individual interviews).  
Important: always double-check on which

messages will be communicated by each speaker to avoid repetitions; and check the layout of the slides (readable and not too much text, just bullet points; max 5 to 10 slides per speaker: 20 minutes maximum, all speakers included).

Optional: in order to prepare for the private interviews, you can prepare the potential questions which could be asked by journalists (especially the "difficult questions").

-Location: The location must be easily accessible, and when relevant, in line with your news. In Brussels, Residence Palace: <http://presscenter.org/en/page/would-you-like-to-organise-something-yourself> provides equipped and well located rooms for press conferences. In your invitation, mention if there will be a parking; if not, mention that the use of public transports is advised.

-Material: Make sure to book microphones, screens, beamer, computer... beforehand. Plan parking spots and signs for the journalists to easily access the conference.

-Visibility: Make sure that the logo of your organisation is visible in the room of the press conference with posters/ flyers... and to put access signs from the parking to the conference room. Inform the reception that a press conference will take place on that day and ask them to help journalists find the conference room.

-Networking: Try to create informal contacts with the journalists to understand what their topics of interest are.

#### WHAT TO DO AFTER THE PRESS CONFERENCE?

Make sure to remain available for the journalists: they may have questions on a figure, on the precise function of one of the speakers... So keep your mobile phone (number mentioned in the invitation and press release) near you.

Make sure to facilitate the work of the journalists: provide them all the material (your logo, your press release, texts, photos, videos...) online. During the press conference, you can provide them with the material on a USB stick; and give them flyers presenting your organisation/ your campaign. After the conference, monitor the impact of your press conference (number of press articles...).

## INTERVIEWS

Interviews generally take place at the request of a journalist who would like to get more information about a hot topic, following a press release, a press conference, a situation of interest to society, or in case of a crisis situation.

The golden rule of a successful interview lies in a good preparation. You can get ready by applying the following steps, but with the current way of working in media, it is not likely that you will have enough time to follow all the steps. Most interviews are prepared in advance: the journalists already know what type of answer they may receive from experts and therefore will ask the questions they want to in order to receive the responses they expect to receive. There are ways to keep control over one's message as explained below, but you must also know that getting ready for an interview is almost impossible, so it is normal if you do not feel prepared enough before an interview.

Journalists may contact you by phone and start the interview immediately as they may need the information here and now. If you do not feel ready to take the interview straight away or are not able to take the interview at that moment; and if the journalist can wait for an hour or more, ask for their contact details and the following information: how much time is there before the writing/ publication of the article; who else is being interviewed; what are the key information they are missing and would like to receive; any other information you may consider important to prepare yourself for the interview, then commit to call them back as soon as possible, and do it at the time you set. Journalists are used to people not calling them back so they will look for other sources in the meantime, but it is important that you conduct the interview if you said you would. Also, when they start the interview straight away over the phone, know that they (especially radio journalists) may be recording it; so whether you feel you are being interviewed or not, they may use some of the elements you provided in their report.

Steps to follow to get ready for an interview:

#### BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- Check the profile of the journalist: what is their expertise? A journalist familiar with the biodiversity topic will ask other questions than general reporters. Specialised journalists know perhaps even more than you do; whereas general journalists may not be very familiar with your topic. The trend is now towards more general journalists: they have to cover a wide variety of topics simultaneously. Journalists now have less time to collect, process and verify in-depth information. Their articles are getting shorter and their deadlines, increasingly tightened. Remember that so you can provide the journalist with basic contextual knowledge by the end of your interview to help them understand the broader context (do not do it at the beginning of the interview: see below for more information on *how to structure your messages*).
- For which media the journalist work? For which type of reader/ listener/ viewer is the message being prepared?
- What is the reason why the journalist contacted you? Which information are they looking for? What happened before they contacted you? Were there articles or press releases published? Is it a reaction to your own press release? Has the topic been discussed in the news? If so, how was it handled so far?

#### DECIDE WHO WILL TAKE THE INTERVIEW

Make sure the appropriate person is being interviewed. Check if there are any internal procedure as far as spokespersons are concerned: should the message come from the management or from a topic expert?

If you speak as an expert, know that what is expected from you is that:

- You speak as a specialist in a given subject (scientific, technical...). Note that an "expert" refers to someone who knows about a topic (not necessarily someone who has published many publications and has worked for many years on a specific topic as may be the case in the scientific world).
- You can express yourself with clarity.
- Your intervention aims to enhance the credibility of the information, especially during a crisis situation.

#### PREPARE YOUR MESSAGE

- Prepare some key messages and make sure to be able to summarise the issue in a simple way, preferably with no more than five sentences.
- Focus on what is new or different (e.g. what is new in your information? what the media does not know yet? what are the consequences of the

new regulations/ the new project/ the results... for citizens?)

- Remember to bring a response to the essential questions that are being asked by journalists who? what? where? when? why? how?
- To make your information more accessible, do not hesitate to illustrate it with images, numbers, facts or concrete examples. However avoid giving too many numbers or incomprehensible data. Put emphasis on some key figures and if necessary, provide the journalist with a document containing all the figures.
- Translate your message into understandable vocabulary for the public; and if you are able to do so, you can help the journalist work by already choosing an "angle": the point you are using to introduce your story.
- Ideally (but not necessarily), your information should be "ready for use": the journalist should be able to basically copy-paste (a text from your press release; a clip of your video interview...). For you, this is an additional guarantee that your messages will not be misinterpreted and that the information published/ broadcast in the media is accurate. In other words: you remain in control of your message and nuances that you want to bring.
- Avoid literal translations that may make some incomprehensible messages.
- Avoid any form of jargon: your information must be simple and understandable for the uninitiated; possibly use a more 'popular' language to communicate to non-specialised media.
- Whichever media you are communicating with, remember the principle of the inverted pyramid (see the press release section for more details): Traditionally, the information is presented in a introduction - development (context, general principles, examples) - conclusion standard. In communicating with the media, it is the opposite: you start by providing the main information, what is the most important in your message, what is new or different must come first; then you proceed with the details, examples, illustrations and the context.

#### DURING THE INTERVIEW

##### CONTENT

Focus on your messages and do not hesitate to reformulate several times what you want to say during the interview (the journalist will cut afterwards, so do not hesitate to repeat your message if you would like to formulate it in another way until you are satisfied with the way you expressed your idea). Use clear language, understandable and tailored to the audience. Be concise, concrete and pictorial (use numbers, facts, examples...). Use action verbs, avoid



negative or passive constructions.

A radio or television interview follows a standard pattern:

Introduction of the topic; 1st interview; Comment of the journalist; 2nd interview; Comment & conclusion of the journalist.

A radio or TV interview format usually lasts for no more than 1'30 min., and the time allocated to an interviewee will not be more than 15 to 25 seconds so make sure to summarise the essence of your message in about 20 seconds (if you had time to prepare before the interview, rehearsal until you know exactly what you want to say and how you will say it in 20 seconds: and you can add your prepared sentence after you answered another question from the journalist - just to make sure you provided them with what you think is the most essential before the interview ends). At the same time, make sure to be natural when you explain your message.

The journalist basically needs you to provide information on the topic. Your statements will help them communicating the message: the journalist can not say what they think or know: the journalist uses experts to express an issue and explain it to the public: consider yourself as a passageway to the elaboration of a message to the citizens.

However, the journalist may have already decided, prior to the interview, what they would like you to say. If you see the journalist is asking the same type of question over and over again with a precise intention of getting a specific answer, but that you do not want to say so, you can simply state to the journalist "I know what you are trying to make me say but I do not agree with this idea. I believe that..." (do not say what they want you to say. Some journalists may cut it and use it as if you actually said it). By stating to the journalist that you will not say what they want, they will move on to another question; if they repeat the same question again and again, it is because they think you did not understand the point they were trying to make and hence, are trying to get their statement in a way or another.

If you are having difficulties to find space to make your point, you can also use the *bridge technique*: use sentences such as "The essential point is..." or "If you have only one thing to remember, it is..." to move away from the question and take up the lead. Keep your line of conduct. A journalist may try to get the information they want (which is fine if it is in line with your views; but if it is not, do not hesitate to keep the control of the message you are communicating).

If you are interviewed by a radio or TV journalist, remember that your statement may have to be edited/ cut so do not use "First", "Second"... or other complicated constructions. Make your statement short enough to be kept as one element; and if it needs to be cut, make it easy for the video editor: express each of your ideas in a short, simple and clear way. If you do not follow these rules, your intervention may not be kept because you will have taken too long and used too complex terms to express a simple idea. With interviews, a rule to keep in mind is: *the simpler, the better*.

Never lie, say only what you know. As representative of your organisation, do not say 'I think', but 'this is...'. If you lie on facts, it jeopardises your credibility and the one of your organisation. Since most TV interviews are not live, better say that you do not know something rather than speculating, remaining vague or starting to make the issue sound complicated: journalists will not keep the section where you said you do not know, they will cut it at the editing process because it is not interesting for them, so do not fear saying you do not know about something.

#### FORM

In television, the non-verbal (posture, facial expression, tone of voice, gestures, etc.) often says more than verbal. As the popular saying goes, "You never get a second opportunity to make a first impression". What will be first perceived by the viewer is your general attitude: are you relaxed or tense? Remember to breathe, do not talk too fast, articulate clearly. Use variations in your tone and gestures to focus on the important elements. Adopt a stable position and control your gestures. These serve for supporting your words, so they must be consistent with what you say. Keep eye contact with the reporter. Adopt a suitable dress, adapted to the context and the public. If your clothes are not simple, the viewers may keep their attention on your clothing or appearance and the message will be lost. Adopt a discreet appearance.

#### AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Make sure the reporter understood and noted down your name and the full name of your organisation or project on behalf of whom you spoke. Stay professional until the end, even when the interview is over (the microphone or camera can still be running - a technique that is sometimes used). After the interview, make sure that the journalist understood the points you raised. Stay available in the following hours, the journalist may contact you for additional information or for checking on some details.

Follow the dissemination/ publications and potential impacts of your media appearance.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media will help you reaching out to a wider audience in a very short time. Social media are becoming increasingly popular; including for journalists who use it more and more as a source of information. Not less than 89 % of journalists use Twitter to find information (source: *Marketingfacts*, 2010 JW Alphenaar, 2010). Many journalists actively seek information and call for experts via Twitter. Do not hesitate to react to their requests or put them in contact with an expert you know could fit to the need of the journalist.

Follow influential journalists to better understand what they are interested in and seize opportunities to communicate with them. 'Recycle' your press actions: use social media as additional channel to distribute your press release, to announce an event, to launch an information campaign... Do not cause confusion. Use your real name and tell clearly who you are and who you work for.

## POST-ACTION

At the end of a press intervention, it may happen that the information published/ distributed by the journalist contains errors or is inaccurate. Do not react emotionally by infuriating or threatening the journalist. If it appears that the error is obvious, you can contact the reporter to report the error and request a correction. Think of the potential benefits for the image of your organisation (you may attract more attention by requiring a correction: make sure not to worsen the controversy). You can also ask the reporter a right of reply, that is to say a reaction to certain information involving your organisation. You may prefer another form of arrangement, such as negotiating another article which will include the views of experts who will provide information and more detailed explanations on the topic.

## IMPACT

Depending on the impact you would like to have, target different media. If you wish for extended visibility, know that the daily newspapers are not so much read anymore. The publications which have the highest rate of purchase are magazines such as Ciné-Télé-Revue, Télérama, Télé-Moustique, Métro; and the communal press. These publications are read by whole families, and stay in the living-room for months. Local TV also have more impact: when national TV allocate only 20 to 30 seconds to an expert, a local TV sometimes produces reports of up to 5 minutes, which allows experts to speak for 1.30 to 2 minutes or more. Also, local TV are looking for stories, so being pro-active and proposing them topics is a good attitude to adopt with a high rate of potential coverage.

## CONCLUSION

Even if some journalists work in a 'scoop'-oriented attitude and are disrespectful of the contents provided by experts on a topic, one must try to keep on developing good relations with the press. Media and journalists working ethically and professionally still exist despite the various pressures they are facing, so one should not only focus on the gloomy side of the current media and use it as a pretext for refusing to speak to the press.

If you encounter a bad experience with the press, an alternative to keep a good media coverage is to create contacts with some targeted journalists or media whom you trust/ whom you like from the work you have seen coming from them. To do so, you can contact a journalist and provide them with a "background session" i.e. a private interview to explain an issue/ a topic to a journalist: the contents will not be published, but the journalist will understand the issue and will then be more interested in further covering stories coming from you. This is called a "Background" in the press field.



## LIST OF ANNEXES

**ANNEX 1: EXAMPLE OF PRESS RELEASE**

**ANNEX 2: SPEAKING TERMS**





## Endocrine disruptors: major step towards protecting citizens and environment

Brussels, 4 July 2017

**Today, Member States representatives voted in favour of the European Commission's proposal on scientific criteria to identify endocrine disruptors in the field of plant protection products. This is an important step towards greater protection of citizens from harmful substances.**

Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Vytenis **Andriukaitis**, said: *"Today's vote represents our determination to devise a real EU policy on endocrine disruptors. After months of discussion we are advancing in the direction of the first regulatory system in the world with legally binding criteria to define what an endocrine disruptor is. This is a great success. Once implemented, the text will ensure that any active substance used in pesticides which is identified as an endocrine disruptor for people or animals can be assessed and withdrawn from the market. We now count on the support of the European Parliament and the Council, involved in the decision making process, for a smooth adoption and entry into force of the criteria."*

The adopted criteria will provide a stepping stone for further actions to protect health and the environment by enabling the Commission to start working on a new strategy to minimise exposure of EU citizens to endocrine disruptors, beyond pesticides and biocides. The strategy will aim to cover for example toys, cosmetics and food packaging. In parallel, a substantive new research on endocrine disruptors with an important budget of approximately 50 million euro will be allocated in 2018 to around 10 projects in the next [Horizon 2020](#) work programme.

As for pesticides and biocides, the Commission will not delay any action and will already apply the criteria to substances for which assessment or re-evaluation is undergoing or for which confirmatory data concerning endocrine properties have been requested.

### Background

The criteria endorsed today concerning substances falling within the plant protection products legislation are based on the [World Health Organisation \(WHO\) definition](#). They identify known and presumed endocrine disruptors. They also specify that the identification of an endocrine disruptor should be carried out by taking into account all relevant scientific evidence including animal, in-vitro or in-silico studies, and using a weight of evidence-based approach. The Commission intends to adopt the same criteria for biocides. This is important because the properties which make a substance an endocrine disruptor do not depend on the use of the substance.

The Commission [text](#) foresees that the Commission will present in due time an assessment of the criteria which will also cover the derogation for growth regulators<sup>[1]</sup> in the light of experience gained.

The criteria will apply after a short transitional period of six months during which the European Chemicals Agency ([ECHA](#)) and the European Food Safety Authority ([EFSA](#)) - mandated by the Commission - will be finalising a joint guidance document for the implementation of the criteria. An outline was published on 20 December 2016 and a draft guidance document will be available for public consultation in autumn.

The criteria will apply also to the on-going procedures reassessing the substances.

Lastly, a REFIT evaluation on the functioning of the plant protection products EU legislation is underway and its conclusion will pave the way for a probable modification of the overall EU framework.

### For more information

Details on the decision making process are available [online](#)

Frequently Asked Questions on endocrine disruptors available [online](#)

<sup>[1]</sup> Growth regulators are active substances with specific modes of action targeted at some organisms (e.g. arthropods). From a biological point of view they are not expected to pose a risk to humans and vertebrates in the environment and are therefore particularly effective and useful in integrated pest management.

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## ANNEX 2 SPEAKING TERMS

The following "speaking terms" are well known by journalists: they relate to how information can be communicated in their own media. Do not abuse of these processes: when you use them, you must have reasons for it. Note however that due to the high speed of information transmission and to social media, these journalism rules are less and less respected.

### EMBARGO

Request by a source that the information or news provided by that source does not get published until a certain date or if certain conditions have not been met. The understanding is that if the embargo is broken by reporting before then, the source will retaliate by restricting access to further information by that journalist or his publication. The reason why the embargo is used is that media is given advance knowledge of details being held secret so that reports can be prepared to coincide with the announcement date and yet still meet press time. In theory, press embargoes reduce inaccuracy in the reporting of breaking stories reducing the incentive for journalists to cut corners in hopes of "scooping" the competition. (source: Wikipedia: News embargo: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/News\\_embargo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/News_embargo))

### OFF THE RECORD (OR "OFF")

The information is provided to inform a decision, provide confidential explanation, or add a context to the news; but it can not be published. It is intended to help the journalist understand the news itself and communicate it better to the public.

### UNATTRIBUTABLE

What is said can be published but it can not be attributed (the source can not be mentioned in the press article).

### ON THE RECORD

In press conferences, the speaker often starts by stating "On the record" and moves into "Off the record" when needed. "On the record" means that all that is being said after that can be published and attributed to the source.



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