

# EUROPE!

▶▶ *A Generation Ahead*

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## Some Press Work tips

### Getting yourself in the media

The media – newspapers and broadcasters – reach millions of people in every country every day. Getting yourself featured is an excellent way to get your message across to the public and to voters.

**Deal with all media** – don't expect to be on the front page of the main national newspaper or on the main TV news immediately. A small note on page 13 of a local newspaper will still reach thousands of people, and raises your profile.

### Contacts

First find out the contacts for the media you are trying to use. Which are the main newspapers? Which are the main TV & radio broadcasters? Include national, regional and local media.

Newspapers usually have contact details printed in them. For broadcasters, see if you have any contacts with people who have to contact them professionally, and could give you their details. There may also be a media guide which you can buy – if all else fails then try the telephone directory, and ring them up to ask their address and fax number etc.

Try to find the name and the contact details of the **journalists responsible for European affairs** (esp. for national media) and / or the person in charge of the coverage of local activities (esp. for local media interested in local activities).

### Press release

What you write has to jump off the page, and say "Read Me!". Newsrooms are extremely busy places, and unless your press release immediately looks interesting, no-one will read it.

Some newsrooms have their fax machines placed straight over the bin – everything that comes out of the fax machine will go straight in the bin unless it looks interesting enough to pull out.

There is a standard format for press releases which you should follow. Press releases always go by fax, so you should fax or post them (you can also use email but newsrooms still expect press releases almost entirely by fax.)

### Writing a press release

A press release should include:

- Your **logo** (or name of your organisation if you don't have one). They need to be able to see immediately who has sent it.
- Your organisation's **address, phone/fax numbers, email/web addresses** etc
- The **date** when you are releasing it
- A **contact name and phone number** for them to contact for more information – this is extremely important. Preferably your own **mobile** number. And make sure if they ring then they really will reach you.
- A note of how long it is – eg "Page 1 of 3" on the first page.
- A **headline**. Make this **short** and **snappy**. If you have a particular **slogan**, use it here.
- The text of what you are saying. The key thing is to present this **clearly and quickly**. Bullet points are good to use.

- **Quotes** are essential – put your core message in as a quote from the leading member of your organisation, eg ‘Alison Weston, President of JEF, said “We need a European Federal Constitution now” ‘
- If you have support for what you are doing from someone important or famous or from an outside organisation, include a quote from them, eg ‘Alain van Hoof, Mayor of Brussels, said “I fully support JEF – their work is very important” ‘ (I suggest that you write this quote for them, and simply ask them to approve it. They may change it but if you wait for them to do it themselves you may well wait for ever.) However, if you are making a quote in someone’s name it is vital that they approve it first.
- Make your press release **short** – if at all possible, get it all on **one** page – maximum two.
- Use big typeface – not smaller than 12 point.
- At the bottom you can put “Notes for Editors” – this is where you can put boring but important information. Make the main press release about your main point, and use “Notes for Editors to explain the context and background.
- At the very bottom, put “ends” – don’t ask me why, this is just part of the press release format!

When you have written go back and read through it again (better still ask someone else to do so). **Make sure that the main point you want to make is the main point which comes across.** There is no point having your main idea buried somewhere in the middle of paragraph three!

### Photos

If at all possible, find a photo to go with your press release. This makes it much more likely that the newspaper will use it.

**Try to get the newspaper to send their own photographers along** (give them a few days’ notice) – but they may not, so whatever you do, take your own camera along as well. Photograph everything that you do! Many photos will not come out well, for whatever reason, so if you are campaigning for an afternoon, don’t just take three photos, but take a whole film, of different shots.

The best photos of are an event – eg if you have a demonstration (this also makes good television pictures of course). But even if it’s just a small meeting, a photo of two people grinning can look good.

If you take a photo, send it to them quickly. Three days later is no use to a newspaper.

**Standard ideas to make photos look better** (and so improve the chances of the newspaper using them) include:

- Holding up or waving something (maybe a flag)
- Shaking hands
- handing over something (eg a petition, or a cheque)
- Things like balloons, flags or hats or T-shirts with a message on them are also good.

### Taking good photos

Taking photos of events for newspapers is not the same as beautiful art photos! **The most important thing to remember is get as close as you can to what you are photographing. Make the main points fill the whole photo.**

**In general concentrate on a few people.** At a street stall, for example, one or two activists talking to a member of the public makes a much better quality photo than fifteen of you standing around talking to each other. (Obviously this doesn’t apply when you are trying to photograph several hundred people in a demonstration!).

A photo with you standing next to a sign can be good – whether it is the office plate of the Prime Minister’s office, or a name sign of your town. A photo by a famous landmark is also very good.

Give some thought to what is in the **background** – do you have a **JEF sign** you can stand in front of, for example?

**The most important thing to remember is not to try to have too much in the photo.** This can be difficult – if you are having an event you will of course want everyone there to be in the photo. But always remember that this photo is probably going to be reduced to 3 centimetres square on a newspaper, and there is no space for lots of detail. That just looks messy, and so the newspaper won’t use it.

### Talking to the press

The key thing to remember in talking to the press is to decide what the **main point** you want to get across is, and make it clearly, and again and again.

Unless you are the Prime Minister, they are not interested in your detailed thoughts – realistically you will be able to get just one message across, so decide carefully what it is, and don’t confuse it with lots of smaller points.

**Prepare for what you want to say.** Think what your main point is, and how you will say it. Some “colour” is good – eg something personal to you, or a snappy phrase (a “soundbite”). Also think about what questions they might ask you and prepare your answers.

Remember: this is your opportunity to get across your message – use it for that purpose.

It is common for TV to spend maybe two hours filming something which may only get used for ten seconds. **Never be afraid to repeat your main point** – if they only use ten seconds you want it to be your main point, not some minor throwaway comment you made.

**Talk slowly and clearly.** Before you start, take a deep breath. The press may be in a hurry – don’t let them rush you into saying something you will later regret.

If you are going to be on TV – think about what you will look like: research has shown that 70% of the impact of someone being interviewed on TV is what they are wearing and what they look like – just 30% is what they say. Unless you are being broadcast live, if you don’t like the way it is going, you can stop and take a break and then start again.

The press may have their own agenda, and you will have your own. Make sure that you get yours across!

### **Stunts**

Think of interesting stunts that will make a picture or good TV. This could be:

- Presenting your petition or your ideas to someone important
- Holding an event somewhere famous
- Doing something on an important relevant anniversary, for ex. around the 9. Mai !

And one great advantage that JEF has is that doing something with people from another country always really helps.

### **Letters to newspapers**

Most newspapers have a “**letters**” page. You may not read it, but a lot of people do, and it is very easy to get yourself onto. Newspapers will give you the address or contact details to write to. Try and find something relevant to tie it into – eg a national or local event that would be different in a European context. And definitely make it **very short**. Newspapers love short letters – three pages of your thoughts will go straight in the bin, I’m afraid. I suggest you aim for about five or six sentences.

### **And finally...**

Enjoy it! Don’t be discouraged if you don’t make all the national TV bulletins on your first day. Successful organisations take time to build. But people have done it – and along the way every person that you reach with your message is another member of the public who might support you, and who will go home and tell their family and friends about this funny federalist person that they met today...