



Natura 2000 Networking Programme
on behalf of the European Commission

Natura 2000 Networking Programme managed in
partnership by project partners EUROPARC Federation,
Eurosites and European Landowners Organization (ELO)

Theme: **How to write a press release**

A practical session on how to write a press release

The Natura Networking Programme has been set up to focus on communication tools to help “promote Natura 2000, good practice in site management and the benefits of networking, across Europe.” Protected sites in Europe cover around 20 per cent of land. By using communications to support a partnership approach Natura Ambassadors can help win the public relations battle for hearts and minds of the public and champion good practice by land managers and stakeholders.

There are a range of tools available to get the message across - including paid advertising, Green Day events to engage with the public, newsletters and publicity gained through press releases. Whereas advertising is all about control, independent editorial is all about influence. Readers of the quality press know that advertising is paid-for and, therefore, any message is giving a biased account.

Independent editorial is perceived by readers to be there purely on its merits and importance. Our opinion is understood to be reported because the press has deemed that it is Natura 2000 staff who can best explain the issue to its readers.

The session will be divided into three parts, combining short talks with practical sessions to practice the skills involved in writing successful press releases.

1. How to identify suitable stories that will interest the media

Only one in ten press releases is picked up by the media. This session will identify successful techniques to help put together interesting, newsworthy press releases that attract attention from the press, radio or television. We will consider what ‘hooks’ work most effectively and review real examples to rate their chances of gaining coverage.

2. How to write a press release

Press releases are written to a standard formula, similar to that used by journalists when writing news stories. The press release needs to get the story across in the first sentence to make sure the news editor selects it for a second look.

The introduction should contain the answers to the questions of who, what, where, why, when and how of the story in basic detail. As the story unfolds more detail is inserted. Introduce a quotation as early as the third paragraph for human interest. Make sure to use colourful language and offer new information so that the journalist is more likely to include your quote (and therefore name-check your organisation).

Press release structure

- Intro - Broad and shallow intro – one sentence – 15 words setting the tone for the story and grabs attention of the reader. Preferably using a visual image and in the present tense. Develop a series of images based on intro
- Second element - Tell the reader why this subject is important, why we are covering it now, why they should keep reading
- Amplification - Use plenty of fascinating facts, quotes, and anecdotes to keep interest. Vary pace and rhythm using quotes so it doesn't get repetitive
- Quotes - Full quote in at third paragraph, fourth at the latest. Do not leave best quote to end of story as this is likely to be cut. Humanise figures – relate to human interest or local population
- The End - Go out with a bang not a whimper. Closing quote – this rounds off the story

3. Practical session

Delegates practice writing an introduction and first two paragraphs from example handouts of background material.

4. Dos and don'ts for writing press releases

- Content - ensure that the release is grammatically correct and doesn't contain any spelling mistakes, errors, and sources are quoted correctly.
- Concise - keep it punchy and don't use unnecessary flowery language e.g. cutting- edge, revolutionary.
- Factual - present the information for distribute that is true, correct and doesn't embellish anything that to be communicated.
- Objectivity - virtually impossible to do, but refrain from using over hyped quotes from sources as they will be presented as being too biased.
- Timing - The press release may not be topical, but it may be able to incorporate the release with a more recent news event.
- How to handle conflict and anticipate different views

Training

Further information on environmental media training organisations can be found at www.naturamedia.org .

For additional information on cost effective media training in the UK visit Media Trust, a charitable organisation working in partnership with the media industry to build effective voluntary and community sector communications <http://www.mediatrust.org/about-us> . Their rates are typically around one fifth of commercial companies.

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The opinion expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission