



FACTSHEET

Media relations in Interreg projects

Version 1.0

INTRODUCTION

Interreg projects may assume that their work is too specialised or complex to interest journalists. But good media stories depend on whether there is something **new, relevant and tangible to show – and on how well you tell the story.**

Project platforms have a particularly strong starting point. They synthesise results from EU and national programmes, strengthening cooperation across borders and beyond individual projects, boosting knowledge transfer and creating long-term impact. This can provide strong stories about issues that matter across the Baltic Sea region, provided that the story is translated from the project language into something relevant to the media and their audiences.

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● MEDIA RELATIONS IN A PROJECT SETTING

Building relations with the media takes time. With the right strategy, however, you can manage it successfully.

TIP 1: Start with the networks already available to you

Your partners – municipalities, universities, NGOs and other organisations – are located in different parts of the region. They have a good understanding of their media landscape. Many may already have communication or press offices with established media contacts.

Find out:

- Which partners already work with journalists?
- Who covers your topic in the partner countries?
- Which local, regional or national media could be interested?
- Are there relevant news agencies, professional platforms or newsletters?

A good media list is not necessarily long: quality matters more than quantity. Team up with communication or press offices in your partner organisations and explore your own ways to reach out, too.

Also check how media relations work in your own organisation. Some organisations have designated spokespersons, approval procedures or rules for contacting the media. Involve your communication or press office early – not only when your media invitation is ready.

TIP 2: Map media around your topic

Search for recent articles about the issue your project/platform works on and note which journalists regularly cover it. Consider local and regional media, as well as specialised or sector-specific media that already cover your topic. Do not overlook news agencies: one agency story can be picked up by multiple media outlets and give your story much wider reach.

Think beyond individual countries, too. Baltic Sea region-wide media may be interested in stories about shared regional challenges, developments affecting several countries or solutions that can be applied across the region.

For stories with a strong EU policy angle, consider Brussels-based and pan-European media, such as Euractiv or POLITICO Europe. Look for journalists who cover your specific topic rather than approaching a generic editorial address.

TIP 3: Get to know the journalists before contacting them

Follow the work of a small number of relevant journalists and see what topics and angles they cover. This will help you understand what may interest them and approach them with information that is actually relevant to their work.

TIP 4: Start contact before you need coverage

Do not wait until you have your biggest story or event to promote. Offer expertise, not only project news. Your partnership may include public officials, researchers, or practitioners with valuable knowledge of the topic. A current debate or development can provide a good hook to approach journalists, offer your expertise and introduce the relevant work of your project.



Ideally, your invitation to the media event should not be the first time a journalist hears from you.

● HOW TO ATTRACT MEDIA ATTENTION

Journalists are not looking for Interreg projects to report on. They are looking for good stories. Your task as a good communicator is to keep an eye on what could become such a story. Think of someone working in your field, a city mayor, a politician in your city or your neighbour as a potential audience: **why would they be interested in your story?**

In the media world, a story contains one or several of these elements:

- **Novelty:** something new, unknown or unexpected (→ what does your project or project platform bring in?)
- **Challenge:** a concrete problem that cities, regions, organisations or people face, something identifiable (→ what brought your partnership together?)
- **Relevance:** a clear connection to people's lives, public services, businesses, the environment or current political agenda (→ why should people care?)
- **Proximity:** a connection to the place where the media outlet and its audience are based (→ from local actions to regional, national or EU impacts)
- **People:** faces make your story relatable (→ who can show what the issue or solution means in practice?)
- **Impact:** evidence of what has changed, or what could change, and for whom (→ what difference does your work make?)
- **Timeliness:** a link to a current debate, development, policy decision or event (→ why does it matter now?)
- **Evidence:** figures, comparisons, concrete examples or visible results that make the story credible (→ this is how you gain credibility)

And one more thing: the **transnational dimension** will make your story noticeably stronger. Show that the challenge is not limited to a single city or country. Explain what becomes possible when organisations from different countries and sectors address it together, and how solutions can efficiently travel across borders.

Important! Do not try to explain everything your project or project platform does. Find a fitting hook for each story and build your media work around it.

● CHOOSE YOUR MEDIA OPPORTUNITY WISELY

A regular project meeting is rarely a media story simply because partners from several countries are attending. Look instead for an opportunity that gives journalists **something to see, experience, or discuss**, something they cannot read on your website. Consider, for example:

- demonstration of a pilot activity, solution or synthesis of solutions;
- presentation of significant new findings, conclusions or recommendations;



- targeted debate or presentation of joint evidence or recommendations to cities, regions, ministries or other decision-makers;
- policy dialogue linking Baltic Sea region experience to current national or EU priorities;
- event marking a city, region or organisation taking up or applying a tested solution;
- site visit where practitioners can show how a solution works in practice and explain what changed as a result;
- comparison showing how different cities or regions tackled the same challenge and what can be learned from their experience;

● MEDIA LANGUAGE

If you approach local, regional or national media, communicating in the local language can make your press release or media invitation more **accessible and relevant**. Empower project partners to translate press releases and, where appropriate, adapt them to their local context, while keeping the transnational value of the story.

English can work well for Baltic Sea region-wide and Brussels-based media.

Whatever the language, remember that journalists often work under tight deadlines and have little time to decode complex information. Keep your messages clear and concise. Use plain language, avoid project and EU jargon and explain technical terms.

Do not assume that journalists know Interreg.

● MEDIA INVITATION VS. PRESS RELEASE

A media invitation and a press release serve different purposes:

- A **media invitation** aims to get journalists to attend your event. It should be short and focus on why coming is worth their time: what is happening, what they can see or experience and whom they can meet or interview.
- A **press release** gives journalists a story to report on, whether or not they attend the event. It provides news, key facts and context, evidence, quotes, and contact details in a format that journalists can easily use.

What to consider for a media invitation?

Where possible, approach journalists with a personalised email rather than relying on a general invitation sent to a long media list. Keep the invitation short and practical. Include:

- what is happening and why it is interesting;
- when and where it takes place (incl. a concise agenda)
- what journalists will be able to see, experience or photograph;
- who will be available for interviews;



- whom to contact for further information.

Add brief background information about your project/project platform and links to further information.

Send the invitation early enough for journalists to plan, particularly if travel is involved. Plan a reminder a few days before the event and follow up personally with your priority contacts.

Remember that an invitation is not a guarantee of attendance or coverage. News agendas change quickly, and even interested journalists may not be able to come. This is why building media relations well before your event matters: the stronger the existing relationship and the more relevant the story, the better your chances.

How to prepare a press release?

The press release should stand on its own. A journalist should be able to understand what happened, why it matters and what the story is. A good press release is concise: ideally 500–800 words and no more than two pages. It should also follow a clear structure.

A good press release follows a clear structure:

- **Headline**

Make it clear, concrete and free of jargon. Focus on what is new or why it matters rather than on the project/project platform activity itself.

- **Lead paragraph**

Put the most important information first: **What happened? Why does it matter? Who is affected? Where? Why now?** A journalist should understand the news value without having to read further.

- **Body**

The journalistic concept of an **inverted pyramid** can help you structure your content. Put the most important information first and complement it with supporting information and background as the story develops. When writing about your project/project platform:

- ❖ explain the context and challenge;
- ❖ present the solution, finding or result;
- ❖ provide evidence and concrete examples;
- ❖ explain its relevance to people affected by the issue;
- ❖ highlight the transnational dimension and relevance to the wider Baltic Sea region;
- ❖ include one or two useful quotes.



Use quotes to add a perspective, interpretation or human voice rather than simply repeating information already given in the text.

- **Background information**

Briefly explain the project/project platform, the Interreg Baltic Sea Region funding context and relevant countries and organisations. Add links to further information and visuals, and provide a



media contact with telephone number and email address. Do not forget to include the project/project platform logo.

● YOUR CHECKLIST FOR THE MEDIA VISIT

A perfect media invitation, a well-prepared press release to share after. What else to bear in mind?

- Clarify whether there is a **media policy** in your organisation. Consult the press office if needed and coordinate with your lead partner, too.
- Be ready to explain **what your project/platform is about** and why it matters. Agree on the main messages with the partners involved, so that you speak with one voice. Practise it before the journalists arrive.
- The local story can get attention, but the transnational dimension can give it wider relevance. Be ready to explain **what working across borders has made possible** that one organisation or country could not have achieved alone.
- Choose **people who know the subject** and can explain it well. Brief them on the key messages and likely questions. A short test interview can help.
- **Plan what journalists can see, photograph or film.** Check permissions and consent in advance.
- Journalists may ask questions you did not prepare for. **Don't speculate or guess.** If you do not know, say you will check and come back with the answer.
- Have **facts & figures, background information, names and contact details ready.** Know who will answer additional questions, and answer quickly.

● MEDIA RELATIONS FOR PROJECT PLATFORMS

The guidance above applies to all Interreg Baltic Sea Region projects. As Operations of Strategic Importance, project platforms have additional communication requirements: they must organise **one communication event to which the media are also invited.**

Project platforms should draft and coordinate the press release with the MA/JS with sufficient time for revisions.

When preparing the press release:

- focus the communication on promoting the project platform as an Operation of Strategic Importance;
- highlight synergies across borders and projects by consolidating project results and outcomes;
- clearly present policy impact and benefits for the Baltic Sea region, with links to key EU priorities and policies;
- emphasise the value of transnational cooperation;
- include a reference to the **European Union and the Interreg budget** in the header, subheading or text of the press release;



- if no European Commission representative attends the event, request a quote from the Commission and notify the MA/JS for further assistance.

Contact

platform@interreg-baltic.eu

communication@interreg-baltic.eu

Reference documents

- Programme Manual
<https://interreg-baltic.eu/toolkit/online-programme-manual/i-communication-in-projects/i-4project-contribution-to-programme-communication/>
- Communication and visibility on the Programme portal
<https://interreg-baltic.eu/toolkit/comms-visibility/>