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Media Training

How to get your message across

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Media interviews are:

- A powerful chance to spread your message
- Unfamiliar territory for most people
- A strange game where special rules apply

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So to get the best results:

- Understand how interviews work
- Prepare yourself thoroughly
- Practice!

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News Angles

- Your interview must make news
- Every news story needs an "angle"
 - ✦ Something that makes audiences care
- Give the journalist a good news angle
 - ✦ Something that helps your goals

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Your news angle must be

- Interesting
- Newsworthy
 - ✦ For the people who read or watch the media that you are speaking to
- Imagine the best possible headline
 - ✦ Realistically...

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Good headline

- ✦ "EU project improves services and cuts waste"
- ✦ "EU project brings hope to inner-city ghetto"



Bad headline

- ❖ "EU bureaucrats pour money down the drain"

Or no headline at all!



Defensive news angles

- Some journalists may arrive with a negative news angle already planned
 - ❖ Especially if you have had bad press
- Try to predict negative angles
 - ❖ Disprove them
 - ❖ Substitute your own angle



Messages

- Messages are building blocks for news
- Statements or arguments that are:
 - ❖ Simple
 - ❖ Clear
 - ❖ Strong
 - ❖ Consistent



Messages must be focused

- A news story has 2 or 3 basic ideas
 - ❖ So use no more than three messages
- Prepare and memorise them
- Back them up with evidence!



Proof points

- Use evidence to make your messages convincing
- Hard evidence
 - ❖ Facts and statistics
- Soft evidence
 - ❖ Anecdotes and personal stories



Now the practical part...

- Quotes and sound-bites
 - ❖ Most likely to survive the editing process
- Use strong lively language
- Consider planning and scripting



Keep it simple

- Don't go into too much detail
 - Don't speak for too long
 - Keep sentences short
 - Use basic universal language
- ❖ Would your grandmother understand?



Messages and proof points

- In every answer:
 - ❖ at least one message
 - ❖ a proof point
 - ❖ colour, examples and anecdotes
- Be positive and honest.
 - ❖ Journalists are wary of hype.



Body language

- Sit forward
- Make eye contact
- Smile
- Appear interested
- Be enthusiastic



Forget process, talk action

- Process is important but boring
 - ❖ Institutions, procedures, bureaucracy
- Action, people and results make news
 - ❖ Talk about the real world
 - ❖ Not the world inside INTERREG IIIIC and its projects



Practicalities

- Bring a press kit
- Don't be intimidated by a tape recorder
- Don't be taken by surprise



Rules of the game

- If you make a mistake – fine, but correct yourself immediately
- Don't speak "off the record"
- You have no right to see the story before publication or broadcast.
- You may ask to see your own quotes
- You may ask when it will be published and in what form



Difficult questions

"Why are EU projects so bureaucratic and ineffective?"

- Some questions can't be given a straight answer
- But to avoid the question looks bad too



Blocking and bridging

"Block" a negative question

- ❖ respond briefly in a non-specific way

"Bridge" with a smooth transition

- ❖ change the subject to a positive message



Blocking and bridging phrases

- ❖ "That's an interesting question, and to put it in perspective..."
- ❖ "I'm glad you've asked me this because it brings me to a point that I've been wanting to make..."
- ❖ "I don't have precise details, but what I do know is..."
- ❖ "The underlying question is..."



More blocking and bridging

- ❖ "What I think you mean by the question is..."
- ❖ "Let's not lose sight of the key issue here, which is..."
- ❖ "This is indeed important, but what's even more important is..."



Asked about a problem?

Talk about a solution.



Acknowledge and action

- Sometimes, it's best not to try to deny a problem
- Acknowledge the problem quickly and openly
- Focus on practical action



Acknowledge and action

- Honesty and pragmatism are powerful positive signals, even in a negative situation.
 - ❖ *"Yes, we made mistakes in the past. The important thing is that we learned from them very rapidly and worked hard to fix the problems, and that effort is now paying off as we can see..."*



Potential pitfalls

- ❖ **Yes/No & Either/Or.**
 - Don't choose: explain.
- ❖ **He said/she said.**
 - Don't be drawn into criticism.
- ❖ **Loaded questions.**
 - Object to bias or errors.
- ❖ **Rapid fire.**
 - Keep your cool, take your time.



More potential pitfalls

- ❖ **Speculation.**
 - Avoid making predictions.
- ❖ **Don't repeat the negative**
 - Move on quickly to positive material
- ❖ **Fishing**
 - Never assume a journalist knows anything
- ❖ **Over-answering**
 - Stick to your messages, then stop talking



Tips for television interviews

- Ignore the camera
- Make eye contact.
 - ❖ Don't look around.
- Try to relax and speak naturally
- Gesture normally
- Sit up straight



Tips for television interviews

- Don't cross your arms
- Smile!
- Look alert and interested
- Stay calm
- Don't use written notes



Tips for television interviews

- Don't have anything in your hands
- Arrive early
- Ask for a glass of water
- Stay where you are at the end
- Never assume you're off camera



Clothing and appearance

- Dress professionally
 - ✦ (or appropriately for the location)
- Bright bold colours are OK
 - ✦ BUT: project your message, not your appearance
- Contrast is good
 - ✦ Try a plain suit and a brighter shirt
- Avoid fine patterns



Clothing and appearance

- Wear something a microphone can be clipped to.
- Minimal jewellery
- More make-up than normal
- If offered professional make-up, take it



Radio interviews

- Tone of voice is key
- Control the pace
- Confident, calm, conversational
- Don't move around relative to the microphone
- Try to relax and forget you're being recorded