



Press release writing

The process:

Media releases should be drafted by the member organisation/person working on the project and then sent to the communications officer by email on ciaran@ien.ie for observations. The communications officer can advise on changes to maximise coverage, but the final content comes back to the relevant Member Organisation/person.

Below are some tips which you may find useful.

Tips on writing media releases:

- You have the information about your event/initiative and your organisation. The communications officer can help you present it and circulate it, but the content comes back to you. You have the knowledge and expertise in this area, so it's helpful if you explain clearly what you want to say.
- When you describe this to someone at home or a friend or colleague, how do you summarise it? That's your starting point for your first sentence. Tell people upfront why this is interesting and why they need to keep reading.
- Follow the news story inverted triangle formula – the most important information on top and then the next piece of information.
- Who, what, where, when, why, how – these are the key questions which must be answered in a press release. Try to answer these questions in your first two paragraphs.
- Remember the Rule of Three - We can only hold around three or four pieces of information in our short-term memory and lists of three register in our brain as a pattern. Outline the 3 Key Messages you wish to get across to the public.
- What you want to happen as a result of the media release – how would you like people to feel? How do you want them to act? What do you want them to do? For

example, do you want them to turn up at an event or sign a petition or support a campaign?

- Make sure that the messages in the press release actually work towards that aim – feel, act, do.
- After you have outlined the key info (Who, what, where, when, why, how), try to include some quotes from a key person, explaining the difference this announcement or initiative can make. But make sure you include full names and titles (no acronyms) and the full name of the organisation(s) involved.
- If there's an event – exactly where; at what time; and is the event open to the public?
- Is this person prepared to talk to journalists/talk on the radio. If not, identify a suitable spokesperson who is confident and has the knowledge to talk about the subject of the press release.
- Use plain English and avoid jargon – think about who is reading the press release and don't assume they have knowledge of your organisation and what you do.
- Don't overwrite – try to keep it to a page/page and a half. Less important info on background can go into a 'notes to the editor' section at the end of the release.
- What is the point of the event/announcement – in other words, what do we hope will happen next?
- Where can the public go for more details? This should be an email address, phone number or web page which can be published or read out on radio.
- Where can the media go for more details – i.e. they need a mobile phone number of an organiser/key person. This phone number is not for publication.
- Think about images - Are there any good quality photos available which would be suitable to be printed in a newspaper? Do you have a video/graphics that can be used on a newspaper/radio website?
- Check your media's publication date and deadline for news copy – a lot local newspapers go to press on Tuesday afternoons. Work back from this to see when you need to get your press release into the paper
- Follow up: You can follow up sending your press with a phone call but keep it short. Just confirm the media received it and to say a spokesperson is available should they need to talk to anybody
- Follow up: Is there anybody who could write an opinion piece about the event/initiative? This needs to be more than just a description of what the event is, it needs to have an element of opinion e.g. a call to action, an explanation of

why this is important. It can really help where there is an ongoing campaign or petition