european research

A guide to successful communications

SIXTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME

contents

Introduction

Dissemination of results is a contractual obligation of participation in research initiatives supported under the European Union's Sixth RTD Framework Programme (FP6). The specific aims of this provision are to promote knowledge sharing, greater public awareness, transparency, and education. Consortia are required to provide tangible proof that collaborative research not only exists, but also pays dividends in terms of academic excellence, industrial competitiveness, employment opportunities, environmental improvements and enhanced quality of life for all.

At the same time, the communication of successes and the announcement of exploitable developments are of direct value to the participants themselves. Suitably framed messages can help by:
• Drawing the attention of national governments, regional authorities and other public and private funding sources to the needs and eventual benefits of the research;
• Attracting the interest of potential partners and/or correspondents;
• Encouraging talented students and scientists to join the partner institutes and enterprises;
• Enhancing the reputation of participants, at local, national and international level;
• Where appropriate, aiding the search for financial backers, licensees or industrial implementers to exploit the results; and
• Generating market demand for the developed products or services.

This publication aims to assist project coordinators and team leaders to generate an effective flow of information and publicity about the objectives and results of their work, the contributions made to European knowledge and scientific excellence, the value of collaboration on a Europe-wide scale, and the benefits to EU citizens in general.

The document particularly addresses communications via the 'mass media' (TV, radio and the written press), the workings of which may be less familiar to scientific/academic partners. It also covers websites and other internally generated support such as print publications, CDs and video.

The following pages outline good practices that can be employed in:
• Defining key messages;
• Establishing target audiences;
• Selecting the appropriate modes of communication;
• Tailoring information to the intended outlets;
• Building good relationships with the media;
• Evaluating results;
• Maximising the exposure of messages; and
• Tapping useful Commission and other external resources.

As well as providing sound advice on how best to proceed, the content includes examples of successful approaches that have been used to date.

1. Communications strategy

1.1. Define your message

The first step in any communications exercise is to define the message or messages to be transmitted. An evident objective is to focus on positive achievements and the benefits they bring.

This requires clear agreement and careful coordination among all parties who may act as spokespersons or information sources for a particular project or network. Inconsistent facts, figures, emphases and viewpoints are to be avoided at all costs.

Note:

All public-oriented communications relating to FP6 instruments should acknowledge that such projects and networks are supported by the European Union – e.g. by stating 'This project is supported by funding under the Sixth Research Framework Programme of the European Union'.

1.2. Target your audience

Reconciling the communications goals of the consortium and those of the EU entails addressing a very broad range of recipients. Scientific, technical, business, institutional and governmental audiences are all prime targets. But, because FP6 is supported by public funds, there is an equal responsibility to show citizens that these monies are being spent to good effect. Fulfilling the societal objectives of spreading education and generating an enthusiasm for science also implies a need to reach the public at large, using all available means.

1.3. Select your tools

Peer-reviewed publications, specialist websites and scientific congresses typically form the principal information channels of the research community. By contrast, 60% of the general public obtains its knowledge of science from TV. Popular newspapers, magazines, radio and – to a growing extent – the Internet also play major roles in informing public awareness and opinion.

Between these two extremes come the business-to-business tools, including: commercial, technical, financial and industrial publications; broadcasts; and trade fairs and seminars. All need to be considered in the preparation of a well-balanced communications mix.

Local community-related activities may form yet another route to limited but often strategically important audiences.
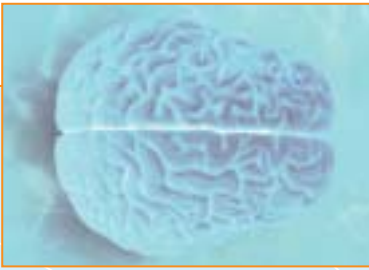
Main sources of scientific information

(data from Eurobarometer on science and technology, 2001)

Chart: Main sources of scientific information (percentage), information type on vertical axis, % on horizontal axis (0 to 80).

- TV
- Press
- Radio
- School/university
- Scientific journals
- Internet
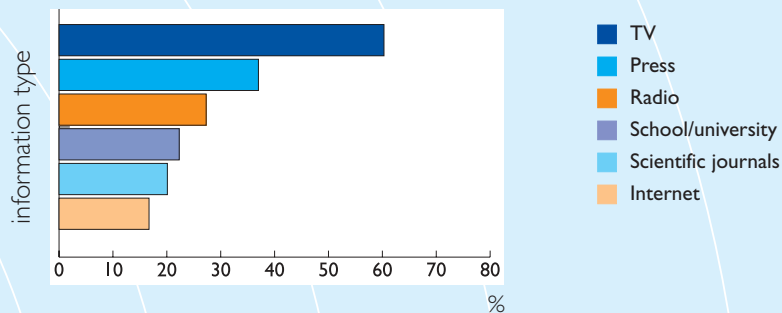
1.4. Plan your programme

The communications activity has consequences in terms of both financial and time expenditure. It is therefore essential to establish a plan of predetermined scope and budget, with identified goals. Indeed, the outlines of this will have formed part of your FP6 proposal document.

It is advisable to plan for a regular flow of information, rather than to pin your faith on the occasional ad-hoc announcement. Establishing recognition as an active provider of news and information encourages journalists and others to approach you for help and opinions. By creating a lively dialogue, you gain opportunities for publicity that may not have occurred to you or your partners. And in setting your budget, retain a reserve to meet such contingencies.

Establish a list of spokespersons able to deal with particular aspects of your project or network, and ensure that they are informed about the overall plan and its key messages.

Explore the communications resources that exist within your consortium. Accessing professional skills and facilities, established contacts and existing mailing lists/databases can all save time and money.

2. Media relations

2.1. Why communicate via the mass media?

Taking advantage of the opportunities offered by editorial coverage in the press, or on TV and radio, brings a number of benefits. As mentioned above, these media reach very large audiences. Moreover, the credibility of your messages is enhanced by a public perception of editors' impartiality.

Television is a particularly powerful medium. The public regards television news especially as one of its most trusted information sources. When local/national TV reports on an event, such as a new discovery or a significant research outcome, most people unquestioningly accept the presented version as hard fact.

The broadcast media offer a cost-effective way of transmitting information. It does not involve costly and time-consuming production or reprographic processes – and dissemination is increasingly achieved by rapid and inexpensive electronic means.

2.2. Basic principles

Media relations are an indirect form of communication. The direct recipients of a submitted press release, or the attendees at a press conference, are the journalists or editors involved with particular programmes or publications. Your ultimate goal, however, is to reach their viewers, listeners or readers.

It is therefore essential to ensure that all messages fulfil the criteria necessary to achieve ready acceptance by editors and journalists to maximise the chance of exposure to the actual target audience.

Editors exercise independent control over the content and style of the stories they exploit. You cannot oblige them to use all of the material you supply, nor to reproduce the information exactly as you present it. Consequently, you must do everything possible to make your message interesting, timely, comprehensible, unambiguous and comprehensive – and present it in a manner that makes its transfer to the screen, air or printed page as easy as possible.

Furthermore, journalists are busy people with inflexible deadlines dictated by the publishing process. Also, there is usually considerable competition for their attention. Radio and TV deadlines are usually even shorter than those of the printed press, and their editorial 'spaces' more limited. Be prepared to encourage interest by offering interviews or film crew access at short notice.

Hint:
An approach that has proved successful is for project partners to issue press releases simultaneously in their own countries, giving journalists local contact points for follow-up in their own languages.
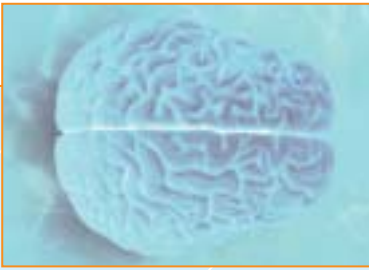
2.2.1. Define clear messages

With any communications exercise, you need to define your key messages in terms that will be under-standable to the ultimate target audiences. Keep stories simple.

example
'The X project is developing fast and cheap methods of detecting liver cancer at a stage early enough to permit life-saving treatment' NOT 'The X project is working on highly specific molecular markers for hepa-tocellular carcinoma currently diagnosed through the detection of neoplastic lesions only in advanced state of evolution'.

Prime essentials are that the delivered information should have a clear subject with a factual basis, be relevant to the audience of the targeted programme or publication – and cover a topic that is either newsworthy in its own right, or relates to a particular field that is in focus at the time of its issue. Also, of course, it should positively reflect the interests of your project.

2.2.2. Present information in a form that meets the journalists' needs

When you are preparing a **press release** for general distribution, observe the guidelines in Section 2.3 (page 8). If the timing of a news story is critical, check the broadcast and publication deadlines for your target media. Where the timing is also sensitive for project-related reasons, it may be necessary to issue the press release in advance, with a clearly indicated embargo date.

If you are responding to an **editorial invitation** to supply information, deliver what is requested:
• Concentrate on the topic indicated and answer the specific questions that may be posed;
• Respect any indications regarding the required text length. In general, published articles are quite short, so do not simply send a 5 000-word off-the-shelf article or a printed brochure. This may be more convenient for you, but it wastes the journalist's time and could result in him/her ignoring your contri-bution; and
• Wherever possible, take the time to examine the publication and understand its particular approach. It is always desirable to give the impression that your material has been specially prepared.

This last point is also relevant if you are **writing an article** speculatively for submission to a particular publication.

2.2.3. Be complete

Ensure that your message is complete, self-contained, and does not leave any obvious unanswered ques-tions. Include figures, where available and relevant. Try to think like a journalist: provide everything neces-sary to form the basis of a good story that will not require too much time spent on additional research.

2.3. Produce an effective press release

A **press release** is information that is communicated proactively to the media – including TV, radio and electronic publications, as well as the printed press – from which they select the elements they consider to be of interest to their publics. They will edit (or expand upon) your story to produce a broadcast item or text that they consider to be most appropriate.

When the content of a message has been decided, your objectives should be to:
• 'Package' it in a manner that makes it stand out from the many that are competing for journalists' attention;
• Present the story in a way that encourages reproduction of the key points with minimal changes; and
• Make any editing as easy as possible.

2.3.1. Structuring a press release

Heading

The heading is the first element that addresses the journalist. A good heading is a short heading – two lines is a maximum length. Ideally, it should include an active verb, and employ vocabulary that is in common use and will appeal to readers' curiosity or imagination.

example

'Smart textiles protect their users', NOT 'Functionalised fibres exhibit photochromic and thermochromic properties'

Introductory paragraph

Viewers, listeners and readers – and journalists! – are in a hurry. They need to be able to obtain an overview of a message almost at a glance. So, provide an introductory paragraph of two or three sentences to present the content in a nutshell, and to indicate its significance. This should answer the six basic questions – who?, what?, why?, when?, where? and how? – or as many of them as are relevant in the context.

example

'Belgian (where) waste treatment company Scoribel (who) has achieved the ultimate environmental objective of converting industrial waste into a form that is 100% reusable (what) in a co-combustion process with conventional fuels for heating the kilns that produce cement clinker (how). Completed in August 2003 (when), this development has helped prevent the closure of a neighbouring cement plant, preserving valuable employment in a region facing a shortage of suitable primary raw materials for cement production (why).'

Text

Paragraphs should be arranged in order of declining importance. A good test is to check to what extent, starting from the end of the text, paragraphs can be progressively removed without affecting the essence of the message. This equates to the simplest form of editing for a journalist seeking to fill a limited page space when working under deadline pressure.
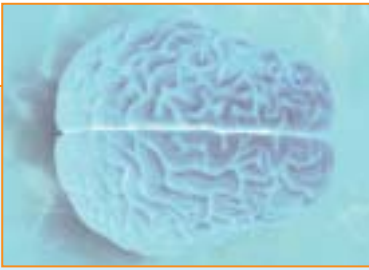
Ensure that texts always include an acknowledgement of European Union financial support.

Adding quotations can be an effective means of making a story more lively and interesting – note that accuracy is essential when quoting third-party sources. It can also be a useful way to make points that are matters of opinion, rather than fact.

example
''We believe this new drug to be the most advanced in the world,'' says Dr Smith.

Subheadings
Subheadings divide the text into blocks of ideas and thus facilitate scan reading to identify items of particular interest to the reader. They should consist of just a few words, make a specific point about the story, and ideally be benefit-oriented.

example
'Markets expanding', 'Cost-effective composites', 'Knowledge for the future'

Subheadings should not be overused, and should be spread more or less evenly throughout the text – two or three would be sufficient for a typical two-page press release.

Bullet points
Bullet points are useful when listing a range of options or comparing related facts. They can often be helpful in reducing the amount of space needed to present a complex scenario.

Paragraph numbering
Avoid paragraph numbering and other elements that will not appear on the printed page. They only give the journalist extra work in removing them.

Photographs, diagrams, graphs, tables
An attractive (and good quality) photograph greatly increases the probability that a press release will be selected for publication, particularly if it includes a human element or illustrates a striking application (space vehicle, prominent building, healthy plant growth, etc.). Where recognition of size is important in understanding the image, e.g. microelectronics, try to incorporate a reference element to indicate the scale. When supplied in electronic form, photographs should be suitable for high-quality reproduction – i.e. with a resolution of at least 300 dots/inch. Always provide an explanatory caption.

Diagrams can be a convenient means of explaining a working device, plant layout, process flow, etc. However, it should be realised that space on the printed page is limited. Avoid over-complicated diagrams – and consider providing textual descriptions in the form of a caption relating to key numbers (this also simplifies the production of multilingual releases).

Graphs and tables simplify the interpretation of comparative data, but again should not be unduly complicated.

Background

Avoid the use of extensive technical explanations and historical detail in a press release. This information may nevertheless be useful to journalists intending to write more extended stories. Where appropriate, add it as 'Notes to editors' at the end of the text – or even supply a separate background article, clearly labelled as such. Note that a backgrounder can often be recycled to accompany more than one press release, with periodic updating, as required. Another method is to post it on your website, and to indicate the website address in your press releases.

2.3.2. Press release style

Speak plainly

Use language that you think a very large audience will understand. And bear in mind that even the editor/journalist may not be a specialist in your particular field, so avoid unnecessary scientific jargon and 'Eurospeak'.

Where special terminology is unavoidable, add a brief explanation:

example
'The size of transistors is being scaled down to just a few nanometers. A nanometer is one billionth of a meter (1 x 10-9)'

or provide a 'human' comparison:

example
'A nanometer is around 1/80 000th of the thickness of a human hair'

If abbreviations are employed throughout a text, spell out the corresponding phrase in full the first time they are used:

example
'EUROSTAT (Statistical Office of the European Communities)';
'DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid)'

Aim to express just one basic idea in each sentence. Keep sentences short – a maximum of 30 words is a good rule of thumb. Avoid ambiguity; minimise the use of passive verbs.

To facilitate reading, keep paragraphs short – typically two to three sentences.

Be consistent

• Be consistent in the use of spellings, abbreviations, units of measurement and the use of initial capital letters.

• It is advisable to employ the internationally recognised SI measurement units and their abbreviations (see, for example, http://www.chemie.fu-berlin.de/chemistry/general/si_en.html).

• Note that, in the English language, initial capitals should neither be used for the names of the sciences and other disciplines (physics, engineering…), nor for the names of the chemical elements. Their use for other generic words (states, committee…) is also to be discouraged.

• Always make use of your word-processing programme's spelling and grammar checker.

2.3.3. Plan the circulation strategy

If the message is to remain topical, a press release must reach its recipients as quickly as possible. Its circulation must therefore be organised in advance. Releases may be sent by fax or email, or made available on a website – provided that the site is known to the targeted journalists, and that they visit it regularly.

As has been stated, journalists tend to have little time and work under considerable pressure. You are therefore strongly advised to make life easier for them by making every effort to ensure that information reaches them directly, rather than expecting them to search for it.

When news is also announced directly, at a press conference for example, the press release should be distributed at the place where the event takes place. It can be handed out individually, or with other documents in a complete press pack. This should not preclude a follow-up distribution, as not all of the invited journalists will necessarily attend the event.

> **Hint:**
> Make use of events: if you are participating in an event such as a conference or exhibition organised by a third party, take advantage of the fact that journalists are likely to be present. Bring your press releases to hand out, and check what press facilities may be provided. Ascertain in advance whether there is a press room in which you can display your material, and what formalities are necessary to gain access. The press room can also be a good place to make new contacts and organise interviews with journalists.

2.4. Organise a successful press conference

Press conferences are appropriate to mark a major event or announce important news, where the ability to see results at first hand, or to question the personalities involved, will bring added value for journalists. Another justification is to give a general briefing about a topic of current or emerging interest. This may not necessarily produce a great deal of immediate press coverage, but will provide journalists with a contextual framework for future announcements. It is nevertheless always preferable to provide a news angle that will justify the time spent in attending such an event.

Hint:
Think particularly about visual possibilities for TV – facility visits, concrete results of research….

2.4.1. Plan ahead

Press conferences can take various forms. They can be open to all journalists, addressed to a targeted panel in line with the subject and geographical area, or reserved for a limited circle of journalists seen as opinion leaders.

Whatever the format, success requires the mobilisation of substantial resources. Careful preparation may take between 15 and 20 days work full-time for one person, plus a presence on the day and for follow-up. Moreover, such an event costs money, and the costs should be calculated in advance.

This is not the type of operation that should be repeated too often; otherwise it becomes a drain on budgets and dulls the interest of the press. It is vital to weigh the value, and not to abuse the method to announce details that could easily be communicated in writing.

In some circumstances, it may be necessary to organise a press conference at short notice, but this should be avoided as far as possible. However, such eventualities are unlikely to arise in the context of FP6 project promotion.

2.4.2. Timing

• Press conferences are typically held in the late morning, but an early morning press breakfast or midday press lunch are also acceptable alternatives.

• Other media events can take half a day, or even a whole day, for example when they involve a visit to a project site or a laboratory tour – but do not forget that time is valuable to journalists. A number of elements can be combined, such as a field trip followed by a press lunch – or even something more ambitious.

• Before fixing the time and date of a press conference, make every effort to ascertain whether a conflicting event may be taking place which could divert your target audience. Ask a known journalist to check his/her diary, or – if you intend to hold your event during a conference or exhibition – check with the organisers to determine whether another participant has similar plans.
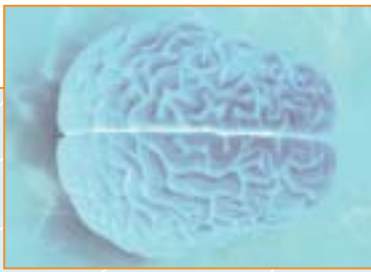
CHOPIN: Childhood Obesity: early Programming by infant nutrition (quality of life)

Obesity is a problem in Europe and prevention is essential. CHOPIN investigates whether infant feeding regimes that differ in protein and fat contents during the first two years of life influence an innovative, early marker of obesity development, namely the difference between length at two years of age and length at birth. The project targets health professionals, politicians and parents via a glossy brochure, a six-monthly newsletter and a website. The website offers Acrobat (pdf) downloads of all publications and includes public information with health professional, parents' and media corners as well as a partner-only section. A dissemination database was established using 'Endnote' software.

Key communications lesson:

Overall dissemination is successful but a media briefing at the ninth European conference on nutrition in Rome in October 2003 attracted very few journalists. Another press conference was arranged just before – and the company concerned then took all the journalists out to lunch!

2.4.3. Invitation

- Ensure that the invitation includes all the facts that journalists need to know – who, what, why, when, where, how – and include any additional information that will help convince them to attend.

- Issue the invitations two to three weeks in advance. Send two copies of the invitation to the editorial office: one for the journalist and one for the editor-in-chief. Be specific about any costs – travel, accommodation, etc. – that you are prepared to support.

- Do not assume that all journalists invited to a press conference will be willing or able to attend. To assemble ten journalists, for example, you may need to extend invitations to double that number.

2.4.4. Location

- Choose a central location with easy access; attach a map with the invitation, and make arrangements for parking and/or transfers from the nearest transport terminals.

- Journalists are only human – an attractive or unusual location just might prove instrumental in encouraging their attendance.

2.4.5. Press kit

- Prepare a full set of material for the journalists. This should include press release(s) covering the main message(s) being communicated, relevant background material, such as specially prepared press fact sheets, relevant publications and possibly brochures as well as handout versions of the presentation slides. Also include CVs of relevant people and a contact sheet to simplify journalistic follow-up.

- Prepare suitable illustrations – graphics, diagrams and/or photographs. These can be provided on a CD, or a suitable website address supplied to enable the journalist to download them.

2.4.6. Presentations

All press conference contributors should aim to meet certain minimum standards in the style of their spoken delivery and the quality of their accompanying presentations (see Section 5, page 35).

- Presentations should be prepared in detail with regard to both their contents and length. As with any form of media message, keep the contents simple and the messages clear. Do not go deeply into scientific detail; a media presentation is not a sector-specific scientific conference contribution.

- Support the talk with good clear slides, ideally in a PowerPoint format that can easily be distributed to the press in printed form or on disk. Develop a simple style and do not try to put too many messages on one slide. Use pictures, graphics and diagrams wherever possible and keep words to a minimum. A slide should support what you are saying, not provide your speaking notes.

- It is essential to rehearse presentations thoroughly before an event, and to verify their functioning at the location itself. To avoid compatibility problems, check in advance what type of audiovisual equipment is available, and in what form presentations can be accepted (laptop plug-in, CD, DVD, videotape, memory stick…).

2.4.7. Other practical details

- When taking responsibility for the organisation of a press conference, make a checklist of the materials and services that will be required on the day – from name badges and table cards, to public address and audiovisual equipment.

- Set aside a reception desk at the entrance to the conference area. Obtaining full particulars from journalists can form useful input for assembling an up-to-date database of press contacts.

- Make sure that journalists are collected and accompanied during facility visits, with competent people on hand to answer questions – and to ensure their safety.

- Have available a suitable area for TV or radio journalists to record specific interviews.
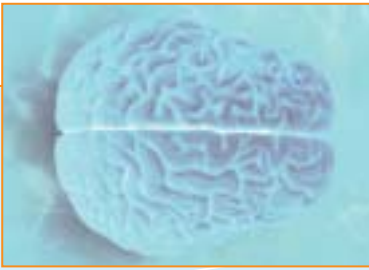
2.4.8. Follow-up

Be sure to note, and respond to, any journalists' requests that cannot be dealt with on the day of a conference (e.g. providing specific pictures or additional background information). Building a reputation as a reliable information source and a person/organisation that delivers on promises pays long-term dividends.

Hint:
Mail/email press kits to journalists who were on your invitation list but did not attend the event. This could well have been due to circumstances beyond their control.

EPICA: European project for ice coring in Antarctica (climate change)

EPICA is a long-term European deep ice-core drilling project on two sites in Antarctica to derive high-resolution records of climate and atmospheric composition through several glacial-interglacial cycles. The results will help draw up European climate policy. The project attracted much public interest and was relatively easy to 'sell' to the media. A **major press visit** was organised to Bremerhaven (DE) with the European Commission in February 2003, with presentations about EPICA and two other polar research projects on-board the research vessel *Polarstern*.

Key communications lessons:
- Take journalists to where the action is (expensive, but generates coverage)
- Stick to facts when talking to journalists
- Provide simple-to-use diagrams
- Use any opportunity to plug your projects
- Send out press releases concurrently with your partners to raise profile

2.5. Build good relationships with the journalists

The best way of ensuring the co-operation of journalists is to establish a relationship of trust based on mutual respect. There is no point in contacting them constantly for the least reason, or swamping them with too much documentation. On the other hand, keep them informed when you have genuine news to impart.

Cultivate key contacts. If you believe that a story appearing on a particular programme or in a particular newspaper or magazine would be an ideal means of advancing your cause – because of its topical or geographical coverage, or its particular editorial approach – offer an exclusive. This could simply be in the form of a telephone interview, or might include a visit to your premises or a face-to-face meeting with a senior figure. But be sparing with this tactic, as its overuse may alienate other journalists.

Adopt these common-sense measures:

• **Be proactive**
   Do not wait for journalists to contact you. Go to them and anticipate their needs by drawing their attention to key events and particularly interesting developments.

• **Make yourself available**
   When journalists are looking for information, they want to obtain it quickly – perhaps for the next day's article or programme. Respond as rapidly as possible, and never leave a question unanswered. If you are unable to react in time, take the trouble to call or email explaining the reason.

• **Be a conduit**
   When you are not able to answer journalists questions, try to refer them to someone in the project group who can. Warn the nominated person to expect a call – and provide any relevant information that will help them to prepare/avoid mixed messages.
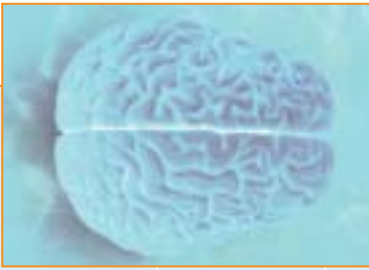
2.6. How to get on TV

Apart from including TV journalists in your press release circulation lists and inviting them to press conferences, there are a number of other actions you can pursue to attract the attention of this exceptionally powerful medium.

Hint:

The most important thing to realise is that TV is VISUAL. In many cases, even a story that may not sound particularly interesting could have TV appeal if it LOOKS interesting.

2.6.1. Five things that TV producers look for

With some exceptions, TV producers are not interested in science/research for its own sake, but rather for the impact it has on human life. Consequently, there are five basic angles that they especially like to cover:

1. Politics. Anything related to local, national, or European politics can be a newsworthy story – especially if you mount a challenge to accepted views, or propose new facts and figures that raise questions about existing or proposed policies;

2. Social crises/problems tend to receive similar coverage, as they hold public interest. Often, there can be a demand for more information to be made available/accessible in the public domain. Bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), human disease outbreaks, global warming, natural disasters, cybercrime and terrorist threats all fall into this category. Technologies with the potential to tackle such problems are frequently hailed as imminent solutions, even though they may realistically take years to be fully approved;

3. Health and education are constantly in the limelight. Medical breakthroughs, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), consumer safety issues and food scares/warnings invariably attract attention, as do efforts to offer increased learning opportunities and plug the skills gaps in national workforces;

4. Celebrities always get television time. So getting a known personality to become associated with your research can be of great value, especially if the outcome has a humanitarian dimension; and, finally,

5. Novelty. If your research has an exciting new angle to propose, this will raise interest. However, while programmes will cover topics that they know from experience to be winners, original stories relating to esoteric fields often leave assignment editors wondering why they should cover them. In such cases, greater ingenuity may be required in 'selling' the concept.

ASSET: Advanced structural system for tomorrow's infrastructure (materials)

ASSET's main objective was to develop a strong and lightweight independent decking or flooring system made of advanced composite profiles used as structural components, for bridges and other building structures. The project established a comprehensive website which provided a wide range of downloadable literature and other information and pictures. It also resulted in very substantial deliverable in the form of a prototype road bridge near Oxford in the UK – the first such in Europe. The official opening was an obvious focus for a media event that, with a little imagination, attracted much TV, radio and press attention – including some overseas journalists.

Key communications lessons:
- Visual gimmicks – such as a tank opening the bridge – attract good media attention
- Good branding helps – ASSET has now become the name of the system
- Make maximum use of partners' facilities
- Use professional help when necessary – such as a PR 'machine' for a media event

2.6.2. Be proactive

Where do you start?

The number of TV programmes dealing routinely with scientific and technological matters is relatively limited. A logical starting point is therefore to draw on your own viewing experience and that of your project colleagues in assembling a 'hit list' of candidates.

Next, you should try to identify and evaluate the presenters/reporters working on these programmes:

- Do they appear to show any interest in/knowledge of your field, or to deal with issues to which you believe you can contribute?

- Do they have a particular viewpoint or cause that may be sympathetic/antagonistic to your interests?

- Is their style friendly/aggressive?

Having identified one or more suitable targets, take the initiative to obtain contact details for them via the relevant broadcast organisations.
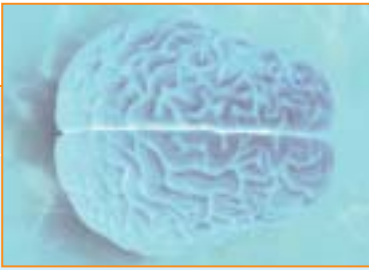
The media is very telephone oriented. However, more and more reporters work via email when establishing 'first contacts' or checking out press releases. Send a press release or personalised message (together with visual material on CD, DVD or videotape, if clips with sufficient visual appeal are available), then call to promote your story. Get to the point fast, and keep to it. Make sure your story is good. Recount the human interest or visual part first.

Remember that, while you are talking, the reporter is thinking:

1. What's in this for us? Will our viewers be interested?

2. Will my boss think this is a good idea?

3. How much trouble will it be for us to get this on tape and on the air?

If you can get positive answers on those three points, you have a good chance of successfully enticing TV to cover your story.

Key messages
• Decide on the key point(s) you want to make — and rehearse them!

• Make sure that you point out the positive aspects — THINK ABOUT:
> Technical excellence — how special is it?
> Does it improve quality of life, or offer other benefits to European citizens?
> How can it enhance the competitiveness of EU industry?
> Is it a good example of European collaboration/networking?
> Is your presentation neutral/independent, and therefore likely to be viewed as 'reliable'?

• Can you present your message in terms that the public will understand?

• Can it be linked to a topic of current public interest or concern?

Perseverance pays
Keep in mind that many TV stations are short-handed and run to very tight deadlines. If you do not succeed in making contact within a reasonable time, consider approaching a station's news desk or the head of the appropriate department.

A good approach is to link your project or its findings to a topic with a high public profile — although some creative thinking may be required to establish such a connection… The next step is to pick up the telephone, send an email or think about developing a press release.

WAVE DRAGON: sea testing and optimisation of power production on a scale 1:4.5 test rig of the offshore wave energy converter (energy)

WAVE DRAGON involves long-term field-testing of an offshore wave energy converter supplying Denmark's national grid. The power of the quarter-scale prototype corresponds to a 4 to 10 MW full-scale system. It is the world's first grid-connected converter of its kind, although plans to build and deploy power production units elsewhere in the EU are already under way. The project has established a good website and focused much of its communications efforts on the media, mainly through involvement in various events – from initial launch of the prototype at sea to recent participation in a Commission-organised press conference at the 'Solar platform' test site in Almeria (Spain).

Key communications lessons:
- When talking to journalists, it is essential to have a clearly defined issue or achievement to present
- A special action is important to attract media coverage – launch of the wave turbine into the sea was exciting; turning on power to the Danish grid less so

2.6.3. TV interview technique

Know (and rehearse!) the story/angle you want to get across, while also aiming to understand what the interviewer is likely to be seeking. Also prepare and discuss questions with the journalist if possible.

When setting up the interview:

- Location – think about where/how you will appear (where will you stand/sit and try to feel comfortable). Try to select a background that is appropriate to your story. Avoid sitting behind a desk unless you wish to be seen as a bureaucrat;

- Get key messages in early. Mention your project/organisation by name. And remember to mention the European Union funding;

- Keep it short and to the point – if it is not a 'live' interview, they will edit the tape anyway;
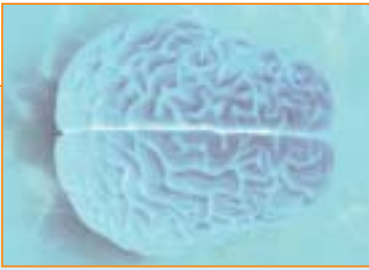
- Show enthusiasm! Remember to smile and speak clearly, especially if you are speaking in a language that is not your own; and

- Body language – look at the reporter, NOT the camera – and ignore the microphone. Do not fold your arms, as this is perceived as creating a barrier between you and your audience.

2.7. Evaluate results

In order to justify the effort put into the generation of media publicity, it is advisable to monitor the coverage obtained. The most basic measure is the quantitative result – i.e. minutes of programme time or the number of 'column cms' achieved. More difficult is a qualitative assessment of the resulting impact. This becomes increasingly problematic when operating at a transnational level.

For example, a full-page story in a local newspaper will be seen by a few thousand people residing in the area, whereas a brief news item in the *Financial Times* or *Le Monde* is likely to be noted by influential businessmen far and wide. And an item on a BBC World Service science programme may be heard round the world. So, how can you calculate their relative value?

Estimating the level of success will always involve a considerable degree of subjectivity. Nevertheless, there are various steps you can take to establish a basis for judgement:

• Collect press clippings/transcriptions
Ask for feedback from colleagues and partners. During project meetings and informal contacts, ask them to forward any media coverage they discover in their day-to-day reading and viewing. To retain their interest, circulate radio and TV transcriptions or recordings and collated pages of press clippings that they can incorporate into their own files.

• Subscribe to a commercial service
Commercial services are available to supply copies of broadcasts or Internet downloads of press cuttings categorised according to country, subject and specific company or product name. Their cost escalates in proportion to the number of search parameters that are specified, and may become prohibitive on an international scale. However, when the partners are major corporations whose interests coincide with those of a particular project, it may be possible to access records that have been gathered for corporate purposes.

2.8. Learn more about media relations

Contributing to the media is different from preparing scientific or commercial papers and presentations. Several resources available on the World Wide Web help to explain the differences and offer useful tips:

• Communicating science news

> Practical advice for science communicators can be found on the UK Science, Technology, Engineering and Medicine Public Relations Association (STEMPRA) website at http://www.stempra.org.uk/advice.html

> The US National Association of Science Writers offers a guide for public information officers, scientists and physicians that explains the different media needs and how to communicate more effectively at http://nasw.org/csn/

> *Communicating Science to the Public: A Handbook for Researchers* can be found on the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada website at http://www.nserc.ca/seng/how1en.htm

• Managing media relations

More useful information about how to manage media relations can be found at:

> ***RTD info*** – The September 2002 edition of the Research DG publication *RTD info* was devoted to discussion of the relationship between science and the media. It contains viewpoints and comments from the two sides, and can be found at:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/rtdinfo/en/special-media/

> ***SCIDEV*** (Science and Development Network) – SCIDEV.Net is a free-to-view website providing news, views and information on science and technology in the developing world. By registering (free), you can access its useful e-guide to science communication – which includes hints on dealing with the media, and gives contact details for relevant organisations, discussion groups and journalists. See: http://www.scidev.net/ms/sci_comm/

3. Website

3.1. Why a website?

The World Wide Web has become a major information channel. This success is explained by the variety and multitude of information it makes available to a wide number of people at any time with a few clicks of a mouse.

Search engine technology also makes possible extremely powerful and rapid research in the gigantic library that appears to be growing exponentially without stop. Unfortunately the information that is published on the web is often of poor quality, badly written, badly adapted to the different publics that read it, poorly organised, and presented in overly complex sites that are impossible to use…

It has become indispensable for producers of information – particularly in the scientific and technical domains – to publish on the web. But it is essential to do this well, taking into account some basic good principles that are easy to apply. Following these rules will not guarantee the quality of a website, yet will make communication more effective.

3.2. What type of website

Project websites come in various forms. A major distinction can be drawn between internally and externally oriented sites. The former are designed simply to improve communication between consortium members and are not really addressed by this guide. The latter can be key tools to raise the image of your project and improve dissemination to specialists, potential users of the technologies being developed, politicians and public funding authorities, as well as the general public. In practice, a website can meet both internal and external needs – using password protection to allow consortium members to share confidential data, while still offering unrestricted public access to more general information.

3.3. Exploiting the website

A website can serve both as a communications tool in itself and a method of disseminating all the other material discussed in this guide. It allows access to key messages about the project and its results, tailorable to all your different audiences. It can and should be updated on a regular basis. Key elements for EU-funded projects include some form of project description, background on the partners, regular information on progress and, ideally, information for the media – an electronic press room with press releases, background information and pictures. Other suitable items could include a web version of any project newsletter – providing links to further information – and downloadable versions of any literature generated by the project.

Hint:
Do not forget to publicise your website. Put the address on all print items, press releases, correspondence, etc.

3.4. Ten keys to good web communication

3.4.1. The time factor

The printed word is fixed – this is an advantage in that your message cannot be distorted, but a weakness as it cannot easily be updated. A web page can be ephemeral – here today and gone tomorrow. So, while people do not expect a printed item to change, they expect a website to be up to date on the day they consult it. A website editor must therefore consider the development and publication of the site as a long-term exercise which is never ending.

The life of the site consists of an initial 'publication' and regular updates – publishing new contents, archiving out-of-date contents, adding new functions, and improving the presentation. Technically, it will be necessary to use the contents in different contexts, not all of which can be identified at the start. So database technologies should be used where possible, allowing contents to be exported in different forms without expensive and complicated processing.

Hints:
- At the concept stage, identify sections which will remain stable over time and contents that need updating regularly
- Establish an update strategy – who does what, when and how often

3.4.2. Hyperlinks

Unlike paper products that are generally read in a linear manner from the first page to the last, a classical website is made up of a series of pages interconnected using hyperlinks. These hyperlinks are rather like bookmarks, allowing readers to move from one place on a page to anywhere else on the site – or the web itself.

This extremely simple but powerful concept has considerable influence on how sites are read – it is essential to take into account that a reader can arrive at page without having seen any 'preceding' material. This means that each page on a website has to be considered by its author as an autonomous element, with self-supporting information, that can be understood without any context or introduction.

Hints:
To ensure pages function on the web, check that:
- Pages are short. Printed out, they should be no longer than two A4 sheets
- Try to mix all the pages of a website and read them in any arbitrary order. The information should still be understandable
- The number of links in the text – or separate box – should be reasonable. More than five links on a page can cause a reader not to finish the item
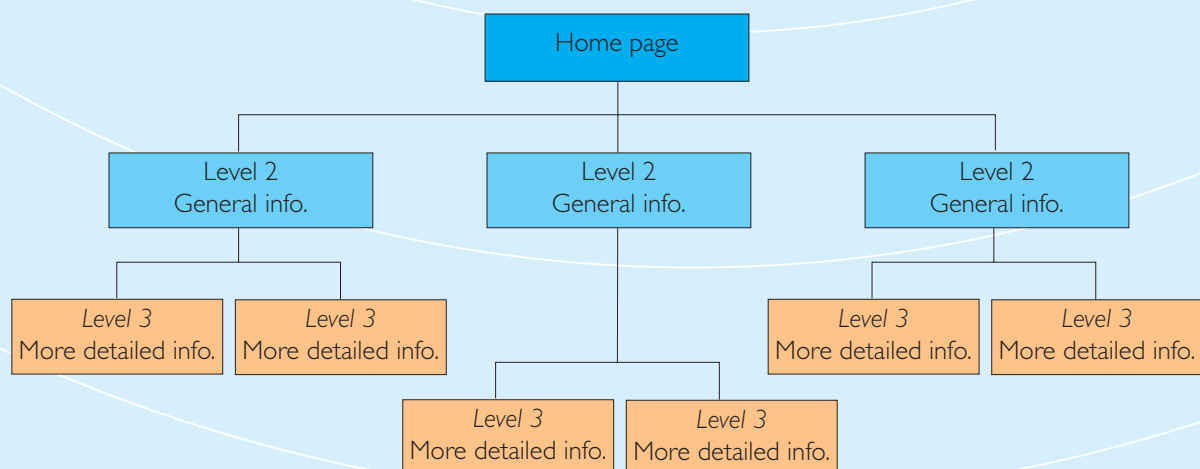
3.4.3. Information structure and 'readership level'

It is not possible to know all the readers who might visit your site. They may be looking for very general information, detailed reports or technical data – and with different levels of understanding of your activity. The web makes it possible to address all these different audiences in an extremely simple and practical manner by exploiting the 'readership level'.

Most web tree structures are pyramidal, with the home page representing the summit of the pyramid. The home page leads to X level-2 pages, each of which leads to Y level-3 pages, and so on. One of the secrets of a good website is to exploit this information structure to allow several readership levels: the most accessible pages should provide general information, while more 'distant' pages provide ever more detail for the more motivated reader.

Hints:
- List all the questions your website is intended to answer and prioritise them
- Provide responses to essential questions in the first two levels of the website
- Try to limit to three the overall number of clicks required to reach essential information – more detailed information can be put deeper in the site
- Try to find the best balance between width and depth on the site. Ideally, one page should provide access to a maximum of 12 subordinate pages. There is no practical limit to the overall depth of the site – but the more it can be reduced, the more effective it will be

```
                        ┌─────────────┐
                        │  Home page  │
                        └─────────────┘
          ┌───────────────────┼───────────────────┐
   ┌─────────────┐     ┌─────────────┐     ┌─────────────┐
   │   Level 2   │     │   Level 2   │     │   Level 2   │
   │General info.│     │General info.│     │General info.│
   └─────────────┘     └─────────────┘     └─────────────┘
      ┌──────┴──────┐            │            ┌──────┴──────┐
┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐  ┌─────┴─────┐ ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐
│ Level 3  │ │ Level 3  │  │           │ │ Level 3  │ │ Level 3  │
│More      │ │More      │  │           │ │More      │ │More      │
│detailed  │ │detailed  │  │           │ │detailed  │ │detailed  │
│info.     │ │info.     │  │           │ │info.     │ │info.     │
└──────────┘ └──────────┘  │           │ └──────────┘ └──────────┘
                      ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────┐
                      │ Level 3  │ │ Level 3  │
                      │More      │ │More      │
                      │detailed  │ │detailed  │
                      │info.     │ │info.     │
                      └──────────┘ └──────────┘
```

3.4.4. Navigation

The complexity of a website is not a problem as long as it is easy to 'navigate' – that is to move from section or page to another. An effective navigation protocol fulfils a double function: allowing readers to know exactly where they are in the site structure at any time, and making it possible to move easily and quickly with a limited number of clicks.

At the same time, it is essential to remember that the level of computer expertise of the great majority of web users is extremely limited. If the navigation system is too complex, they may be unable to understand how to move around a site. Finally, you should not overestimate the manual dexterity of your website visitors: areas of micro-manipulation should be avoided. Navigation areas should be obvious, and immediately comprehensible.

Remember also that content that cannot be seen simply does not exist as far as visitors are concerned. It is necessary therefore to show as much as possible of the richness of a site, without making page reading too complicated.

Hints:
- Call on the services of a professional web or graphic interface designer to develop an effective navigation module based on the information structure of your site
- Get users without specific knowledge of the web to test the navigation system
- Make sure that visitors know where they are on the site at all times; check also that it is easy to move from one page or section to another
- If possible, perform the same test with people of reduced dexterity or poor eyesight to determine whether the system poses significant difficulties for such users
- Finally, remember that the site structure will change with time: if you have selected a horizontal navigation bar, consider in advance how it will look when the number of buttons doubles

3.4.5. Multimedia

The HTML format used to code web pages makes it possible to mix text and multimedia elements such as photographs, graphics, plans, animations, sound and video. Well chosen and well designed, such elements are extremely useful in making complex ideas understandable. In addition to their communications value, they can also make pages more agreeable to read.

Therefore, from the conception stage, website editors should think about the best way to exploit the multimedia elements available and to create new elements to make the information clearer, more relevant and easier to read.

Multimedia elements can slow the display of a web page. And some elements – such as video – require small 'plug-in' programs that must be available on the user's computer. Therefore, ensure that:
• Contents are still readable and understandable even if the multimedia elements are not displayed
• Multimedia elements are not too 'heavy', affecting performance – use, for example, a thumbnail image that can be linked to a bigger picture
• Only standard multimedia formats that can be handled by most computers are used
• Links to download sites for necessary plug-ins are included

3.4.6. Interactivity

Interactivity is one of the principle characteristics of the Internet, allowing a bi- or multidirectional interaction between several users and/or computers. A website can therefore not only publish information but also get feedback from its visitors, contributing to new content, on-line surveys or other more advanced functions.

Simple email enables a visitor to make contact with the person responsible for the website. More extensive interactivity makes it possible to improve the quality of the information on offer by enabling visitors to adapt their surfing to their own particular needs – e.g. by allowing them to access databases through some form of interrogation interface.

Hints:

Interactivity can be expensive. As a general rule, 80% of visitors only use about 20% of the capability of a site, so such investment needs careful reflection. However, a good website should at least:
• Allow a visitor to enter into contact with the producers of the published information
• Provide a well-planned search mechanism that delivers relevant results – if it cannot do this, it should not be offered

3.4.7. Editorial quality

Whatever the quality of the structure, it is the message that is of major importance. It is difficult to describe a quality text because 'quality' is obviously highly subjective. Nevertheless, there are some universal common-sense criteria, as well as certain advice that is specific to web communication.

Hints:
• An informative web text consists of short and simple sentences
• The language should be clear and precise, using a carefully selected vocabulary that does not fall into specialist jargon
• Good spelling is essential
• Do not try to write clever headlines – go for simple, straightforward phrasing

3.4.8. Ergonomy

''Please validate your login before refreshing this page'' is the type of absolutely incomprehensible message that is all too common on the World Wide Web. Many websites pose ergonomic problems – in the form of terminology puzzles, visual challenges (such as text written in small light grey characters on a white background) or elementary logical gaps – that make them almost impossible to use.

Whether the tool is a website, a video recorder or a mobile phone, user experience depends directly on product ergonomics. If this experience is poor, no matter what the intrinsic quality of the product, it will be considered bad. A website must therefore be easy to use for an uneducated public.

Hints:
- Avoid jargon or faddish terminology
- Do not ask a computer programmer to help design an ergonomic application
- When positioning the various elements (text, navigation, links, images, …) that make up a web page, think where you would instinctively expect to find them if you did not know anything about the material you were dealing with. If you find it difficult to view this objectively, ask someone outside your area to check it for you

3.4.9. Compatibility

In principle, HTML coding for web pages should be totally independent of the machines and systems used to read it. Whatever the computer, operating system or navigation system being used, an HTML page should ideally display in exactly the same way. In practice, nothing is less true.

Hints:
- Insist your technical subcontractor develops applications as compatible as possible by avoiding little – known or proprietary technologies
- Respect international compatibility standards – such as summarised in the European Commission's Information Provider Guide (http://europa.eu.int/comm/ipg/)

3.4.10. Information and metadata

In essence, the web is a virtual medium. While it might be easy to store a magazine or folder in a filing cabinet, it is much more difficult to save a web page for subsequent use. Therefore, most users end up by printing out the texts that interest them, in order to store and refer to them in a classical manner.

Unlike an article within a brochure, these isolated pages are without context. Consequently, it is essential that certain data be visible: author, date of validity of the information, original web address, etc. Such

metadata is sometimes visible and sometimes invisible – hidden in the coding on the HTML pages and used for example by some search engines. If you want the information you produce to be correctly referenced in search engines and wish your readers to have a clear idea of the validity of the published information, it is essential to create these tags in a visible form.

Hints:
When you edit a web page, think about adding:
• Page title (which will appear as the title in the navigation window)
• Author's name
• Language
• Date of creation
• Description
• Key words

3.5. Evaluating a website

A simplistic way of measuring the success of your website is by the 'hit rates' of the various pages – the number of visits each page receives. This information is generally easy to obtain and can also provide you with some indication of which elements are of the most interest.

Hints:
To increase traffic:
• Actively encourage linking from other relevant websites
• Register your website with appropriate portals

4. Publications

4.1. Why prepare print items?

Media coverage can have a high impact, but its effect is transitory and its content is to some extent beyond your control. Printed publications play a complementary role, giving a more permanent record of your messages, precisely as you wish to present them and in a form that can be filed for future reference. Another advantage is that they can be distributed to audiences of your own choice.

4.2. Select type of publication

This document confines itself to a discussion of publications relevant to the broad interests and objectives of project consortia, while also helping to meet the contractual obligations of FP6 and the societal imperatives of the EU. The approach to planning and producing publications is nevertheless essentially the same as would be adopted by any publicity-conscious organisation.

The first step is to determine which type(s) of publication best meet the perceived needs. From this follows the allocation of budget and the assignment of human resources able to carry out the work.

Hint:
It is advisable to ascertain whether individual partners have their own literature programmes, in order to facilitate the sharing of information and avoid duplication of effort

You can, of course, prepare a complete hierarchy of literature to meet a wide variety of eventualities. The following indicate just some of the main types that could be considered:

4.2.1. Brochure

A 'flagship' brochure reflects the status of a project and serves as a prestigious calling card for presentation to influential readers – European policy-makers, national and local authorities, potential partners, investors, industrial end-users, technology licensees, media representatives…

Produced early in the lifetime of a project or network (possibly as a speculative investment even before funding is confirmed), a brochure can:

- Provide an overview of the consortium, and highlight the reputation/strengths of individual partners;

- Review the background and technological rationale for undertaking the initiative;

- Indicate the targeted results, and emphasise the scale of breakthrough/innovation expected to be achieved;

• Explain the provision being made for education, knowledge sharing and exploitation of the findings;

• Predict the likely long-term impact in terms of European competitiveness, employment, environmental gain and quality-of-life enhancement;

• Attract interest in association with, and contribution to, an initiative from parties recognising a potential for profitable participation in the fruits of the eventual discoveries; and/or

• Help SME partners who may not be able to afford such an exercise alone.

Hint:
The realisation of such a document is a relatively costly exercise, so the content should be designed to ensure longevity, although this is not always easy in an era of rapid change. Practical advice is to concentrate on major issues, avoid quickly outdated detail, incorporate statistical forecasts from the most reliable sources and feature images with a timeless quality.

4.2.2. Newsletter

A periodic newsletter offers the means to report unfolding developments during the course of a project. Depending on the choice of content, it can be circulated internally to inform individuals within partner organisations, and externally to your target audiences.

Typical candidate stories that could be considered for inclusion are:

• Suitably edited versions of project press releases;

• Announcements of progress by single partners or workgroup collaborators;

• Reports on conferences and meetings;

• News of milestone achievements;

• Personnel announcements; and

• Information about forthcoming events.

Newsletters of this nature are often issued three to four times a year – but even an annual publication can serve as a useful update to information contained in a main project brochure.

4.2.3. Case history sheet

A case history sheet serves as a concise reference to the nature and scope of a project or to specific deliverables. Typically contained within a double-sided A4 sheet, it forms an inexpensive first-line response to requests for information. It is equally suitable as a handout to site visitors and conference attendees, and as an element for inclusion in press kits or mailed approaches to prospective TV contacts. Converted into pdf electronic file format, it can be posted on your website or used as a moderately sized attachment to email correspondence.

4.2.4. Poster

In the scientific context, posters are commonly produced to describe individual strands of research at specialist conferences and meetings. However, posters of a more generic nature can be used to introduce complete projects and networks to the wider world. These are necessarily even briefer than case history sheets, and can provide only the briefest of summaries. In addition to display at exhibitions and public meetings, they can be supplied to universities and schools with a view to simulating student interest.

The aim should be to provide an eye-catching and thought-provoking presentation, and to include contact or website details giving ready access to further information.

4.3. Design and Production

Attractive design is integral to the success of any printed publication. The graphic treatment, balance of words and pictures, choice of typeface(s) and distribution of elements on the printed page all contribute to the creation of a harmonious document that will invite readers' attention.

There is a strong element of subjectivity in the definition of 'good design', and the criteria are subject to change in line with the fashions of the day. Modern computer systems usually include facilities for desktop publishing, but a professional touch will greatly enhance the visual quality of your literature.

Hint:
Most consortia include partners with publicity or marketing departments that can assist in this respect; use of their services or those of an external agency or studio are to be recommended

4.3.1. Checking copyright

Sourcing photographs for your literature may be a sensitive issue. Many pictures can be found on the Internet, and it is technically feasible to make good quality copies from existing documents. However, failure to respect the copyright on such items could lead to legal redress.

Hint:
If in doubt, always ask for the owner's permission to reproduce a picture, and print acknowledgements when so requested

4.3.2. Printing choices

Printing costs vary enormously, depending upon the number and size of pages, number of colours used and length of the print run. This is another area where it is advisable to seek professional advice.

For conventional printing of a glossy brochure, it is preferable to produce the estimated total number of required copies in a single run, as a substantial proportion of the total costs is related to the machine start-up phase. Printing, say, 2 000 copies at one time, is far less than double the cost of 1 000.

Advances in digital printing over recent years now make this a cost-effective option for the production of newsletters, posters and other documents in quantities of up to a few hundreds. Moreover, the electronic source files are readily updated to incorporate the latest information.

Hint:
Do not forget to place your publications on your website for easy downloading – making them available directly to interested reachers throughout the world

4.4. Dissemination strategy

Printed publications can be distributed to audiences drawn from mailing lists owned by project participants, or from specially prepared lists assembled with reference to industry directories, sectoral associations, chambers of commerce and other sources. Where appropriate, they can also be included as inserts into other mailings – such as prospectuses, proposals, invoices and invitations to events.

In addition, brochures and leaflets can be offered to site visitors, and to participants in meetings, conferences and exhibitions – including those organised by third parties.

Packaging and postage costs for dedicated mailings can quickly rise to substantial levels. On the other hand, documentation gathering dust in a storeroom serves no useful purpose. It is therefore important to define a dissemination strategy at the outset, and to make a best possible estimate of the total numbers of individual printed documents that will be required.

5. Presentations

5.1. The spoken word

When giving a spoken presentation to a mixed and predominantly non-specialised audience, many of the remarks mentioned in Section 2 on 'Media relations' are equally applicable or adaptable, i.e.:

• Keep the presentation clear, simple and to the point;

• Structure the message so that your key point is the one that will be retained most strongly in listeners' minds[1];

• Avoid complex sentence constructions and obscure or slang words; many in the audience may be coping with a language that is not their mother tongue;

• Maintain the technical content at a level you believe the average person will understand;

• Eliminate unnecessary scientific jargon and Eurospeak; and

• Communicate your enthusiasm, and try to incorporate interesting or amusing anecdotes that will retain listeners' attention.

5.2. Visual support

Attractive slides add visual interest to spoken presentations, and help to explain points that cannot easily be made in words alone. PowerPoint is the commonly accepted standard for such visual support, and most conference facilities are equipped to handle slide sequences created in this format. But, all of your efforts will be wasted if the audience cannot read or interpret the projected images! It is vital to THINK SIMPLE and THINK LARGE. In fact, layouts should be twice as simple and four times as bold as those used for paper documents.

It is also preferable to have more slides with less information on each slide, than fewer, more detailed, slides. With a disciplined approach, it will take exactly the same amount of time to talk through one idea on each of six slides as it does to discuss six ideas on one slide. In addition, the on-screen changes will add dynamism and visual excitement.

1 Some sound advice on how to achieve this is contained in an article entitled 'Speechwriting under the gun', published on the Internet by Harvard Business School at: http://hbswk.hbs.edu/item.jhtml?id=3707&t=career_effectiveness

5.2.1. Text slides

- Because presentations often take place in large conference rooms, small type sizes are likely to be illegible to at least some of the audience. Choose:

a minimum of 24-point for ALL CAPITALS texts, and at least 32-point for

Capitals and Lower Case — and do not be afraid

to use even larger sizes;

- For optimal legibility, select a 'sans serif' typeface such as **Arial**, in preference to a serif face like **Times**;

- Limit texts to a maximum of six lines per slide, with individual points covered in a single line, wherever possible;

- Adopt a 'telegram' or 'text message' style, eliminating all unnecessary words;

example
- Synergies improve quality of life
NOT
- Synergies can be created thus contributing to improve the quality of life in all parts of the world

- Round off numbers, and use symbols in place of words – e.g. '%', instead of 'percent';

- Include no more than one sub-level to bullet points;

example
- Individual projects
  – already large in size and partnership (e.g. biomaterials)
  – small but with a great extension potential (e.g. nanotechnologies)

- Incorporate photographs that complement the texts, but ensure that these are also large and clear enough for easy recognition. And when a photograph is included, reduce the volume of text accordingly;

- Bold text carries more weight, so use it for main titles and, where appropriate, to highlight key words (although this can also be done by means of contrasting colours);

- Employ colour with purpose, not as decoration – too many colours are confusing and distracting; and

• Use light-coloured texts against dark backgrounds, rather than vice versa. In a projected slide, white is the brightest colour, followed by yellow, light blue, etc. (Avoid red or green texts against dark backgrounds – especially for slides that will be distributed in black/white printed form, as the contrast will be minimal.).

5.2.2. Diagrams and tables

• Keep diagrams simple; eliminate any detail that is not essential in making your point;

• Aim to use not more than four colours per diagram. Present the most important data in the brightest colours, and consistently display related data in the same colour;

• Use a scale along either the horizontal or vertical axis of a graph, bar chart, or column chart instead of numbers at the ends of the bars or columns;

• Do not include footnotes or references (unless you are presenting data that is proprietary to a third party requiring attribution).

Finally, never forget that the best way to be a successful presenter is to REHEARSE… REHEARSE… REHEARSE…

6. Audiovisual media

Audiovisual 'publications' on CDs are becoming increasingly popular and are taking over from videotape as the medium of choice for dynamic combinations of speech, video sequences and PowerPoint-type slide presentations. They are inexpensive to reproduce, can incorporate written texts and printable documents, and be circulated in similar ways to conventionally printed literature. They thus form an excellent alternative for information packages that are too large to be sent by email.

CDs, in their turn, will no doubt be superseded by DVDs, as increasing numbers of people become equipped to read the larger capacity disks.

Whichever support is used, professional standards of creation and editing should be employed to produce an end result that can stand alone as a positive endorsement for your work and your project.

7. Using external resources

7.1. Research DG activities

The Research DG itself is heavily involved in communicating the results of EU-funded research to the media and the general public. Your scientific officer will gladly advise you about any possibilities of participating in relevant media activities and provide an interface to the Information and Communication Unit.

Commission activities fall into four main categories:

7.1.1. Media mailing list

Nearly 3 000 journalists – from television and radio to newspapers, magazines and scientific journals – receive targeted information on developments and results considered to be of interest to their various audiences. Press releases related to FP6 projects are prepared in close co-operation with project participants. Once finalised, they are sent to the mailing list (i.e. to journalists all over the world).

7.1.2. Thematic press briefings

In addition to sending information to the media, the Information and Communications Unit invites journalists to frequent thematic press briefings – often 'on location' rather than in Brussels – where the scientists actually involved in the research present their results to the media. Such events typically generate dozens of TV and radio programme items, as well as newspaper and magazine articles across Europe. If the subject is suitable, a video news release can even be prepared for TV station use. Recent examples of briefings include those on flood prevention and mitigation (held in Dresden), smart sustainable manufacturing (Milan), and the environmental impact of antibiotics (Gothenburg).

7.1.3. *RTD info*

A free magazine entitled *RTD info* reaches the research community more directly. This has a circulation of over 80 000 copies – and a readership of almost ten times that. It includes specially written articles on selected projects and their results. In addition, it publicises events organised in connection with EU-funded projects.

RTD info is published in printed and electronic formats (via the Research website on Europa) in English, French and German; and in Spanish in electronic format only.
See http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/rtdinfo/index_en.html

7.1.4. Research website

Reaching the broadest of all possible audiences, the Research website (http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/research/) on EUROPA – the European Union's web portal – runs to some 18 000 pages covering all aspects of EU-funded research. Over the first eight months of 2003, the site averaged 1.25 million hits per month – more than twice the hits for the same period in 2002.

The EUROPA Research website aims to present the best of European research. Information on – and links to – research activities across the EU is accessible to the general public, the research community, policy-makers and the media.

7.2. CORDIS Wire

CORDIS (http://www.cordis.lu/) – the European Commission's information service on European research and innovation activities – offers a service known as CORDIS Wire, to which you can submit your project press releases. After evaluation of the content by a qualified administrator, accepted releases are posted on the site for downloading by journalists and other interested readers. When a release is not considered entirely suitable for inclusion, the administrator may contact you to resolve the problem. You can also request email notification of the publication of your releases. To access this facility, simply complete the general CORDIS registration form.

See http://dbs.cordis.lu/cordis-cgi/srchidadb?CALLER=CORDISwire&LANGUAGE=EN&LIST_TYPE=home

7.3. AlphaGalileo

AlphaGalileo (http://www.alphagalileo.org) is a website that describes itself as 'the world's leading resource for European research news'. Run by the not-for-profit AlphaGalileo Foundation, on a mix of government grants, commercial sponsorship and advertising, the service offers a fast and fast effective way to communicate with journalists around the world. It provides instant access to news, images, background information and a database of experts.

Project press officers and scientists can register as 'contributors', giving rights to post press releases, book and event information, access the address book, and view the complete reference library. You may also sign in as an 'expert' so that registered journalists can contact you for information on your chosen field.

This publication is intended to help coordinators and team leaders in EU Sixth Framework Programme projects generate an effective flow of information and publicity about the objectives and results of their work, the contributions made to European knowledge and scientific excellence, the value of collaboration on a Europe-wide scale, and the benefits to EU citizens in general. It provides an outline of good practices in defining key messages, establishing target audiences, tailoring information to intended outlets, evaluating results and maximising the exposure of messages through sound advice and examples of successful approaches that have been used to date. Topics covered include establishing a communications strategy, media relations (particularly via the 'mass media' such as TV, radio and the written general press), website communications, printed publications, presentations, audiovisual media and the use of external resources.