

Erasmus+ guide to working with the press

Using the Erasmus+ press release template

Press releases are a great way to talk about what is unique and interesting about your project. They can be used on your organisation's website, as a handout at events, and to reach out to a wider audience via the local, regional or national press. Extracts can be posted to social media channels as well, particularly quotes and images which are often the best way to grab attention online.

The Erasmus+ UK National Agency has produced a press release template and some associated documents in order to help UK organisations spread the good news about their projects. This includes standardised text on the Erasmus+ programme itself, to help you talk about the technical side of your project in a clear way.

The template details

We have highlighted on the template the areas where you can add, remove or customise information.

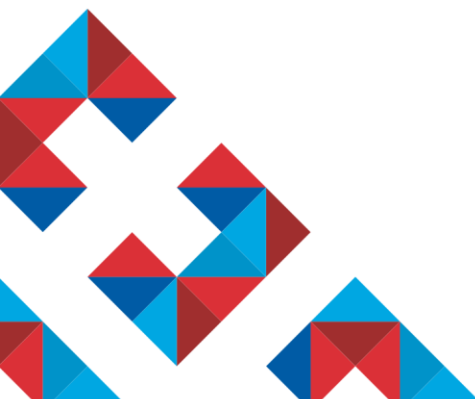
1. Date. Add the release date so that readers know it is current. If you need to embargo the press release (for example, if you are waiting for a particular event) then you should say so here and give the time the embargo is lifted, e.g. embargoed until 12pm on 21/11/2020.

2. Headline. Make sure this reflects the project content you want to highlight. For example, if you are promoting the achievements of your participants, make that clear from the start. Avoid generic headings or puns that don't give any details about your project – we would recommend you include some information to give an idea of the sector of education, training and youth of your project.

3. Project information. Write a short summary of the project, making sure to focus on the positive outcomes. Use the first line or paragraph to summarise the content of your press release. It is a good idea to emphasise the human angle – think about who the participants are, what the results will be and who will feel the benefits of the project.

4. Project quote. This is your opportunity to say something striking about your project, and perhaps to secure buy-in from a prominent member of your organisation. A quote also provides a human touch to your story, creating a personal connection and credibility. If you would like a quote from the UK National Agency, please get in touch via erasmuspluscomms@ecorys.com.

5. Programme information. We have written some short descriptions for you to use as needed:



About Erasmus+
<p>Erasmus+ is the European Union's (EU) programme for education, training, youth and sport, with the EU committing £12 billion to the programme between 2014 and 2020. Projects provide opportunities for learners and staff to improve their skills, enhance their employability and gain cultural awareness.</p> <p>In the UK, the programme is managed by the Erasmus+ UK National Agency, a partnership between the British Council and Ecorys UK.</p>
About Erasmus+ higher education
<p>Through Erasmus+ higher education institutions can enable their students and staff to pursue stimulating opportunities for learning across Europe and beyond, both inside and outside the classroom.</p>
About Erasmus+ vocational education and training
<p>Through Erasmus+ vocational education and training organisations can enable learners and staff to pursue stimulating opportunities for learning across Europe. Participants will gain valuable life-skills and international experience to help them develop personally, professionally and academically, ultimately boosting skills and employability.</p>
About Erasmus+ schools
<p>Erasmus+ enables schools to organise teaching or training abroad for teachers and other support staff, as well as international pupil exchanges, to share the best in modern European school practice, and improve teaching or staff practices.</p>
About Erasmus+ adult education
<p>Erasmus+ enables adult education organisations to provide teaching and training assignments abroad for staff, to exchange modern European adult education practices and supports professional development opportunities.</p>
About Erasmus+ youth
<p>Erasmus+ enables the youth sector to organise or take part in a youth exchange, work shadowing or shaping youth policy.</p>

6. Notes to editors. We have included a standard 'boilerplate' with the Erasmus+ programme details, including the website and social media, so you don't have to compile this information yourself.

At the start of this section, include the contact details of the person who is able to handle any follow up enquiries (preferably a phone number). This may be project staff or your organisation's

marketing team. It is also worth including some standard information about your organisation, your website and social media details.

Maximising your press release

Coverage of your project allows you to share your successes with a wider audience and provides good publicity for your organisation. Promoting Erasmus+ in the media also raises awareness of the programme amongst other like-minded organisations so that they can reap the benefits of international activity too.

Writing a press release can also help you in preparing information about your project for the Erasmus+ Project Results Platform and count towards your final report dissemination activities.

Issuing a press release

Journalists are just like you – they have always got too much to do in too little time! If you can send them a press release that they can reproduce with minimum effort and that gives them all the facts they need in an accessible way, they will be happy to hear from you. It also means that the coverage you get is more likely to include the information that you want it to.

Content linked to individual or group success stories is likely to be most successful, and we recommend you try to include a photograph of your project staff or participants where possible. Make sure you have the relevant permissions from anyone featured in a photograph, and parental permission if they are under 18 years of age.

You can see from our 'Projects in the news' feature the kind of stories that are capturing attention in the press and on social media, so why not use these as inspiration for your own press release? Find out more at: erasmusplus.org.uk/projects-in-the-news.

When to issue a press release

Press releases are best produced to reflect a key milestone or event in your project's life. This could be at the start of the project, when you have received your signed contract with the National Agency, before or after mobility activity, linked to an event or partner meeting, or at the successful conclusion of your project.

All of these would provide a good story for local press, particularly if they can be linked to personal achievements or concrete benefits for your organisation, staff, learners or the wider community.

Contacting the media

Once you have edited your press release, you need to get it to the relevant journalists. Consider calling or emailing your local newspaper in advance to identify the best journalist to send it to; this may be a dedicated sector specialist or community reporter. Twitter has also become a great way to reach out to relevant journalists or your local newspaper.

If you are unsure who the best person to contact would be, use the general newsdesk email to send in your release. Remember, TV will only be interested in the story if there is colourful, visually-stimulating activity they can capture.

Don't forget to think about contacting community media and local websites and blogs other than newspapers. Your story is relevant to anyone with an interest in local affairs, so cast the net as wide

as you can. A good starting point might be the Community Media Association – find out more at www.commedia.org.uk.

You need to be able to summarise your story in 30 seconds so prepare a brief outline before you contact them. If you call first, ask for an email address to send them some more information.

Journalists need news whilst it is still new! If you want to publicise an event or visit, make sure that you give them plenty of notice. If you want local media to attend an event you need to let them know about it well in advance – send them your press release at least a week before.

If you are sending a press release and photos after an event, make sure you send it as soon as possible while it is still current, that day if possible. Find out when your media deadlines are for submissions so you can make sure you get it to them in time.

Top tips

Here's some top tips to think about when writing and sending your release.

1. Who, what, where, when, why? Journalists will always want to make sure they have all the facts, so try and cover all the key details for your project, even if they seem simple. Also think about why they would want to promote it – why is it relevant to their audience and why would local people want to know about your project?

2. A picture says a thousand words. Photographs improve your visual impact and help tell your story. It is important that you also include all names of participants that are in the photo and make sure that you get consent to use the photograph. Attach both a jpeg version and PNG of the photograph so newspaper sub editors can easily compose the layout of the news item.

Remember video is also a very important tool, particularly on social media, so to be sure to include any good quality videos as well. When sending video, it may be best to send this in a link to avoid heavy downloads. Consider using Dropbox, Google Drive or WeTransfer for this.

3. Choose your timing. Try to send your release earlier in the week, as this is when editors will be meeting to plan that week's content. A Monday morning is a good time to send. Forget Friday afternoons as it is likely your message could get missed.

4. Best way to send. The simpler and clearer your release and photos are to access, the better. As well as attaching your release as a Word document, you can also copy and paste the text into the body of the email, so the journalist can see your story as soon as it comes into their inbox.

5. MPs & local governmental departments. To raise the profile of your project within your press release inform your local MP; not only does this keep them informed about what funding goes into their constituencies but they sometimes use these examples in their Parliamentary work. Please note if you want to contact your MP Friday, Saturday or Sunday are the recommended dates as usually they will be in Parliament throughout the remainder of the week.

Promoting an event

On the day

If you are inviting journalists to an event, make sure someone is dedicated to looking after them who can answer their questions and ensure they speak to enthusiastic participants that are prepared to answer questions.

Photography

Good quality, high resolution photographs of interesting and colourful activity can make all the difference to securing press coverage. Make sure that you have someone assigned to take pictures at any publicity-worthy events so you can send them to the local press (if they are not able to send their own photographer along). Brief your photographer to get interesting shots of activity, not just a line-up of people in suits!

Make sure that you have the relevant parental consent for under 18's and permission from everyone involved to use their photographs and quotes for the media. We recommend using a photo and video disclaimer, an example of which you can find in this pack.

Interviews

Prepare spokespeople to do interviews, which might take place either on the day if journalists attend your event, or on the phone.

If you are doing an interview, think about what you want to say and how you can best get your key messages across. Think about the audience – they won't all be experts or familiar with your organisation or field of education, training or the youth field, so try not to use lots of acronyms or jargon! Do try to make a reference to Erasmus+ and the UK National Agency website so people can find out more about the programme: www.erasmusplus.org.uk.

Pinpoint other spokespeople that have been involved (e.g. participants, teachers, youth workers, parents) and make sure they are prepared to answer questions about their experience and are clear on the key messages.

Next steps

Once your press release has been drafted, get someone else to read it through and check for errors. You may also want to run it past other people in your organisation (managers or marketing colleagues) to make sure it is giving the right messages about your organisation and your project.

Make sure your press release is newsworthy, but don't give up if your first story doesn't get published. There are many reasons why some releases don't get published, whether there is a bigger story developing or simply due to staff availability. Try again with a different story, maybe on a different day.

If you get media coverage for your Erasmus+ activity, please let us know about it! Do tweet us @erasmusplusuk or send us a Facebook message at www.facebook.com/ukerasmusplus.

Good luck!