



## Relationships with the media

**The themes discussed in this workshop aim to help participants identify the main methods of dealing with the media.**

The media can be used as an effective way of attracting new inhabitants.

**As a rule it is not easy** to steer journalists in new directions. The association “plus beaux villages de France” for example, only had coverage during the summer, and often the most commonly known villages were portrayed as dormant places rather than lively territories !

The message that different structures aim to portray and the direction taken by journalists do not always reach an appropriate compromise. A press article about an event or plan of action often treats the subject without taking into consideration the structure, its employees or the elected councillors ! Institutional matters don't seem to interest journalists.

In addition to this a feeling of not being pertinent enough or being too shy prevents good relationships with the media and national press.

The lack of time allotted to communication by official representatives, or no job appointment for communication are problems that make media relations more difficult.

Lastly television production companies establish scenarios before getting to grips with the subject ; this distorts the reality.

**However some initiatives have interested journalists and have improved relations with the press.**

The subject has more impact if the media and journalists are targeted, especially if the information diffused corresponds with the reality.

Creating good relations with local correspondents and journalists means information can be communicated effectively. The news is easily accepted because the media is known and trusted.

When drafting texts for the press it is essential to be concise and know how to attract the journalist's attention, this is why it is important to be familiar with communication methods and to answer the questions, why ? What ? When ? When ? How ?

The media follow editorial guidelines, have periodicals, a thematic calendar and they study each new text for their articles. If the given text takes into consideration all of these elements, it has more chance of being interesting and appearing in the newspaper.

Better still, the information has more media attention if there is a link between what's going on nationally and with regional news.



However communication with the press means choosing one or two ideas, respecting the journalist's lack of interest and stop harassing them if the subject does not get printed.

Better relations and a greater trust develop through time and patience.

circulation of the information. The mayor or the president is not always the best person to speak to journalists.

The important thing to remember is to talk about what's going on in the territory, and this will have an affect on the image and the appeal of the region.

Among the more "powerful" Medias, radio airtime means widespread broadcasting. The radio does not always figure in press relations, this should change.

**How to begin ? This is a question frequently asked by territoire, and it can be answered briefly :**

- Find out the names of journalists that appear in the credits, look in the editorial introduction of newspapers, look at the Internet sites or telephone editors ;
- As soon as contact is made, present the subject ;
- Deal with the subject in real terms : how to work together, which method of communication do journalists prefer (mail or post) ? Which viewpoints interest them ?

The following rules exist to manage the functional aspect and ensure the success of any media attention :

- Don't go over time for a breakfast or a press conference ;
- For the above occasions chose written invitations ;
- Invite the editor or publication manager as well as the journalist ;
- Give the Christian names of the elected councillors ;
- Leave enough time for questions ;
- Allocate areas for television and radio interviews ;
- Give subject matter, and speakers (not only elected councillors !).

Lastly it is important to be able to answer questions from journalists. It is advisable to have detailed and precise examples on hand (for example in the case of new residents) If the journalist's approach doesn't reflect the reality, these examples can help to get the journalist back on track.

When dealing with the press there is always room for negotiation, which should be used to give an impression of being indispensable and a source of information (for example, my contacts for my Web site address in the article).



To conclude, the participants at the workshop agreed that **not all of the media was the same**. It is therefore important to know with which type of media we are dealing, what is their editorial line and their readership, and moreover, remember a journalist writes for the readers.

All journalists are different, so avoid treating them as a group. They are curious people who have been influenced by their education, their life, their personal preoccupations or interests for certain subjects. The idea of dealing with certain subjects in a partnership deserves further consideration.

Journalists and communication specialists are not in opposition, the two professions are linked and they both need each other. Be careful of hurting the pride of journalists. Besides their role is **to tell stories, inform people, but not to release communiqués**.