

ETWINNING MEDIA TOOLKIT

CONTACTING YOUR LOCAL MEDIA

International activity, particularly involving young people, can provide interesting stories for the media, and eTwinning offers lots of opportunities for this. Whether you're involved in a European partnership, or a recipient of the prestigious eTwinning School Label or Quality Label, why not showcase your great work to your community! There is great scope for you to secure coverage in local and regional media for your activity. This toolkit aims to support you to do just that.

The British Council Press Office manages national media relations for eTwinning, including for the educational trade media (e.g. TES and SecEd). If you get enquiries from the national media or trade press, please refer them to the Press Office in the first instance on 020 7389 4889.

WHY BOTHER WITH THE PRESS?

Coverage in your local paper, or on a local radio or TV station, allows you to share your success with a wider audience and can provide good publicity for your school. Promoting eTwinning in the media also raises awareness of the programme amongst other schools so that they can reap the benefits of international activity too.

Proactively approaching the press, using a press release, also helps to ensure that your key messages - the things you really want to say about the project - are included in any coverage.

TEMPLATE PRESS RELEASE

The best way to let the media know about your achievement is with a press release. We have created a template which you can personalise to use with your local media.

Journalists are just like you – they've 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.

CONTACTING THE MEDIA

Once you've edited your press release, you need to get it to the relevant journalists. When you call your local newspaper, ask to speak to the News Desk, and for TV or radio ask for the Planning Desk. Remember, TV will only be interested in the story if there is colourful, visually-stimulating activity they can capture.

You need to be able to summarise your story in 30 seconds so prepare a brief outline before you call. Ask for an email address to send them some more information and send across your release. Call back next day (or later that day) to check they've received it. Find out if they need any more info or are able to attend / send a photographer to your event.

Journalists need news whilst it's 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's still current, that day if possible. Find out when your local newspaper's deadline is for submissions so you can make sure you get it to them in time.

WHAT NEXT?

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 (see 'Interviews' below).

PHOTOGRAPHY

Good quality, high resolution photographs of interesting and colourful activity can make all the difference to securing press coverage. Make sure that you've got 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 **permission and parental consent** for those involved to use their photographs and quotes for the media.

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 teachers so try not to use lots of curriculum-speak! Do try to make a reference to eTwinning and the British Council website so people can find out more about the programme:

www.britishcouncil.org/etwinning

Pinpoint other spokespeople - students, teachers and parents that have been involved- and make sure they are prepared to answer questions about their experience and are clear on the key messages.

CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

If something happens as part of your partnership activity that has the potential to attract negative media attention you must tell your British Council eTwinning Regional Officer as soon as possible or contact the eTwinning UK team at the British Council (see details below).

If a newspaper or other media outlet calls you to find out about the incident, take their details and say you will call them back. Your British Council contact, working with the British Council press office, can support you to prepare lines for a media response.

SUMMARY – FIVE TOP TIPS FOR MEDIA COVERAGE

- 1) Make sure you are clear about why your activity is interesting, different and newsworthy.
- 2) Find out who writes about schools / education at your local paper and invite them to relevant events at the school. Keep them updated on future plans that might be of interest.
- 3) Make sure you always get media consent for those involved, particularly parental consent for students.
- 4) Don't be put off if your local press doesn't seem that interested. Journalists are under constant pressure of deadlines and local media have seen big cuts - so staff are extremely busy.
- 5) Keep at it - follow up with a phone call and even if a journalist can't come to an event, send a follow up release and photos.

If you have any questions, or would like advice or support to engage your local media, email us at: etwinning@britishcouncil.org

Good luck!

The UK National Support Service for eTwinning

British Council | 10 Spring Gardens | St. James's | London SW1A 2BN.

www.britishcouncil.org/eTwinning
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