



Visoko sudsko i tužilačko vijeće Bosne i Hercegovine
Visoko sudbeno i tužiteljsko vijeće Bosne i Hercegovine
Високи судски и тужилачки савјет Босне и Херцеговине
High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina



Communication with the media and the use of communication tools/checklist





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Improving Court Efficiency and Accountability of
Judges and Prosecutors in BiH Project – Phase III



CONTENT

Introduction.....	5
Writing and distributing press releases – Checklist.....	6
Media interviews/statements – Checklist	14
Press conference checklist	17
Tips and Tricks	20

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INTRODUCTION

“If something wasn’t in the media, it didn’t happen.”

Media relations play a key role in creating the image and creating positive publicity of the institution. How much we invest in building relationships with the media will also determine how much positive or negative response we will get from the media.

Citizens of any country use the media as one of the basic sources of information, which further indicates that the media greatly influence their perception of the work of any judicial institution.

The importance of building good relations with the media is especially visible when we want to convey certain message to the public. Relations with the media are not “do” and “forget” but they are based on good relationships with journalists, editors and other media employees and their continuous nurturing.

The media and the public expect transparency, accessibility and continuity in the provision of information from all judicial institutions, including courts.

When conducting proceedings before your court that attract particular attention of the media and the public, it is crucial for the public confidence in the work of the court that the relevant person of the court provides the media and the public with timely, accurate, reliable and comprehensive information on relevant facts concerning the specific proceeding, while also taking care to protect the integrity of all persons involved in the proceeding.

We communicate with the media in different ways, depending on the message we want to convey and the type of media we send the message to. Some of the most popular communication tools we use in media relations are: announcements and press releases, media kits, press conferences, informal meetings , briefings, interviews, statements, videos, press centres on the official website, surveys ...

The results we want or expect also depend on the quality of communication, primarily the use of communication tools and channels.

Through this document, a number of practical tips and examples of quality use of various communication tools are offered for the purpose of informing the public, creating a an objective and correct image and publicity, presenting the results of work, but also establishing good relations with the media.



WRITING AND DISTRIBUTING PRESS RELEASES - CHECKLIST

Press release is the most common communication tool of public institutions with the media and the public, which, if delivered correctly and in a timely manner, can achieve the desired effect.

Press release structure and general information

In order for a press release to be interesting, it must contain news, something significantly new and relevant for the moment. You should not write a press release, you should write a news.

How to achieve the desired form of communication?

The irreplaceable rule of writing news is the 5W + 1H. This means that journalistic rules say that if you want to write a news, you have to answer 5 questions:

5 W + 1 H	
WHO	is the subject of a story, who is it about?
WHAT	is the topic of a story?
WHEN	did the event take place (or will take place)?
WHERE	did the event take place (or will take place)?
WHY	is this information important / what is the cause of the event that is in the information?
+	
HOW	did it happen?

5W+1H

The answers to these questions should be found in the opening paragraph of the press release.

The structure of the press release is similar to the news report and the “inverted pyramid” rule is recommended.

- The first paragraph of the announcement should contain the most important information (news);;
- The following paragraphs expand this most important information and provide additional details in the order of their importance
- The least important information is at the end of the statement.

**Who? What? When?
Where? How?**

**Other relevant
information**

**Additional
info**



Press release title

The title is crucial whether the text will be read or not and also for the media. The editors and journalists most often assess whether to pay more or less attention to a delivered press release on the basis of the title. Due to an inadequate title it can often happen that the press release you have sent remains unread or unobserved. Thus, coming up with a title requires a lot of attention.

The title of the press release should be concise, and it should be possible to clearly determine the content and topic of the press release. **The case number and other formal elements should not be mentioned in the title of the press release.**

“The title should be short, clear and eye-catching and it has to bring novelty.”

Examples of titles:

An example of a title that does not follow the above rules:

NOTICE TO PARTIES „A Court Settlement Week.“

An example of a title that will draw a lot of attention:

A court settlement week from 9 to 25 September – solve the dispute faster!

Introductory information

Every press release in its introductory part should contain key information about the context and essence of the information to be shared with the media and the public.

In cases that attract particular media attention, you will most often need to communicate information to the media more than once through press releases. In these situations, it is wrong to believe that the person reading the press release has previously read all other statements related to a particular case. That is why the introductory part of the press release should offer the latest information, and offer additional links and clarifications below.

Press release content

In this part of the press release, it is necessary to present comprehensive information about the facts that you want to share with the media and the public. Regardless of whether it is the disclosure of information related to a particular court decision or a particular procedural situation that is ongoing, this part of the press release should offer the media information that is crucial for proper understanding of a specific situation, in a clear, understandable manner and without unnecessary formalism. Whenever possible, when writing a statement, it is desirable to emphasize the role of the court in a particular procedural situation or proceedings. It is wrong to assume that a person who will write a media news or create a TV report based on the submitted press release is familiar with the things that the judge implies.

When do we write a press release, information for the media?

We write a press release when we have something new to say to the media or the public:

- after organized event
- after hearing, trial, rendering judgement
- legislative amendments
- changes in the work of institutions of public interest
- introduction of novelties, new services, rules ...

When do we send a press release?

The timeliness of sending a press release is one of the key parameters on which it depends whether we will achieve desired objective with the message.

When sending a press release, it is necessary to take account of:

- that the statement is distributed immediately after the event, the end of the trial, the judgement rendering, the hearing ...
- the dates and days of the week when you send the press release. Try to avoid holidays, significant dates, commemorations and anything that may occupy media attention and put your information / press release out of focus.

Difference between an announcement and a press release

An announcement form is most often used when inviting journalists to cover an event organized by the court or prior to the press release.



The announcement form contains basic information about the venue and time, organizer and topic, while the press release contains additional information and is usually sent after the end of an event, activity, to publish a statement or take position on an issue, to give general information or to supplement latest news..

How to write a good press release?

Press release has to be grammatically correct and understandable

- Sentences and paragraphs in a press release should be short so that the editor or journalist can review them quickly.
- They should not contain jargon, abbreviations, unexplained details or clichés.
- Press release should be written using words and phrases of daily use, which are understandable to every member of society.
- It is recommended to avoid dry introductions, such as: On 15 August 2020 the court held... or Today, the court has presented to the journalists the details of case number 8542, which refers to... or...

“Give journalists the most important information immediately ”



Stating the initials or names of the parties to the proceedings and law articles

- When stating the identity of the parties to the court proceedings, it is recommended to apply the rules defined in the Guidelines for Publishing Court and Prosecutorial Decisions on websites of judicial institutions, that the HJPC BiH adopted in 2014.
- Since it is a document that can be changed, the principles of publishing the identity in a press release should be harmonised with the potential changes of the initial document.
- Law articles need not be stated in a press release. The editors and journalists, should a need arise, will additionally research specific court cases, judgements, decisions on the basis of the press release...



Technical specifications of a press release

- A press release should be concise, clear and focused on the information to be shared with the media and the public and should not exceed one A4 page (font 12, normal line spacing).
- It is recommended to separate paragraphs for easier and faster reading of the press release.
- Double spacing between paragraphs.
- Plain paper, preferably containing a memorandum with the name and address of the organization at the top.
- Only print on one side of the page.



The following data are at the top of the standard press release page:

- Date of publication of the press release;
- Name, telephone and fax numbers and e-mail address of the contact person;
- Publication time, if an indication is required that they may not be published before a certain deadline, so that journalists have time to read the materials and process the information, which is important if the story is complex. In that case, write “DO NOT PUBLISH BEFORE” and the date and exact time when the information may be released to the public;
- The headline, which summarizes the news from the press release, which attracts attention should be further emphasized.

How should a press release look like when it is a response to a crisis situation?

When a press release is a response to a current crisis situation, bear in mind that the journalists expect you to tell them:

- What happened?
- What was the reason for the crisis situation?
- What is being done to overcome the crisis?

What is important?

- That the press release is a sort of a response to a crisis situation. That you send the press release on time – react immediately! The response must be quick, clear and open;
- That you present only correct information;
- No ambiguous communication;
- The press release must have the tone adjusted to the current situation (no going into discussions, personal showdowns, attacks); the first reaction in the crisis situation dictates the tone for the next communication.

How to distribute the press release?

The most efficient way to send press releases to the media is via email. When publishing press releases on the website is accompanied by sending the media the press releases via email, we can then expect the information to be disseminated more efficiently.

Journalists receive large numbers of press releases every day, and it is therefore important to take all necessary steps to ensure that the editor/journalist reads and publishes your press release.

- Creating a mailing list with the addresses of all media relevant for your court, including the local media;
- When sending out an e-mail, use BCC for addresses (do not share your mailing list with other users);
- E-mail title should correspond to the title of the release, avoid titles such as ‘press release, media release’; e-mail subject ought to attract the editor/journalist’s attention;

- Attach relevant photographs, videos or other content, if you have it, to the e-mail;
- Pay attention to the size of the attached files, because some media have restrictions on the file size.



Information that a press release must contain

Contact details: A press release must have contact details, including the contact person's full name, telephone number, and e-mail address of the person that can provide additional information to the media.

Case number: If the press release refers to specific court proceedings, the case number needs to be provided so as to facilitate the media in potentially applying for access to information in line with the relevant legislation.

Additional information

Instruction on access to information under a court's control must be clearly posted on the court's web page. If technically feasible, a press release published on the court's web page should contain a **link** to the referenced information.

Additionally, a court's web page should contain a visible Glossary of legal terms for journalists, whereas a press release, if technically feasible, should have a **link** to the Glossary.

An example of a press release:

Header: Deliver on the court memorandum.

Footer: Write the contacts of the court if the court memorandum does not contain the court contacts (or the contacts of the person designated for media communication differ from the court contacts on the memorandum) then write the contacts for the media.

Press Release

A Court Settlement Week from 23 May to 3 June in courts in BiH – solve the dispute faster and cheaper!

(Sarajevo, 20 May 2022) In all first instance and second instance courts in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the period between 23 May and 3 June 2022, at the initiative of the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a Court Settlement Week will be held during which the parties can resolve their disputes in a faster and more economical way.

It is a possibility to resolve the court dispute faster, especially in cases of payment of utilities and similar services of small value, payment of debts and monetary claims, damage compensation, division of assets and properties in co-ownership, regulation of boundary lines, material obligations, family disputes and alimony disputes and other.

By closing an agreement that has the same legal power as the court judgement, both the parties and court are spared of long court proceedings, unnecessary obtaining and presenting of evidence, postponement of hearings, a long settlement procedure, potential second instance procedure and a number of additional costs of regular court proceedings are thus avoided.

The interested parties who wish to resolve their disputes by court settlement may contact the court through their representative or in agreement with the opposing party in writing or propose closing the court settlement otherwise. It is important to emphasise that the parties can close a court settlement regardless of the period of the Court Settlement Week.

An intense application of this concept would significantly relieve the judicial institutions of the burden, which would simultaneously mean less cost for the parties to the court procedure, but also faster access to justice for the citizens and business subjects.

Starting with 2016, the court settlement weeks are implemented by the HJPC BiH in cooperation with all the first instance and second instance courts in BiH with the aim to promote court settlement as a peaceful, faster and more economical way to resolve disputes. **For all additional information, please contact:**

Ana Anić, Public Relations Officer

Tel: 035 111 222

E-mail: ana.anic@pravosudje.ba

Example of an announcement

Media Advisory **Open Doors Day for the Media**

The High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina is organising an Open Doors Day for the Media, during which current information about the work of the Council and current activities will be presented.

The Open Doors Day will be held:

on Wednesday, 17 November 2021
the HJPC BiH building, beginning at 11:00 hours

A presentation of the current information about the work of the HJPC BiH is planned, as well as the announcement of the event Court Settlement Week.

The information will also be presented on the activities that the HJPC BiH has conducted thus far to improve the current communication practice and increase transparency through the Improving Court Efficiency and Accountability of Judges and Prosecutors in BiH Project, which is being implemented in cooperation with the Swedish National Courts Administration.

After the presentation of all the relevant information, an informal part of socialising with the journalists is planned, in order to additionally identify segments for improvement of the cooperation between the media and judicial institutions.

During the event, the attendees will be addressed by:

For all additional information, please contact:

Ana Anić

Public Relations Officer

Tel: 035 111 222

E-mail: ana.anic@pravosudje.ba



MEDIA INTERVIEWS/STATEMENTS – CHECKLIST

Interview, just like a media statement, is a type of a public appearance. The difference between an interview and a media statement is the length and the type of broadcasting, however, both require mental and physical preparation, if we are looking to achieve results.

Manner and intensity of preparations depends on the type of media where the interview or the statement will be broadcast.

Preparation and manner of conducting an interview is not the same for TV, radio, or print media.

“Preparation is the key to any successful public appearance!”

Preparation for a public appearance:

- Identify the media outlet
- Assess the type of audience
- Assess what you can and wish to achieve with the appearance/what message you wish to convey

When contacted by a journalist or a media outlet, try to be thorough in learning about the reasons behind the media’s interest and the details that might be the subject of media’s special attention.

Try to assume which questions might be asked during the interview, so you are better prepared, or simply ask the editor/journalist to send you the questions.

Think how you should phrase your answers to convey a comprehensive, correct and precise information and reduce the possibility of misinterpretation.

If you have no experience with public appearances, try to rehearse answering the expected questions. With time, this practice will help you build self-confidence when making public appearances.

If you believe that a certain fact needs to be particularly highlighted, for full understanding of a specific question, think about the context (answer to which expected question) best suited for relaying the fact to the media.

Always try to make your answers focused on the essence of the questions that drew special media and public attention and try not to digress and thus make room misinterpretations.

If you are unable to answer a question, try to explain this to your interlocutor clearly and precisely. “No comment” should never be an option for an answer.

Try to be pleasant when conversing, but take a decisive attitude.

How to prepare a good media statement?

- Statement is format not longer than 45 seconds (do your best to say anything that matters within this timeframe)
- Make the answers short
- Media statement is usually a commentary of a current affair, a statement of views/position of an institution...
- Present the key message at the very beginning
- Occasionally you will find yourself in a situation where several speakers are giving a statement to the media. In that case, repeat the essence of your message to increase its chances of appearing as the main topic.
- Speak concisely
- Do not use long sentences (avoid the possibility of having the answer “taken” out of context)
- Always have a phrase, a conclusion... something the media will “catch on” (something current, attractive to the media, something that will attract public attention)
- Do not use phrases such as: as I said earlier... time indications (you don't know when the statement will be broadcasted)
- If you are speaking before several journalists, do not address them by first name if you do not know each and every one of them.



TV interview tips

- Study the content and style of the show inviting you as a guest;
- Think about the audience that will watch the show;
- Think about the journalist, the editor (is (s)he provocative, what can you expect?);
- Write a maximum of three things we want to point out before the appearance;
- Don't let them “drag” you to other topics!
- Never use unverified information;
- Review the most important current media topics;
- Adjust clothing;
- Nonverbal communication;
- Maintain a professional relationship with the journalist/editor, regardless of potential previous acquaintance;
- Avoid uncontrolled reactions, unless you are the only interlocutor (do not let the responses of other participants prevent you from conveying the message in the desired way).

Radio station interview tips

Determine what you want to say during the interview;

- Use informal, “everyday” language;
- Do not use complicated legal/professional terms;
- Do not use jargon;
- Do not talk as if you were in a meeting or addressing a gathering;
- Use anecdotes/stories (to keep the listeners' attention);

Remember, a radio interview offers the opportunity for the public to only hear you. They do not see you and you cannot complement the verbal communication with the non-verbal one. Therefore, make your speech interesting enough to hold attention.

Interview for the print media

Journalists working in the print media usually send you interview questions by e-mail, after which they paraphrase or copy your answers in full.

It is important that:

- you are aware in what format your statement or interview will be relayed;
- you know how much space it will occupy (the length of your answers depends on that);
- be clear when giving answers;
- do not avoid being photographed by a journalist for the needs of a statement or interview;
- request authorization of the text in order to be able to check the accuracy of the stated/relayed data

What if you are asked a question you do not have an answer to or do not want to answer?

There is a chance that questions and claims may arise during the interview that could jeopardize the conveying of the desired message. In this case, the goal is to have the conversation back on track allowing you to tell what you came to tell and return the communication in the desired direction.

How?

Use the so-called bridging phrases. Of course, bridging techniques are not the only method of diverting attention from unwanted questions, nor should they always be used, but they can serve as a method to successfully send the desired message.

Examples of bridging phrases:

1. **Give me an example “...for example...”**
In a situation where a journalist/editor states that the public does not trust the work of judicial institutions, you answer: “we are doing everything to change such a perception. For example, recent research suggests certain progress....”
 2. **Suggest viewing the situation in a broader context**
A journalist points out that there is too much corruption in your court, and you answer: “The problem exists, but the problem of corruption is only one aspect, let’s look at things in a broader context...”
 3. **Draw the attention to another issue**
If a journalist points out a specific issue, turn the attention to a problem that is affirmative for you in the following way: “... that is not the real issue. The real issue is ...”
 4. **Suggest another way of looking at the issue**
“... Let’s look at it from a different angle ...”, after which you divert the course of communication to the desired direction and highlight information and messages of relevance to you.
-



PRESS CONFERENCE CHECKLIST

A press conference is the most demanding form of media relation and we must have a reason for organizing it, that is, you must have something important to publish.

The goal of a press conference can be to publish something, to present results, analyses, conclusions, data...

What do you need for a successful press conference?

- Check if the news is truly very important/determine the topic of the conference;
- Select the venue of the conference;
- Choose the time of the conference;
- Arrange the space;
- Inform journalists/media information about the press conference;
- Invitation to the media should contain: time and place of the conference, the reason for organising the press conference, full names of the speakers. Announcement for the media should be short and simple and contain basic information. A press release is best sent 24 to 48 hours in advance.
- Appoint a person to moderate the conference (moderator)
- Designate persons to address journalists (speakers)
- Prepare material for journalists
- Have prepared information for the media, no more than two or three pages long and secure enough copies for all journalists. This way, you give journalists/editors additional information, but also increase your chances of them conveying the information to the public. Part of the information can be reports, research results...

What should be the course of a press conference?

- Welcome the journalists, prepare a list for journalists and other visitors;
- at the beginning, specify how long the conference will last and introduce the speakers;
- Give presentations, taking care that speeches are short;
- Provide sufficient time for journalists' questions;
- Distribute written material;

How to choose a venue for a press conference?

- Choose a practical, easily accessible place,
- With enough room for media representatives and their equipment,
- With appropriate lighting and sound equipment,
- That can provide space for cameras
- Brand the space behind the speaker (place banners or other features that are part of your visual identity)

How to define the day and time of a press conference?

Think about the dates and days of the week when scheduling a press conference. Make sure that the day of the press conference does not conflict with holidays, important dates.

- Previous experiences and practice has shown that Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays are recommended as the most suitable days for organizing events.
- A press conference should not be scheduled before 10:00 and after 14:00.
- Be aware of the time you have available. A press conference should not last longer than 30 minutes
- Make sure that in addition to the time for speakers, you also leave enough time for journalists' questions

Tips for organising a successful press conference?

- Start the press conference at the scheduled time, don't be late
- Do not give individual interviews for broadcasting to the media or newspapers before you start, because that way you may give the impression of favouring certain media, which does not benefit you in any way in building good relations with the media. Individual statements can be made after the conference.
- Place a table with materials for journalists and promotional materials, as well as the list of media representatives, next to the entrance to the room.
- Designate a person who will provide the media with all the necessary information and be at their disposal, if necessary.

What if no one shows up for the press conference?

Prepare a recording of statements, video material, photos, press release, and send it to journalists.

What to do after the conference?

- Send a press release, video and audio material, and photos to journalists who were not able to attend the press conference
 - Find published information, texts and media coverage from the conference (keep records of media appearances)
 - Analyse your performance - this will allow you to detect shortcomings, omissions, but also make improvements
-



Tabular overview of the key steps for organising and holding a press conference:

Preparation	After the press conference
Set the date and place of conference (make sure that there are no other interesting events at that time to draw media attention)	Send a press release and other materials to the media outlets who were absent
Adjust the room (make room for the speakers, journalists and the cameras, brand the room...)	Record the number of media articles about the press conference and reported information
Send the media advisory on time to the media	
Determine the speakers and moderator	
Prepare all the necessary materials for the journalists	
Collect the contacts of the present journalists and editors	



TIPS AND TRICKS

Recommendation during TV interview

- Wear glittery clothing, clothing with thin stripes, squares or dots
- Wear large jewellery, reflective jewellery or jewellery that makes sound when you move. All this can distract the viewers and prevent you from conveying the desired message
- If the interview is taking place in a TV studio, take care to sit comfortably to avoid fidgeting and undesired non-verbal communication
- Wearing bright colours is not recommended
- The hair must not cover the face
- If you are giving a statement while standing, do not sway or swing, keep a firm and stable posture
- When giving a statement to the media, look at the journalist who is standing in front of the camera or at the camera

Radio



- Do not make mechanical clicking sounds (tapping with a pen or clicking it)
- Pay attention to the proximity of the microphone
- Avoid fillers
- Make sure you have water available during the interview

Online and Print

- If you submit your own photo for the purpose of publishing it in the media, make sure that it is a business photograph, not from a private album and make sure it does not jeopardize your credibility.

Press conference

- If you do not have an answer to a question, or if you consider the question inappropriate, invite the journalist to discuss the topic later.
 - Take care of non-verbal communication, we speak with the body as much as with the speech apparatus.
-

