



EUROPEAN COMMISSION - PRESS RELEASE

Headline/Title – short, active, eye-catching

Make it eye-catching. Capture news value to sell the story. Keep it short - one line's better than two. Make something happen – use a verb. (The Commission ACTS, DOES something.) Focus on substance, not procedure. Avoid jargon, acronyms. Indicate the topic/portfolio at the beginning, ex: 'Merger case – XXXX'

Body

Guideline for length: The shorter, the better. Three or four paragraphs are often enough for the body of a press release. They should be publishable as they stand. Journalists who want to go further will develop your material and 'own' it by asking questions relevant to their readers and going into background available on the second page of the press release as well as from the sources given below your rapid digest.

Start with dateline, eg BRUSSELS, 14 January 2010 –

Best practice is to locate story in time and place. Current style is to use 'today'. This has to be read in conjunction with a date elsewhere on the press release and automatically becomes out-of-date in 24 hours, though the word 'today' persists in both web and print versions.

Introduction: Summarise the news. Go straight to the point. If journalists cannot see news value instantly, the press release will not be used. Keep sentences short and simple. Keep it interesting and easy to understand. Journalists scan introductions, so aim to answer their questions immediately and concisely – who? what? why? where? when? how? The introduction should ideally stand on its own.

Development: Expand on the introduction with examples, key figures, key dates. Use details that back up the introduction. What best illustrates the story? Show, don't tell. Do not try to pack everything into a press release. Cherry-picking to capture interest in an event is its purpose.

Quotation: Optional, but recommended. Enables journalists to source a story to a Commissioner rather than a press release. Draft quotes in 'spoken', not administrative language. Read them out to 'hear' if they work as something that is said. Keep them short. The quote should be good enough to be copied and pasted into the reporter's story. The quote should illustrate why the issue is important. **Good quotes add colour** and show Commissioners as people who want to do something about the issue – to improve life in Europe! Write your quote in *italics*.

More follows – *add these words at the end of your text, ranged right, so that the reader knows there are more details on the back of the printed sheet.*

Contact – details of people to contact – name(s), phone, email, at foot of page 1

IP/XX/XXX

(in a web-based format: click-through)

Substance

- Elaborates further details on the content
- Answer further aspects of questions like "What's the issue? Who will benefit and how? Why does action have to be taken by the EU? What exactly will change?"
- Add charts or other secondary details
- Add hyperlinks to related documents

Procedure / What's next?

- Elaborates details of procedure
- Looks forward to next steps
- Recalls history of the initiative: previous steps



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