



# Communications toolkit

## Campaigning for trans rights



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# Communications toolkit

## Campaigning for trans rights

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TGEU is a member-based organisation working to strengthen the rights and wellbeing of trans people in Europe and Central Asia.



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# Introduction to communications and campaigning

Communication is the process of sharing or exchange of ideas, information, knowledge, attitude, or feeling among two or more persons through certain signs and symbols. Communication, in simple words, means the transmission of a message or idea from the sender to the receiver. The sender may be a person or a group of persons, who transfer thoughts or ideas to a destination. The destination may also be an individual or group that receives the messages.

Campaigning, on the other hand, is a series of planned and integrated activities within a set timescale, that motivates action and support for a change in national/local government policy, business practice, and/or individual behaviours in order to achieve specific objective(s). Campaigns can inspire people to take further action, in addition to helping them understand the depth of the problem—and this all adds up to real change. They are a challenge against the unacceptable.

A campaigner sees something that they want to change and goes about trying to do that. All over the world, every single day, people are campaigning for things they believe in. Some of the biggest transformations we've seen throughout history have been brought about by passionate people working together.

As trans people, we unfortunately live in a world where our rights and humanity are constantly under attack. In order for us to advocate for our rights, we have to be able to master the art of communications and campaigning.

That's why we have put together this toolkit: to take you through the starting points of developing good communication and campaigning skills. It is important to highlight that some of the tips and terminology are mostly applicable to the English language. We hope you find this toolkit useful. Don't hesitate to get in touch with us at [comms@tgeu.org](mailto:comms@tgeu.org) if you have any further questions.

## DO'S AND DON'TS OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

Good communications skills are essential for us as a trans movement to achieve our rights and ensure that everyone in our communities is represented. At its core, effective communication is about ensuring that what we want to say is interpreted correctly by the recipient of the message. While this may sound easy to accomplish, it's actually quite tough. It's a process typically filled with obstacles largely arising from human differences in perspectives and experiences.

Communication is difficult, both verbally and in written form. As a result, we often struggle to communicate thoughts and ideas in the way we intend, which leads recipients to misinterpret or misunderstand our core message. As a matter of fact, even when we agree with another party, miscommunication can lead to the feeling of confusion or frustration.

Some of the ways to develop good communications skills include:

DON'T	DO
<p><b>Assume.</b></p> <p>Never assume that the other side thinks the same way you do or will approach the situation the same way you would. Empathy is one of the most important skills of any strong communicator. It starts with being aware of your own emotions and biases, and progresses to being aware of the other parties.</p>	<p><b>Listen first, speak last.</b></p> <p>First and foremost, in order to be an effective communicator you have to be an effective listener. Don't just react or respond to appear you're listening. There is a very big difference between listening to understand and listening to respond.</p>

### **Have one-sided conversations.**

Whenever possible, engage the other side. This is naturally very difficult for most of us, but remember to listen, ask questions and demonstrate genuine curiosity. If you think about the best conversations you've been involved in, it probably involved you feeling heard and in-tune with one another. This can only occur when it's two-sided – both sides are engaged and interested. Keep this in mind next time you are approaching any conversation, especially a challenging one.

### **Communicate with confident and clear voice.**

Confidence comes with experience. However, one can also develop confidence through preparation. Next time you have a difficult or sensitive message to communicate, script it out. Write down what you want to say. Take a step away from your notes and then return with a fresh perspective to edit. Try role-playing in your head, out loud, or with a friend/colleague. This process will help fine tune your message, increase your confidence and, ultimately, help you deliver your message with more conviction.

### **Leave people out.**

Whenever you use language that excludes a certain part of a population, you are already losing the argument. It has been proven time and again that communication that excludes doesn't work.

### **Be as inclusive as possible in the way you communicate.**

For example, in order to make it easier for neurodivergent people to understand you properly, avoid long sentences, ambiguity, and vagueness; be clear and precise as much as possible.

# Strategising and planning

Trans rights organisations and activists are increasingly using tools for communication and campaigning both online and in-person. However, in many cases, their use is not linked to the overall aims and objectives of our organisation, especially the change that we intend to see happening in our communities. Often, the change and how we will reach that point – meaning the strategy – are not clearly defined. Most grassroots trans-led organisations do not have the means to develop a strategy due to lack of funding and capacities.

What is a campaign strategy? A campaign can be seen as an organised and purposeful effort to create change, and it should be guided by thoughtful planning. Before taking action, successful campaigners learn as much as possible about:

- What is the existing situation?
- Who is affected by the issue, both positively and negatively?
- What changes could improve the situation?
- What resources, tactics, and tools are available to implement a campaign that will address the issue?



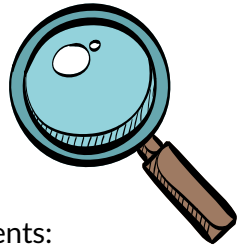
This knowledge is crucial to develop the strategy that will guide us in planning, implementing, disseminating, monitoring, evaluating, and improving our campaigns.

## PLANNING OUR CAMPAIGN

Campaigning is about communicating, and communication is about influencing (and being influenced by) other people. While before campaigning may have been a one-way activity, successful campaigns today almost always include a two-way communications process.

In building a strategy, four very basic questions need to be asked:

- What do you want to change?
- Who has the power to make that change?
- What can convince them to make the change?
- What should you do to persuade them?



Our communications plan need the following elements:

- Clearly define what you want to achieve
- Know who your audiences are. Who do you want to influence? Why? How much power do they have to help you achieve the change that you want to happen?
- Be very clear in your message
- Be creative and innovative when you choose the channels and tools to communicate your message

A communications plan for a campaign is important because it can:

- Guide how to implement the campaign
- Make it easier to track the campaign performance
- Make it easier to make changes to the campaign
- Show different ways or tools to communicate your message

## COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

Here are some basic elements of a campaign communication plan:

**1. Clearly define what you want to achieve by having a clear set of goals and objectives.** The campaign goal is the “big” change that we want to achieve over a relatively longer period of time and usually described in a more ambitious language. A campaign may have one or more goals depending on the scale and magnitude of our campaign. If you have more than one goal, make sure that they are related.



Increasing number of organisations are using SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound) objectives. The objective should specific about what it wants to achieve (policy makers will enact laws to enable legal gender recognition on the basis of self-determination), measurable (x number of policy makers), achievable and realistic (if based on an assessment by the group), and time-bound (“by the end of 2023”).

**2. Know your audiences.** Who is our target audience? The trans community? Policy makers? The general public? Do the people we’re trying to reach respond to email? In which social networks are they most active? It is important to have information to make informed decisions on how we’re messaging.

Campaign audiences can be categorised either as “decision makers” or “opinion or influence formers”. Decision makers are people who have the formal mandate and power to enact the change that we want to achieve. These could be elected officials or appointed officials in the government. Opinion or influence formers are individuals or groups who may have no formal authority or power but are nonetheless influential. These could be our allies or our adversaries – people or institutions who are opposed to our agenda because it conflicts with their interests.

Our campaign plan has to reflect who are the decision makers and the opinion/influence formers you want to reach, and who you aim to reach first and later. For example, in order to reach a particular decision maker you may have to work through an influential person or institution first. Or you may have to reach both the decision makers and the influential but adversarial groups around them at the same time. It is very important to note that those who will benefit from your campaign, e.g. the trans communities that you serve, can also become a very influential campaign voice. Always include in your campaign plan how to build their capacities and enable them to become an important part of your campaign.

**3. Be clear in your message.** Your campaign communication plan needs to formulate very explicitly what your key messages are. These messages must be distinct, clear, explicit and are directly linked to your goals and objectives. They should contain the following:

- What is the problem?
- What solution are you proposing?
- What action do you want your allies and targets to take?

**4. Be creative and innovative when you choose the channels and tools to communicate your message.** When campaigners want to influence a decision maker, they have basically two options:

Direct influence: An example of this is lobbying with authorities.

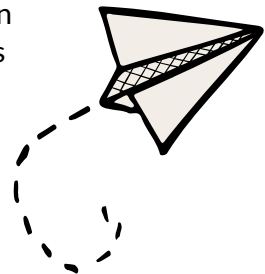
Indirect influence: Where one turns to a part of the “public” to gain support for one’s case, as in building alliances and shaping public opinion.

The channels and tools to communicate campaign goals and objectives can take the form of face-to-face or virtual activities.

When selecting the forms or channels to communicate a campaign it is important to consider the following questions:

- What tools/channels are accessible and available to you and your allies?
- What tools/channels will reach your priority audiences?
- What tools/channels will widen the reach of your campaign?

Communications materials such as this toolkit can help guide you in managing your communications efforts and developing campaigns.



The Movement Advancement Project has developed a set of research-based resources designed to help shape discussions around key issues of importance to LGBTQ people.<sup>1</sup> OneCause has compiled a guide to planning and hosting your own awareness campaign.<sup>2</sup> SOGI-campaigns has a platform with free online courses to help you find the right message to move your audience.<sup>3</sup>

TGEU has developed a paper<sup>4</sup> with information and speaking points to help trans activists in Europe in their efforts to combat anti-trans narratives and actors. TGEU also organised the Trans Leaders Academy in 2021, the first-ever e-learning platform for emerging trans activists in Europe. The session on Strategic Communications was developed by Mina Jack Tolu; it provided tips and tools to understand the intersections between media ethics and practice, and communicating about trans issues.<sup>5</sup>

## TIME MANAGEMENT

The ability to efficiently plan, execute, and follow up on your communication efforts is crucial. Organising an online campaign takes up a lot of time.

Here are some tips for improving your time management skills while planning and executing a campaign:

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<sup>1</sup> See: [lgbtmap.org/effective-messaging/talking-about-lgbt-issues-series](http://lgbtmap.org/effective-messaging/talking-about-lgbt-issues-series)

<sup>2</sup> See: [onecause.com/blog/awareness-campaigns](http://onecause.com/blog/awareness-campaigns)

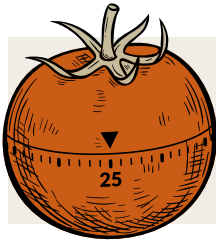
<sup>3</sup> See: [courses.sogicampaigns.org](http://courses.sogicampaigns.org)

<sup>4</sup> GATE, ILGA-Europe, and TGEU (2021) *Trans Rights are Human Rights: Dismantling misconceptions about gender, gender identity, and the human rights of trans people* [tgeu.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/dismantling-misconceptions-about-gender-and-trans-rights-en.pdf](http://tgeu.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/dismantling-misconceptions-about-gender-and-trans-rights-en.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Watch it on our YouTube channel. [youtube.com/watch?v=QQtsHvVqSYw](https://youtube.com/watch?v=QQtsHvVqSYw)

**Prioritise.** Understand which tasks are the most important. Write down all the aspects of the campaign you need to complete and break them into smaller tasks. By identifying the most important components, you will find it easier to organise your time accurately throughout the days, weeks, and months of the duration of the campaign. Be mindful that some tasks are dependent on others, so make sure your list is organised in a way that the tasks that need to be completed first are prioritised so that others can follow.

**Set a time frame.** Allocating a specific amount of time to a specific task can help. It's common to drift away and let a task consume all of our time, or to jump back and forth between different tasks without meaningfully progressing in any of them. Our brain works best when it focuses on one thing at a time. It is helpful to use a countdown timer to ensure you focus on completing the task.



**Pomodoro technique:** break your workday into 25-minute chunks separated by five-minute breaks. After about four rounds, take a longer break of about 15 to 20 minutes.

**Plan in reverse.** When building a campaign, start with the launch's date and work your way backwards to develop your plan. Remember to always plan some buffer time for the unexpected!

**Calendarise posting.** A content calendar will help track the frequency of the posts and the content based on the channels the organisation is active on. This calendar will ensure that you are creating consistent, timely messages across your channels. It also allows you to keep track of what is pending and what has been completed.

**Get help.** Approach your campaign as a collaborative effort. You don't have to do everything yourself. Brainstorm together in the initial stages, assign tasks based on people's strengths, ask others to review

the work and offer input. Use your time as efficiently as possible. Coordinate the campaign but avoid micromanaging.

**Create content in batches.** Plan ahead. Set aside a couple of hours to craft messages and design visuals in batches.

**Use templates.** Instead of manually recreating the structure and layout for each new post or statement, we recommend creating templates and using them throughout the campaign. It will save you time and make sure your visuals are consistent.

**Automate posts.** Automating posts on your website and social media allows you to have the content disseminated when your audience is online the most. It also frees up your time for other tasks and helps you plan better. There are plenty of automation tools you can use for social media, including some free ones for smaller groups.

**Keep learning.** Spending time learning a new skill now can help you save time in the future. For example, learning how to use a graphic design tool will surely save you time in the future.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> As part of our plan to support the trans movement throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, TGEU organised a webinar to assist trans activists in their online activism: “Basics of graphic design for trans activists.” The event was organised in collaboration with the graphic design platform Canva. You can watch the webinar on our YouTube channel: <https://youtu.be/e0lBr7mJesk>

# Inclusive communications

Communications are a critical part of movement building. Inclusive communication strategies that are part of broader organising have the potential to amplify trans people's voices, shift attitudes, and connect our personal struggles in global solidarity. We can use our communications in ways that challenge racism, sexism, misogyny, and the patriarchy, i.e. communications that challenge discriminatory structures, build inclusive societies, and are fair in content and process.

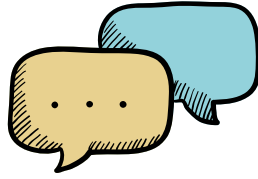


**Keep in mind:** Be strategic about your message and always consider who your audience is. The more a message is framed within the audience's mind frame, the more likely they are to connect. We tend to agree with those we can relate to.

Here are a few key principles to think about when you generate messages for action that are inclusive and diverse:

## Ensure:

- The voices of trans communities who are further marginalised, such as trans women of colour, trans sex workers, trans people living with disabilities, are centred.
- Those who face intersectional marginalisation in our community are not patronised.
- Further marginalised trans communities are not tokenised or put at risk under a potentially-hostile public eye.
- Your communications are as inclusive as possible. For example, you can avoid using pronouns and use *the* or *a* instead (for example, *the document* instead of *her document*).



WHAT NOT TO USE	WHAT TO USE
Blindspot	Blank spot
Blind to	Oblivious to/ignorant about/ unaware of
Stand up/for/by/with; Speak up/out	Take action
Illegal immigrant	Undocumented/irregular immigrant
Non-white	Racialised / People of colour
Blackmail	Extortion
Black market	Illicit market
Blacklist	Blocklist
Chairman, mankind, fireman	Chair, humankind, firefighter

## COMMONLY-USED TERMS

Here are commonly-used terminology TGEU uses in our work:

**Asylum seekers** are those who seek safety from persecution or serious harm in a country other than their own and await a decision on the application for refugee status under relevant international and national instruments.

**Cis(gender)** is a term used to describe people who are not trans and/or gender-diverse.

**Hate crimes** are criminal acts motivated by bias or prejudice towards particular groups of people. This could be based on gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, age, disability, or other characteristics. A hate crime comprises two distinct elements: 1) it is an act that constitutes an offence under the criminal law, irrespective of the perpetrator's motivation; and 2) in committing the crime, the perpetrator acts on the basis of prejudice or bias.

**Migrants** are those who are moving or have moved across an international border or within a state away from their habitual place of residence.

**Non-binary** is a term used to describe those who does not identify exclusively within the categories of "man" or "woman."

**Refugees** are people who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, belonging to a particular social group or political opinions, are outside the country of their nationality and unable or unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country.

**Sex work** is the exchange of sexual services (involving sexual acts) between consenting adults for some form of remuneration, with the terms agreed between the seller and the buyer, in accordance with Amnesty International's sex work policy. Sex workers are adults (aged 18 and older) of all genders who receive money or goods in exchange



for the consensual provision of sexual services, either regularly or occasionally.

**Trans and gender-diverse people** include those with a gender identity that is different from the gender they were assigned at birth and those who wish to portray their gender in a way that differs from the one they were assigned at birth. Among them are those people who feel they have to – or those who prefer/choose to – present themselves in ways that conflict with the social expectations of the gender role assigned to them at birth. They may express this difference through language, clothing, accessories, cosmetics, or body modifications. Trans people and gender-diverse people include, among many others, transsexual and transgender people, trans men and trans women, cross-dressers, agender, multigender, genderqueer, and gender non-binary people, as well as intersex people who relate to or identify as any of the above. Also included are those who self-identify or relate to the terms “trans people” or “gender-diverse people” in international contexts, such as people who see themselves as a part of local, indigenous, or subcultural groups – e.g. *leitisi* in Tonga, *travesti* in some Latin American countries, – and those people in non-binary gender systems who were raised in a different gender than “male” or “female.” Some gender-diverse people feel represented by the umbrella term “trans;” others do not, and vice-versa.

**Transphobia** encompasses a spectrum of violence, discrimination, and negative attitudes towards trans and gender-diverse people or people who transgress or do not conform to social expectations and norms having to do with gender. This includes institutionalised forms of discrimination, criminalisation, pathologisation, and stigmatisation that manifest in various ways, ranging from physical violence, hate speech, insults, and hostile media coverage to more diffuse forms of oppression and social exclusion.

**Undocumented or irregular migrants** are those migrants who, for various reasons, do not have a valid permit to stay in the country in which they live or work. They are also described as migrants in irregular situations or migrants of irregular status.

## ACCESSIBILITY

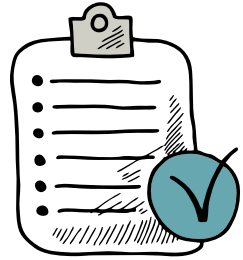
Accessible communication benefits all audiences by making information clear, direct, and easy to understand. It should take into consideration the multiple barriers to accessing information.

Some best practices are:

- Write in a concise and simple style to ensure users understand content quickly and completely. Break the sentence into multiple ones if necessary.
- Avoid clichés, jargon, and pompous language.
- Avoid idioms, colloquial expressions, and culture-specific references.
- Explain all acronyms and avoid abbreviations. Always define an abbreviation or acronym the first time it is used. For example, in a post about the “European and Central Asian Trans Council”, the “Council” can be used after the full name is mentioned.
- Give your audience clear instructions on what to do.
- Use active and descriptive headlines, email subjects, and social media messages.
- Use headings, subheadings, and bulleted lists to make content more accessible for screen readers.
- Use links to provide more information. Those should be explicit in terms of where they are directing the user (i.e. avoid using “click here.”)
- Use enough white space to ensure information is not visually overwhelming and the most important information is highlighted.
- Vary use of multimedia and text to reach different types of learners.
- Use descriptive language tags (known as alt tags) for digital images and documents.

- Offer contact and feedback options via multiple channels.
- If your audience speaks a variety of languages, consider translating or localising some of the content.

There are several recommendations developed to make web content more accessible to people with disabilities. A good place to start is the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 “is designed to apply broadly to different Web technologies now and in the future, and to be testable with a combination of automated testing and human evaluation.”<sup>7</sup>



Another helpful source is the PRCA Accessible Communications Guidelines, produced in an effort to help create more inclusive content and campaigns.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 <https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/>

<sup>8</sup> PRCA Accessible Communications Guidelines. <https://accessible-communications.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/PRCA-accessibility-guidelines-Spring-2022.pdf>

# Developing our messaging

Messages need to reach and persuade our target audiences, not our managers, our favourite donor, the chair of our board, or our most hardened opponent. We need to reach our target audience where they are at, and appeal to their deeply-held values, using language they can relate to.

Effective messaging relies on five core principles:

**1. Use qualitative research (if available) to understand the target audience.** At the preliminary stage of message development, it's more important to understand how people think than to understand their level of support for your issue. How do they talk about your issue? What metaphors and patterns of reasoning do they use? What connections do they form to other issues? What language or words trigger defensive reactions? Clues may come from what's omitted and moments of inconsistency.

**2. Develop messages for testing.** Based on your research, develop messages for testing. This is your time to experiment. Don't test five variations of a similar message; instead, develop different messages and see what works. For example, let's say you want to persuade others to care about trans rights. One approach might ask people to see trans people as fellow humans, as their siblings, partners, friends, and colleagues. Another approach might showcase the violence that trans people face on a daily basis. Appealing to posterity is a very different approach than showing photos of trans people facing violent attacks. Once you determine which approach is more effective, you can start to fine-tune the specific language, imagery, and delivery of your message.

Some questions to ask when drafting a message are:

- What are you asking people to do or think with the campaign?
- Does the message appeal to the deeply held values of the target audience without triggering an opposing frame?

- Is the message appropriate, given the education, perspective, and values held by your target audience?
- Are the messages based on what you know about the opinions of your target audience?
- How will your messages hold after confrontation and criticism?

**3. Test the messages.** Effective messaging isn't about wanting to say something and then just simply saying it; it's about knowing what you want your messages to do (e.g., get people to vote a certain way), and then figuring out what you need to say to make that happen. This takes research, not intuition. The only way to know if your messages will do what you need them to do is to test them. You can test your messages qualitatively or quantitatively. While qualitative message testing gives you insight into how people respond to your messages and why, it doesn't give you any assurance that your broader target audience will respond in the same way. If you want quantitative data (i.e. data that's statistically valid) you can organise a focus group of those in your target audience to see how they think about an issue and respond to your messages (what words do they use, what do they respond positively to), or trying a few ways of saying something on social media to see how people respond.

**4. Develop the messages and the visuals.** Use your message testing results to develop your final messages. Now it's time for fine-tuning and creative execution. At this stage, you know what you're going to say. Now it's a matter of how exactly you'll say it. In an ideal world, you would develop different versions of the visual content and do one last round of testing.

**5. Refine and finalise.** Fine-tune and finalise the visual content that most successfully moved the target audience.

## TIPS

Here are some useful tips when developing your campaign to raise awareness and increase public support for a cause or a policy.

**Collaborate, collaborate, collaborate.** We are stronger together. When developing campaigns about issues that affect other organisations, consider inviting them to develop something together. For instance, if as a trans organisation you want to do something special for World Refugee Day, why not connect with an organisation working for refugees and asylum seekers?

**Be visually consistent.** When executing content and campaigns, consistency in voice and visual formatting is crucial. Visual consistency provides predictability to the audiences so they can focus on our message. Instead of manually recreating the structure and layout for each new post or statement, we recommend creating templates and using them throughout the campaign.

**Entertain, educate, inspire.** There are three good ways to make your message appealing: entertainment, enlightened education, and inspiration. People share things that make them happy or make them want to learn more.

**Tell stories.** Stories have the capacity to build relationships and empathy between groups of people. Stories have the ability to compel people to act and stay involved. They hit people in the heart and help take situations beyond a headline or a fact, turning it into something that remains.

**Use multimedia.** One of the big challenges in creating content is how to illustrate it with videos, photos, or images. It is much more than a pretty face. It builds predictability into content, helping the audience find what they need. Keep in mind that the content is central, so make sure that the visuals you are using support, supplement, or explain the purpose of the message. When using photography and video, be cautious with image manipulation and editing.

**Create shareable resources.** Creating resources that are easily shareable will make it more likely that your audience will do that.

**Call to action.** Tell people what we would like them to do. Offer specific actions for them to take: share, learn, sign up, click, write,

visit, etc. What should your audience do? Campaigns inspire people to take further action, in addition to helping them understand the depth of the problem—and this all adds up to real change.

Finally, make sure you do a final round so that your content can shine.

**Hit the mark.** Review the content one last time. Did we nail the objective? Are key messages clear?

**Get a second opinion.** Find someone to offer feedback. A second set of eyes often offers a new perspective. And do not take suggestions personally—keep an open mind and be flexible to input.

**Check for keywords in titles and headings.** Titles and headings help readers scan and help search engines find our content. Make sure to include relevant keywords in the first few words.

**Search for and remove unnecessary and redundant elements.** It is good for the opening paragraph to summarise the piece at a high level, but look out for repetition and redundancy.

**Pay attention to typos, spelling mistakes, and grammatical errors.** Those squiggly underlines will help eliminate a lot of errors, but spell checkers cannot think. It is up to us to check each suggestion.

**Take a break.** If possible, leave the finished piece alone for a while. Reading it again the next day may help seeing things you missed.

**Evaluate the voice and personality.** Before calling it done, read it one final time. Our writing should be clear, straightforward, and accessible.

# Engaging with the media

Here are some general tips to engage with the media:

**Bring statistics.** The media is often interested in numbers and data. If you have them, bring them and add your analysis. Accurate and evidence-based information will support your message. The journalist will likely see you as a credible source and come back to you.

**Reach out to them on Twitter.** If you read something you like, write them directly and let them know. Take the opportunity to mention other work you have coming up in the future.

**Establish relationships.** Journalists want new stories and contacts as much as we want our stories to be put out there.

**Respond to enquiries promptly.** Journalists often have tight deadlines. Try to respond to their enquiries straightaway. Make it a habit. If you don't know how to answer, let them know and get back to them as soon as possible.

**Monitor what's out there.** Be strategic when subscribing to newsletters and following social media accounts. Go through the news first thing in the morning so that you have time to react.

**Offer exclusives.** Share information in advance through embargoed press releases. Those allow journalists enough time to prepare their articles before you officially publish your content.

**Appreciate their effort.** If you get your piece of news out there, appreciate their effort and support. If you have a good experience, say 'thank you.' Chances are they will contact you again if something new comes up.

Although it can be intimidating to speak to a journalist directly, media engagement can be one of the most effective tools in campaigning. With preparation and practice, media coverage can reflect your campaign's messages and help your cause.



## Before

**Research.** Try to find out what the journalist wants to know in advance, what their bias may be, and who else the journalist may be speaking with. This will help you frame your message. How do you find out? Ask, and read previous articles the journalist has written on the subject.

**Prepare.** Write down all the difficult or potentially sticky questions a journalist may ask, and determine how you will answer them in a positive way. Have a friend role play with you so you can practice answering the questions with confidence.

**Simplify.** Hone your messages to a few key points. Very little of what you say will be used, so make sure your comments will be targeted by creating a simplified, quotable version of your key message.

**Confirm.** Make a quick phone call to the journalist to verify the meeting and offer to send directions to your office or event. These additional steps can save you both from an embarrassing situation that might start your relationship off on the wrong foot.

## During

**Stay “on message.”** Staying on message means making sure that everything you say expresses your message. Those who stay on message control the message. The media can only report what it sees and hears. If you provide nothing but your message, it will repeat only your message. Staying on message is the best way to reach your audience in a manner over which you have control.

**Flag key points.** When you’re speaking, use “flags” to signal key points. Let the journalist know you’re about to make a main point by flagging it with a phrase such as, “the key point is ...” or “the important thing to remember is ...” This helps ensure that journalists won’t miss your key points while making notes about something less important you just said.

**Use bridges to take control.** If a journalist asks you a potentially sticky question, answer it, but bridge it to a message you want to convey. “Yes, but have you considered ...” or “No, but we’ve solved that problem through ...” You don’t even have to answer their question, but respond by saying something like, “That’s a common misperception. What’s important to remember is...”.

**Make it visual.** Use metaphors, stories, and anecdotes to illustrate and simplify your points. These help audiences visualise what you’re talking about.

**Avoid jargon and acronyms.** If your listeners have to decipher it, you’ll lose their attention.

**Be interesting.** If you are passionate about your subject, it will help make a better story. Remember that the journalist is the pipeline to your audience. Help the journalist tell the best story possible.

**Watch casual remarks.** Nothing is really off the record, even if the journalist says it is. Don’t say anything you wouldn’t want to be quoted on to a journalist because those are usually just the juicy tidbits that will end up in public.

**Be prepared for off-topic questions.** If a journalist asks something unrelated to the topic or inappropriate, pivot to what you do want to say. For instance, if someone asks about surgery, say “I get that question a lot, but what’s really important to know is that...” If it is something that you can’t answer immediately, say you’ll get back to them later, and do so promptly.

## After

**Follow up.** Send a note of thanks to the journalist and reiterate any points you want to make. Ask the journalist if you were able to provide them with enough information and offer to assist further. The journalist may not respond before the piece is out, but will appreciate being asked and it will open the door for follow-up articles.

## AWARENESS DATES

Existing national or international awareness dates that directly relate to your work can be used to frame a campaign. For instance, Trans Day of Visibility and Trans Day of Remembrance are opportunities. Research the year ahead and map the awareness dates that can give impulse to your next campaign.

### CASE STUDY: TDoR Campaign

Every November, TGEU develops a campaign for Trans Day of Remembrance to raise awareness of anti-trans violence and the need for trans-inclusive anti-violence strategies. The campaign is based on the data from the Trans Murder Monitoring, and includes the publication of names of trans people murdered in the past year; shareable social media resources for public use; a joint statement; and an English-language video with subtitles in multiple languages.<sup>9</sup>



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<sup>9</sup> You can check out our TDoR resources on <https://tgeu.org/tdor/>

