

Media Representation

Ways to Optimise Media Representation for Groups

How Do You Get Greater Access to the Media?

Offer stories you would like to see, read and listen to. Lots of stories about trans* people are far more interesting than stereotypical ones about surgeries, suffering or sex. What hasn't been heard yet: successful advocacy, health standards, trans* parents, employees, views on trans* equality – lots! Ask around and you will get even more ideas.

Make contact with supportive journalists who might be interested and able to provide greater access to topics on trans*, gender, social movements. Improve their skills, give them training and information, offer them guides to trans*-friendly language, offer them stories and feedback on their work.

Trans activists usually know more about the issues than non-trans* journalists, right?*

Yes, of course. If you are an expert on trans* and equality/gender-related issues, then share your knowledge. Network with allies in the media and educate them through workshops, flyers, informal engagement and exchange. Put this knowledge into practice to support journalists to get as much experience on trans* issues as possible. In some countries where the media engages in some degree of self-regulation, refer to Editors/Journalists Codes of Practice.

Are there other ways to connect with the media rather than just through journalists?

Of course! Other professionals working in the media can also be supportive. Two examples: a layout designer who is aware of trans* issues would choose to use a non-stereotypical image, avoiding the image of a drag queen when talking about trans* people (or even trans* women) and would vary the images in each article. Online newspapers' web administrators could be better informed about transphobic comments. Give

advice on how to influence more positive trans* representation as well.

What if I am asked to be part of a media report on trans?*

Be prepared before engaging with the media. What's the purpose of the report? How well is the journalist prepared? Who else will be asked? Ask for the questions in advance, speak on what you want to talk about. Negotiate beforehand so you can review the article and then agree to it or not. Don't fault other trans* activists on their understandings of trans*-related topics, and keep sight of your common goals.

How to get better connected?

Create or join a network of trans* (and other supportive) journalists – within and across national borders – exchange experiences, work with trade unions, develop topics, write press releases, information leaflets and educational programmes, whatever you think can be done. Produce your own media, increase your knowledge of podcasts, blogs, YouTube channels, upload articles and links. Support journalists to become mentors to trans* people interested in a career in journalism.

Good Practice Examples

👍 Ireland: Human Rights Short film winner, *My Identity*, had a positive effect on media coverage of trans* issues

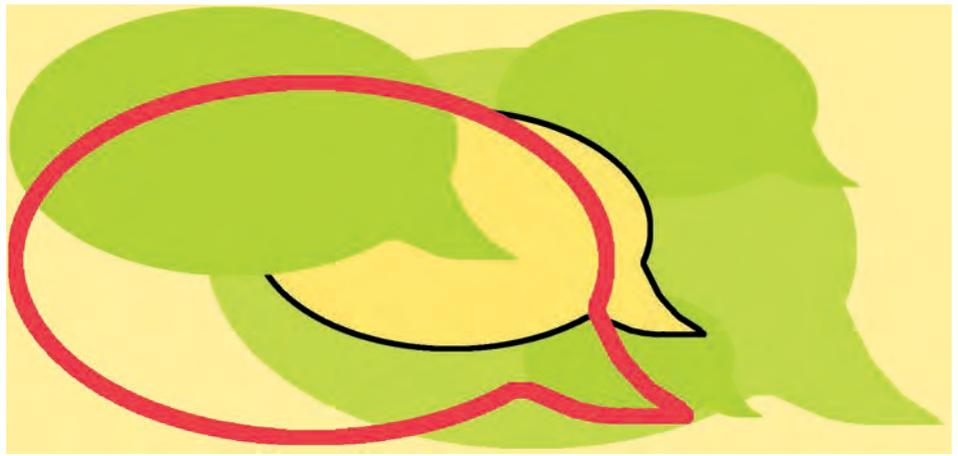
👍 Trans* activists in Switzerland and Germany have published brochures educating journalists and trans* activists

👍 Germany: German Press Council agreed to complaints against transphobic comment on Thomas Beatie in newspaper "taz", new ally established. Subscriptions were cancelled and a demonstration held.

COMMENT**Opportunities for Media Representation and Overcoming Mistrust**

The media seems to be an exclusive sphere that is nearly impossible to gain access to. Many bad practice examples have discouraged trans* people from engaging with media representation: Aren't "they" only keen on sensational stories about sex, surgeries, suffering? Aren't trans* people dependent on journalists' mercy, without any power or influence of our own? And what about countries without media watchdog organisations? In this case: if I make a complaint to press complaint organisations – would they even deal with it? Journalists' lack of preparation and time, poor knowledge, stereotypes... all negatively affect appropriate media representations.

On the other hand: there are many more opportunities than disadvantages. Media representation raises trans* visibility and can show a variety of gender identities. Trans* communities are becoming a stronger social movement worthy of being shown in our diverse variety with our shared common goals, our self understanding and work on equality, success stories, and supporters at various levels from the European Commission to local organisations. Make use of the media to get across new views and experiences that still aren't known by the majority of people in wider society. And finally: through media representation, far greater numbers of people can be informed about trans* issues.

**Letter to the Editor***Advice on How To React*

Don't let transphobic reports in newspapers, on TV or radio make you feel helpless. Even if I am "just" a reader, subscriber, listener or TV watcher, I can react and point out what elements, such as language, image used, headline, underlying attitudes and prejudices, that made a report transphobic (or discriminating towards other social groups such as age, ethnicity, religion...).

Without much work or time needed, a pretty effective tool is to make use of quick responses via online readers' comments on newspaper websites as an answer to transphobic reports (and challenge readers' comments that may follow).

You can also ask groups that support and work for sexual orientation and gender identity social inclusion, other trans* journalists, and grassroots NGO activists for support in making complaints against articles – each "official" header raises interest in the protest and gives it more credibility.

To give a newspaper or media outlet a costly lesson, you can delete subscriptions and encourage your colleagues, friends, family members, and social communities to do so as well – at least tell them about your action and the reasons for it.

Send complaints to the media company's press office and send copies (or email and include them in cc) to organisations that might be interested in the issue as well: journalist trade unions, press complaint bodies, trans* and supportive projects, NGOs working on anti-discrimination, other newspapers. An example is the media watchdog organisation, Trans Media Watch in the UK, which has held successful discussions with BBC and Channel 4 to develop guidelines to combat negative trans* stereotypes on British television.