**Polish Allotment Gardeners in the Media**

**What Works and What to Avoid**

1. **What is the media?**
   1. Definition

The media refers to different types of means of information by which certain content is directed to a very large and diverse audience. The media is represented mainly by the press, radio, television and the internet. The vast majority of the media audience is convinced that the main task of the media is to provide information about events, and most often that is the case. Therefore, very often, the media is considered as honest information institutions. In practice, the media can be, and often are instruments of manipulation. Therefore, it should be noted that very often unreliable information is presented in accordance with the policy of the particular media. It is also important to note that the media should not be completely trusted and the presented information accepted automatically.

The Media have a strong impact on the public opinion, which is why it is often called "**the fourth power**".

1.2 In short the media:

* helps communities to interconnect and be recipients of various information
* is an integral part of each person’s everyday life
* have an enormous impact on the public
* affect our reality
* have a decisive influence on the way we think and behave
* contribute to how events are received/ interpreted

*Note: keep in mind that you cannot accept them automatically*

**II. Types of media discussing allotment gardeners**

We can distinguish three main types of media discussing allotment gardeners:

* **NATIONWIDE**
* **LOCAL**
* **FEDERATION MEDIA**

**1. Nationwide media** - specifically media distributed throughout the country. Their reach and influence is very significant. They cover topics important to allotment gardeners. They have the greatest impact on the public opinion.

The Polish Federation subscribes to a media monitoring service, so that every day it receives a package of materials concerning allotment gardeners that appeared during the day (in the press, radio, television, Internet). From such a report, one can make the following conclusions: the nationwide media refer to the Polish Federation quite positively, however the tone is much more positive in the local media. There are nationwide media that manipulate the information on allotment gardeners, showing them in a distorted perspective. Very often the same event is presented quite differently in two different national newspapers. It depends on the policy of the particular media.

CONCLUSION: do not be an uncritical media recipient.

**2. Local media -** specifically media that appears in selected regions/areas of Poland, they concern any narrow group of people, for example allotment gardeners from a specific garden. Their reach is smaller (compared to the national media), but their impact in the community is quite strong. These media cover more topics concerning allotment gardeners than the nationwide media. There is also a lot more materials with positive overtones.

CONCLUSIONS: the local media should not be underestimated. Very often we forget about them, focusing on cooperating with the nationwide media. Meanwhile, they are equally important.

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|  | **Nationwide media** | **Local media** |
|  | * **write less frequently about allotment gardeners** | * **write more often about allotment gardeners** |
|  | * **coverage has various overtones** | * **coverage has positive overtones** |
|  | * **a few to a dozen materials on allotment gardeners appear within a month** | * **several to almost 10 materials on allotment gardeners appear daily** |

**3. Federation media –** media issued and distributed by the Polish Federation. They are the most important and quickest source of information for allotment gardeners. Their impact is the greatest. They have the greatest reach, communicate vital information and most importantly provide reliable information first hand. They are the chief channel of communication with the allotment gardeners. They cover the most important issues for the allotment community. These are reliable and objective information which is mostly free of charge for allotment gardeners.

**4. SUMMARY**

**4.1 Where do allotment gardeners obtain the most information?**

**Where is the most media coverage about allotment gardeners?**

**4.2 Most important media are the federation media**

**Why?**

* reaches 4 000 000 allotment gardeners, their families and friends
* issued on a regular basis – constant source of information
* largest reach
* show real, reliable, verified information
* provided in an accessible form
* most information appears in printed materials and the Internet
* communicate information with the greatest knowledge of allotment problems

**III. Federation media– what are they?**

3.1 Monthly magazines „działkowiec” („*allotment gardener*”) and „Mój ogródek” („*My small garden*”)

3.2 Zielona Rzeczpospolita („*Green Republic*”)

3.3 Bulletin issued by the Polish Federation

3.4 Informer for allotment gardeners

3.5 Leaflets, posters, brochures, information boards

3.6 Books

3.7 Websites and Social Media

3.8 Video materials (YouTube)

**3.1 Monthly magazine „działkowiec” („*allotment gardener*”)** - is the largest Polish gardening magazine. It has been on the market for 60 years. The magazine has almost 100 pages, and its circulation is 200 000 copies. You can find information on the cultivation of fruits and vegetables, garden development, healthy lifestyle, plant protection, modernization of allotments, fertilization, as well as the most important information on the activities of the Polish Federation. The magazine is constantly changing, combining tradition with new trends, taking the best from each.

**Monthly magazine „Mój ogródek” („*My small garden*”) –** the newest magazine from the "*działkowiec*" publishing house. Available on the market since March 2014. Contains about 60-70 pages. This magazine is co-edited by readers, who can present their allotments and share their gardening knowledge, passion, experience. One of the few magazines of this type in Poland.

**3.2. Zielona Rzeczpospolita („*Green Republic*”) –** the only newspaper in Poland issued free of charge for allotment gardeners. Issued since 2013 by the National Council of the Polish Federation. Circulation is 200 000 copies. Free of charge, distributed to all allotment gardens. Every allotment gardener has access to this newspaper. It is also available for download from the federations website. The newspaper publishes the most important information on the current situation of the gardens and Federation. As a result the allotments gardeners receive quick information on the most important events. The only type of newspaper in Poland, dedicated exclusively to the current situation of the allotment community.

3.3**. Informational Bulletin** – annually about 10-12 editions are issued. Every one has from 100 to 120 pages. Circulation is about 10,000 copies. The bulletin contains all the up to date information on what is happening in the Polish Federation. It also serves to publish all the important resolutions, decisions, notices, statements and document templates. It is available free of charge to every gardener from the garden boards. It is also published via website.

**3.4. Informer for allotment gardeners** - issued each month in approximately 16 000 copies. It is distributed free of charge to very allotment garden. This informer is posted on Bulletin Boards in each garden. It contains all the important information on the current situation of the gardens. The information is very short, served in a news form.

**3.5 Leaflets, posters, brochures, information boards -** issued on the occasion of important events that have occurred within the Federation, for example nationwide demonstrations of allotment gardeners, the entry into force of the new law on family allotment gardens. The goal is to reach as many allotment gardeners as possible with fast, easy information. Circulation is usually 150 000 - 200 000 copies. They are distributed free of charge to all gardeners.

**3.6. Books –** dedicated primarily to gardening topics. Prepared specially for users of allotment and private gardeners, who cultivate many different plants on small areas. The authors of the books are exclusively Polish gardeners, scientists and practitioners, cooperating for many years with the Federation, who recommend methods, species and varieties of plants that have been proven in the Polish conditions.

**3.7. Websites and social media – the Federation has approximately 150 websites**

The most important website is the home page of the Polish Federations National Council, which is a updated daily. The information is served in “news” form. If something important happens the information about it immediately appears on the website. The materials are published usually 7 days a week. Sometimes 20 texts per day are even published. The website is visited by about 5,000 people per day. It includes all the important news for allotment gardeners. It is the fastest source of information for them. On the website of the National Council of the Polish Federations many subpages have been created, which allow allotment gardeners to access materials concerning different topics. The most important of them are: news, regional information, information from allotment gardens, announcements, journalism, law, publications, media coverage concerning allotment topics, as well as a subpage in English.

There is also 26 regional websites, more than 100 websites of family allotment gardens, as well as a website of the "*działkowiec*" magazine. There are also special websites concerning important events, such as the effort to introduce the new law on allotment gardens.

**3.8 Video materials** – released on a regular basis, on the occasion of various important events such as congresses, assemblies, the struggle for a new allotment law.

**CONCLUSIONS:** The Polish Federation should release a variety of informational materials for allotment gardeners. It is important that such materials are diverse, regularly issued, but also responsive to the development of current events. If something important happens, the media should be instantly used to quickly reach the allotment gardeners.

**VI. How to effectively use the national and local media?**

1. What action does the Polish Federation undertake?

* there must be a person or persons responsible for media contacts
* the media must have a contact to this person – by @ or telephone
* it is important to maintain a permanent contact
* availability
* openness
* providing interesting news

**IV . What kind of activities are effective? What does the Polish Federation do?**

**1 Regular sending of press releases**

We need to send regular press releases on important events which are taking place in our organization. We need to be aware that they should concern catchy topics that may be of interest to journalists. They must be interesting and contain „*news*” elements.

**1.1 What affects the attractiveness of a press release?**

**Freshness** – each journalist wants to inform about the latest news. If we describe events dating back to few weeks, or those which we can learn from other sources, then the chances of the media interest of our topic dramatically decreases.

**Significance** – you might want to ask yourself: what are the consequences of the information expressed in the press release? Are they important for the readers, or just for us?

**Objectivity** – the goal of a press release is to give the facts, this is not the place for advertisement, promotion, praise or criticism.

**Brevity** – it is the information that is most important, and it is the information that should be remembered. If it is presented along with a number of additional descriptions, statements, unnecessary data, it will lose its strength.

**Uniqueness** – the described facts should have an aspect of uniqueness. Thanks to this we can make the press release take on greater importance.

**2. Organization of press conferences**

Their goal is to give the media important and timely information. Please note that the media are looking for new, interesting and valuable information. The subject of a “*news*” information must be significant events adding something new to the issue.

**3. Interviews – in the press, radio, television**

Representatives of the Polish Federation are regularly invited to television or radio shows as expert commentators. Be sure to never reject such a request by the media and to respond quickly. Do not send a dubious expert to the media. You might want to learn from the journalist what is the subject of the interview, will it be broadcast live, what other participants will be in the studio. It should be considered carefully, who will give the interview and is this person an expert in the field discussed with the journalist.

**4. Writing weekly columns in the press – (cooperation with "*Trybuna*" newspaper)** – It is important to develop and maintain regular relations with the media. For example, the Polish Federation sustains such a cooperation with the “*Trybuna*” newspaper. It involves writing regular (weekly) columns that are published in the newspaper. The texts concern important allotment issues. These publications have a nationwide reach.

**5. Corrections, polemics** – very different information appears in the press about the Polish Federation which is not always true. Such information needs to be corrected by sending an appropriate response to the editorial, the chief editors and authors of the publications. An unreliable article can’t be left without a comment.

**6 Ads –** If there is any important event, then it might be worth to invest in advertising. You should note, however, that ads cannot appear in a random media. It should be known who is the target group of the title where the ad is published, what percentage of readers are allotment gardeners, will the ad be released in a visible place (for the press) or high-band audience (for TV). If it is to be remembered, an add should appear several times.

**7.** **Cooperation with other institutions** – You cannot restrict your activities concerning only allotment gardeners. You might want to establish a cooperation with other institutions. The Polish Federation undertakes such actions.

- For many years, the Polish Federation sponsors events related to allotment gardening, such as gardening fairs, festivals, outdoor events.

- for some years now the Polish Federation has been working with Greenpeace in organizing many initiatives that also involve numerous media. These activities affect the building of a positive image of the national allotment organization.

- the Polish Federation regularly works with many local governments and social organizations.

**V. Summary**

**5.1 What errors to avoid in dealing with the media. What does not work?**

* delayed responses
* providing the media with boring, unimportant information
* providing incorrect, unverified information
* incompetence
* lack of knowledge
* lack of professionalism
* neglecting the relationship with the media

**5.2 . What works in dealing with the media?**

* Keep track of what is written about allotment gardeners in the national and local newspapers
* subscribe to a media monitoring service which will allow access to all the media materials. Draw conclusions from both the positive and negative materials
* Make contacts with journalists, who write positively about allotment gardeners
* Make permanent contacts with the press, offer prepared texts
* Authorize your statements *– it is your right*
* Inspire the creation of media materials
* Quickly respond to incorrect information about allotment topics
* Do not accept automatically what is written by the media
* Work on a positive image - be open to cooperation with other institutions, such as Greenpeace
* Create your own publications – they have the greatest reach and the greatest impact on allotment gardeners
* Provide important information to allotment gardeners as soon as possible -use the internet, leaflets, brochures, and other publications.

**5.3 Summary**

All of the above mentioned ways of communicating with the media are the result of a long-term experience of the Polish Federation. On the basis of our knowledge we can certainly conclude that the cooperation with the media is not easy. It requires a lot of trouble, dedication and effort. However, if we want the media to present us positively, we have to take care of our relations with them.

Not without reason, the media are often referred to as the fourth power. As shown by numerous examples, they can push anyone of the pedestal, even someone who is at the very top. At the same time, however, they can change someone's image from negative to positive. We must remember that it largely depends on our organizations which of these scenarios will apply to us – the allotment gardeners. Fostering positive relations with the media should be a priority of any allotment organization. It is not a feat in doing many things that few know about, the real trick is to make as many people as possible know about our successes and achievements. And that's what we wish for all the allotment federations.