

GUIDELINES

**Basic standards in
relation with media**



**Bureau for the cooperation with media
Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia**

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Basic standards in
relation with media

1. According to the Law on the Police (Article 5), Law on Criminal Proceedings (Article 3), The Law on Public Information and the Law on Free Access to Information of Public Interest, The Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia establishes the basic standards in communication with the media.

GOALS

2. Main goals of the Serbian police in public relations are:

- Transparent and true information on police related events
- informing citizens on police activities
- better understanding of the police role and responsibility through transparent, active and regular media and public campaigns
- organizing meetings with media representatives in order to explain police work
- implementing standard procedure in relation with the media

SCOPE OF WORK

3. When distributing information to a wider audience, the police rely on the media.

The public information should at least include following:

- a. Assisting journalists when reporting from the crime scene
- b. Accessibility of officers and faster response to media requests
- c. Writing and distribution of press releases
- d. Preparing, organizing and assisting in organizing press conferences
- e. Coordinating and authorizing distribution of information on victims, witnesses and suspects

- f. Coordinating and authorizing distribution of information on classified police investigations

3.1. Bureau for the cooperation with the media within Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia is competent to deal with media and its competence are:

- organizing activities related to the public relations in order to increase transparency
- organizing appearance of police officers in the media
- organizing press conferences, interviews and compiling material for appearance in media
- providing timely information to media on police activities and efficiently answers to media requests
- cooperation with other Government's information agencies and media representatives
- analyzing and overseeing media reports on police and commenting when necessary
- updating list of media
- updating list of focal points (persons) in all Mol (Ministry of Interior) organizational units
- participating in all police promoting activities
- following up the community policing project
- maintaining and updating Mol web site

INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

4. All Secretariats of Internal Affairs must have at least one person authorized to cooperate with the media (Spokesperson)
- 4.1. The spokesperson is also to be accessible to media after working hours.

AUTHORITIES

5. The Minister of Interior and Assistant Ministers are authorized to appear in the media.

The Spokesperson has daily, routine contacts with the media

Besides the routine contacts, the Minister, Assistant Ministers, Heads of Secretariats may authorize other police officers to appear in media in certain situations.

After releasing such statements, those persons should inform the Bureau for the cooperation with the media on nature and contest of their appearance in media.

Type of information and authorities to reveal them when appearing in electronic or print media upon journalists' request:

Topics related to the Mol's policy

The Minister and Assistant Ministers

Emergency situations, special investigations, terrorism, serious financial criminal acts

The Minister and Assistant Ministers

Daily communication with journalists on all topics but ones mention above

The Spokesperson or authorized person

Topics related to the public order, traffic safety, fire protection, border police activities

Head of certain Secretariat, Directorate or authorized person (authorized by the Head of department or Head of Sector)

Information related to crime

Head of Secretariat, Directorate or authorized person (authorized by Head of Section at least)

Small crime

Station commander of the certain territory

JOURNALISTS REQUESTS

6. Upon journalists request on specific topic and after consulting with the Head of secretariat, the Spokesperson or authorized person **should send a reply in shortest time, maximum 48 hours since the request was received.**
- 6.2. Upon journalists request on service information (such as number of traffic accident, traffic slow-down, fire, warnings, appeals and etc.), the reply should be immediate and oral. The Spokesperson or authorized person (such as the chief of shift) are competent to reply in such situation.
- 6.1 In cases of **protection of an investigation process or due to similar reason (classified data, etc)** if the journalists request can not be replied, **journalist or editor-in-chief** must be presented with an explanation (The Law on Free Access to Information).

COMMUNICATION WITH THE MEDIA AT THE CRIME SCENE

- 7.1. The journalists will most probably show up at the crime scene if the incident took place at the public place. The police officer securing the crime scene is obliged **to provide citizens and media representatives** with the basic information on ongoing investigation **(The police are investigating the crime scene).**
- 7.2. The journalists must show their ID when officially approaching police officer and have to respect limited movements at the crime scene (remaining

behind the crime scene barrier tape, or if there isn't one, police officer should point the spot where journalists could observe crime scene investigation). **If the video recording is prohibited, the crime scene investigation team leader in cooperation with the prosecutor and investigative judge will explain the reasons for prohibition to media representatives.**

- 7.3. The police officer securing the crime scene will advise media to contact a spokesperson for all further information.**
- 7.4. After the investigation is done, the spokesperson, in cooperation with supervisors (criminal investigation police, traffic police, etc.) and with the approval from the head of secretariat if needed, will **in the shortest time**, provide complete information on the event, making sure that the investigation process is not jeopardized.
- 7.5. When it comes to event that will most probably attract many journalists and wide audience, it is recommended for the spokesperson to appear at the crime scene. After agreeing with supervisors, investigative judge and deputy prosecutor, the spokesperson should provide complete information on the event. If possible, the **information should be distributed after it has been agreed with the investigative judge and the prosecutor.**
- 7.6. Names of deceased, their identity and age will be announced after their family is informed (**Not negotiable**).
- 7.7. In cases of injuries or disability only initials will be announced (name and first letter of the surname, year of birth and wider territory of living. In cases of

criminal activity against children or juvenile victim only age and gender will be announced (five years old child, fourteen years old girl etc).

- 7.8.** Information on material damage will be distributed depending on the nature of the event and the interest of investigation.
- 7.9. Upon journalists' request, the information on the suicide** could be delivered. Having in mind protection of dignity of the person involved and its family, only the victim's initials should be announced.

COMMUNICATING VIA PRESS RELEASE

- 8.1.** When drafting a press release on finalized police investigation, following data could be provided:
- legal qualification and description of criminal offence that was performed
 - time, place and consequences of the criminal offence (amount of the material damage caused by the criminal offence).
 - information on suspects: if they are already arrested and taken to the investigative judge or are still on the run.
 - when the suspect is adult, information contains name and first letter of the surname, year of birth and wider territory of living
 - when the suspect is juvenile, information contains initials, age and wider territory of living.

According to the Law on Criminal Proceedings, if authorized officials are to present a case to the public, they should previously communicate with a prosecutor and investigative judge accountable for investigation and seek an approval.

- 8.2. If there is a higher public interest for a criminal investigation, the information of the **outcomes of the part of investigation** could be announced, making sure the **further process of investigation is not jeopardized**. In such cases the Mol of the Republic of Serbia's Criminal Investigation Directorate or the Bureau for the cooperation with the media should be advised.
- 8.3. Information on the completed criminal investigation will be announced in a short time, no matter whether the suspect is arrested or taken to the investigative judge or criminal charges are submitted as a part of the regular process. **The released information should not jeopardize further investigation process.**
- 8.4. **In cases of more complex criminal investigations, specifically in cases of financial crime when Modus Operandi, consequences, material damage or identity of perpetrators rise the public interest Secretariats should consult Criminal Investigation Directorate or the Bureau for the cooperation with the media before revealing information, in order to protect certain data from investigation.**
- 8.5. **When it comes to solving of very important criminal cases or investigations that Criminal Investigation Directorate coordinated with different Secretariats or Mol's organizational units, public informing is coordinated with Directorate or Bureau for the cooperation with the media (if not agreed differently).**

- 8.6. When other state authorities are involved in an investigation (customs, financial police etc) communiqué is agreed upon and issued
- 8.7. **When public is being informed on a case that usually wouldn't be interesting for the media, but, due to involvement of public figures its advised to co-ordinate public statement with the Bureau for the cooperation with the media. If criminal charges are pressed against public figures, public should be informed as predicted in paragraph 8.1**
- 8.8. **All Secretariats are obliged to submit issued public statements to the Bureau for the cooperation with the media (in written form), so they can be posted at Ministries web page.**

PRESS CONFERENCES

9. All Secretariats are obliged to organize regular press conferences, at least once a month (or when needed). It is recommended to have special press conference dedicated to regional security developments quarterly.
- 9.1 Spokesperson, Head of Secretariat and officers that he/she authorizes should always attend press conferences

CAMPAIGNS

10. Active organization of campaigns when estimated that it would contribute to decrease in negative phenomena (traffic safety, alcohol and drug abuse, trafficking in human beings, domestic violence)

MEDIA ANALISYS

11. Daily monitoring of print and broadcast media, reporting and suggesting reaction (when needed). Daily report to be submitted as early as possible to Head
Detailed media analysis to be produced quarterly and submitted to
- 11.1 **Detailed media analysis to be produced quarterly and submitted to Head of Secretariat and the Bureau for the cooperation with the media**
- 11.2 **Monthly report to be submitted to the Bureau for the cooperation with the media**