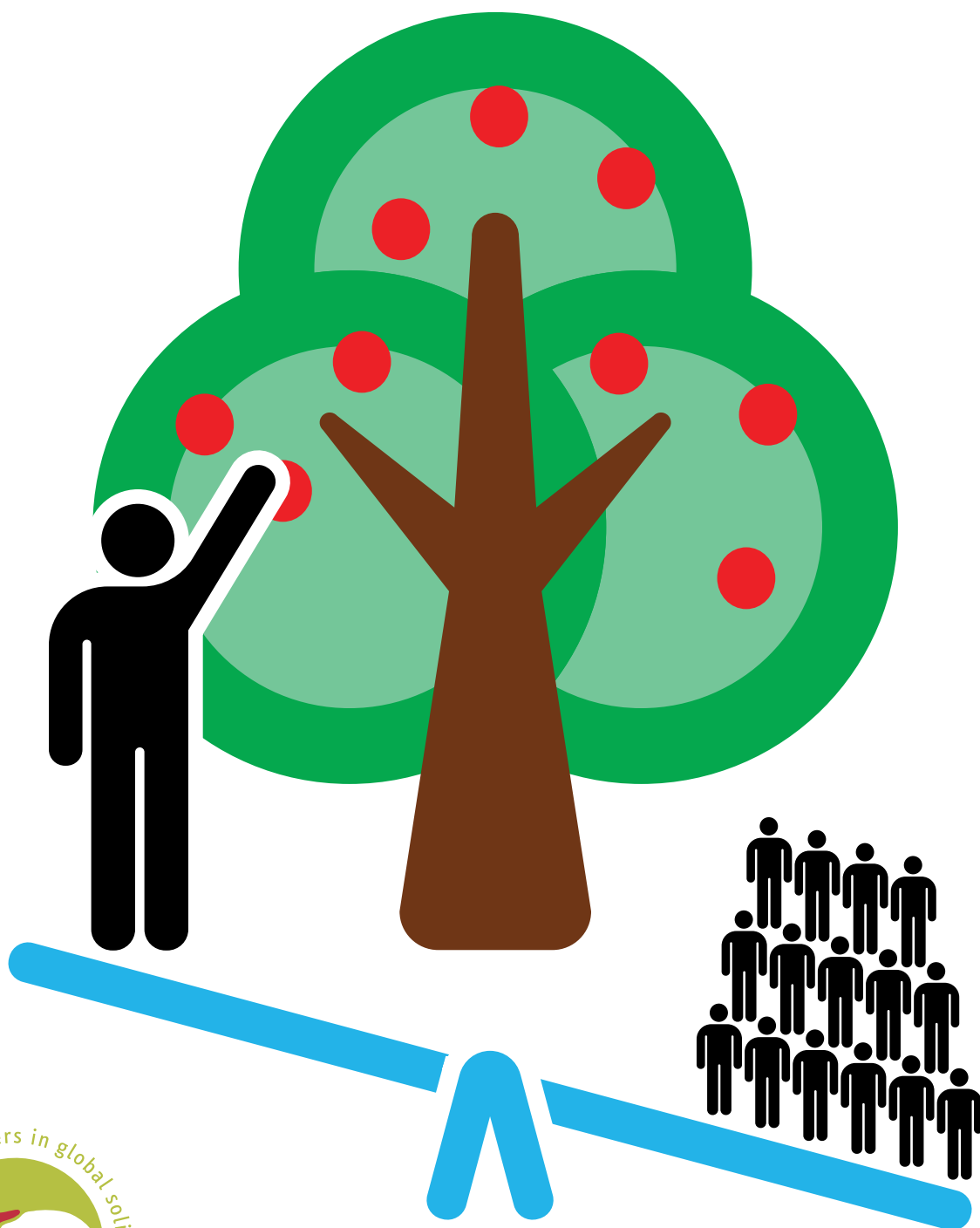


# Be The Change:

a toolkit for taking action against  
poverty and injustice



Comhlámh (Irish for “solidarity”) is the Irish Association of development workers and volunteers. It was established in 1975 by returned development workers. Since then membership has been extended to all those who are interested in social justice, human rights and global development issues. Comhlámh’s work contributes to challenging society on the root causes of global poverty and inequality and empower people to demand equity in global relations. Many of the causes of global inequality, poverty and oppression have their origin in the industrialised countries and can be addressed by education and action.

Comhlámh would like to thank Ian Curtis, Nancy Serrano and Stephen Burns for their contributions to this resource.

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# 1.

## Introduction

***“It is not enough to be compassionate. You must act.”***

- Tenzin Gyatso

If you want to take action from Ireland on the issues that cause poverty and injustice around the world, then this is the booklet for you! Maybe you've spent some time in a developing country, and it changed the way you see the world and inspired you to do more when you returned home, or maybe you're someone who feels passionately about injustice and wants to do something to challenge it.

“Be the Change” is a companion to 3 other Comhlámh resources that support returned development workers and overseas volunteers:

- “The Coming Home Book”- settling back into life in Ireland
- “What Next? A Practical Guide to Continuing Development Work in Ireland” – how to stay engaged in global development action at home
- “What Next: a Toolkit for Returned Volunteers” - a process of reflection upon return and continued engagement in development issues

Once you have worked out the issues you are interested in and passionate about, this resource is here to help you begin to take action. It includes practical advice, tips and stories of how others in Ireland have had a positive impact on the world by, for example, using the media, engaging with our political system, and campaigning. It also includes information on where to go to learn more and develop your skills and confidence further.

In Comhlámh we believe that a group of informed people acting together can make a difference. This has been at the heart of our work since we were founded by returned development workers

in 1975. Thus, we want to support you to join the many individuals, groups and movements who find a myriad of ways to fight against unfair situations. These include big and small things, individual and group actions.

***“If you don't think that small things can make a big difference, you've never slept in bed with a mosquito.”***

We hope that this resource will support you in figuring out how you can be part of making this world a more equitable and just place where the many matter more than the few. If you find that you still have questions after reading it (you probably will), please do get in touch with us.

“Knowledge is Power,” Sean Gibbons, Higher National Diploma in Illustration, Ballyfermot College of Further Education.



It doesn't matter how much you know (or don't know) about social justice issues and the causes of local and global poverty, you can still get involved. If you feel that you do want to learn more, there are many training courses, events and resources you can use (listed throughout this resource and on the Comhlámh website). Often, the best way to learn more is by getting involved with groups working in advocacy and campaign work. To find information about advocacy and campaign groups and events in Ireland visit the following links:

### Links:

[www.volunteerireland.ie](http://www.volunteerireland.ie)

[www.dochas.ie](http://www.dochas.ie)

[www.comhlamh.org/resources-index-contacts-list.html](http://www.comhlamh.org/resources-index-contacts-list.html)

[www.comhlamh.org/newsletter-latest-newsletter.html](http://www.comhlamh.org/newsletter-latest-newsletter.html)

[www.activelink.ie](http://www.activelink.ie)

[www.ideaonline.ie](http://www.ideaonline.ie)

There are different ways you can take action.

You may visit [www.aeinstein.org/organizations/org/198\\_methods.pdf](http://www.aeinstein.org/organizations/org/198_methods.pdf) for an inspiring list of 198 action strategies, or read the Trapeze Collective's Do it Yourself – A Handbook for Changing our World available in hardcopy and online at [www.trapeze.org](http://www.trapeze.org) (resources section/ download). Another website full of ideas is '10 Tactics for Turning Information into Activism' -[www.informationactivism.org](http://www.informationactivism.org). For other useful tips visit Christian Aid's webpage of 'How to' guides - [www.christianaid.ie/ActNow/usefulstuff/index.aspx](http://www.christianaid.ie/ActNow/usefulstuff/index.aspx).



# 2.

# Decision Making

We all make decisions every day and may feel that we have mastered the art of decision making. Some decisions are relatively straight forward and simple but others can be more complex. None of us make the right decisions all the time but an understanding of the decision making process together with a few techniques can help to guide our decisions.

***“The greatest accomplishment began as a decision once made and often a difficult one.”***

- Michael Rawls

## What is Decision Making?

There are several standard definitions of decision making. According to Robert Harris<sup>1</sup>, ***“making a decision implies that there are alternative choices to be considered, and in such a case we want not only to identify as many of these alternatives as possible but to choose the one that (1) has the highest probability of success or effectiveness and (2) best fits with our goals, desires, lifestyle, values, and so on. The two important ideas here are that first, there must be some genuine alternatives to choose from among. Second, every decision must be made in the light of some standard of judgment. This standard usually gets expressed in the form of criteria, which reflect the values and preferences of the decision maker.”***

Credit: <http://www.virtualsalt.com/crebook5.htm>

- 1. Identify the decision to be made together with the goals it should achieve.** Determine the scope and limitations of the decision.
- 2. Get the facts.** Get as many facts as possible about a decision within the limits of time imposed on you and your ability to process them, but remember that virtually every decision must be made in partial ignorance.
- 3. Develop alternatives.** Make a list of all the possible choices you have, including the choice of doing nothing. Sometimes the decision to do nothing is useful or at least better than the alternatives, so it should always be consciously included in the decision making process.
- 4. Rate each alternative.** This is the evaluation of the value of each alternative. Consider the negative of each alternative (cost, consequences, problems created, time needed, etc.) and the positive of each (money saved, time saved, added creativity or happiness to company or employees, etc.). Remember here that the alternative that you might like best or that would in the best of all possible worlds be an obvious choice will, however, not be functional in the real world because of too much cost, time, or lack of acceptance by others.
- 5. Rate the risk of each alternative.** In problem solving, you search around for a solution that best solves a particular problem, and by such a search you are pretty sure that the solution will work. In decision making, however, there is always some degree of uncertainty or risk in any choice. Risks can be rated as percentages, ratios, rankings, grades or in any other form that allows them to be compared.
- 6. Make the decision.** If you are making an individual decision, apply your preferences (which may take into account the preferences of others). Choose the path to follow, whether it includes one of the alternatives, more than one of them (a multiple decision) or the decision to choose none.

It is important to evaluate the implementation of your decision.

Credit: [www.virtualsalt.com/crebook5b.htm](http://www.virtualsalt.com/crebook5b.htm)

<sup>1</sup> Robert Harris is a writer and educator with more than 25 years of teaching experience at the college and university level.

### Other useful links:

[www.mindtools.com/pages/main/newMN\\_TED.htm](http://www.mindtools.com/pages/main/newMN_TED.htm)  
[www.decision-quality.com/intro.php](http://www.decision-quality.com/intro.php)  
[www.managementhelp.org/personalproductivity/problem-solving.htm](http://www.managementhelp.org/personalproductivity/problem-solving.htm)

With so many ways to take action it is important to think about which ones are right for you and your issue. One simple way to do this is to use an impact matrix such as below.

Items that can be categorised in the top right hand corner of the Impact Matrix under the column “*High effort*” and in row “*Low impact*” will be your best ideas because they will make the most difference for the least amount of effort. Actions combining “*Low effort*” and “*Low impact*” can be justified but actions requiring “*High effort*” and “*Low impact*” should be avoided. Brainstorm the various kinds of actions you could take. Then, taking one action at a time, indicate how much effort you think it will take to accomplish that action and how much impact it will have on the overall goal. Fill in the matrix cell by cell ranking the actions. You can rank them according to criteria such as:

- Time and effort needed
- Money and resources needed
- Impact
- Will this impact be local, national, international?
- Who takes the action: individuals, communities, or decision makers?

### Did it work?

It is also vital to take time to reflect on any actions you take. Were they actually effective? What did you achieve, compared to what you set out to do? Try to think of ways to measure their impact. This could include counting numbers, such as how many politicians signed a pledge or attended an event; the number of people and time they spent at a sit-in; the audience of a newspaper, radio or TV show; policy changes; or changing consumer habits. It could also include the trickier task of identifying changes in people’s attitude. For some actions it’s impossible to measure impact directly, but thinking about it may help you to learn how to do things better. Outcome Mapping is a useful method to use to measure changes in the behaviours, relationships, actions or activities of people, groups and organisations you are working with directly. This approach will help you to think about the changes you want to make, how you will know if those changes are happening, and then that makes it easier to assess whether the changes have taken place.

### Useful links:

[www.knol.google.com/k/attitudes-and-attitude-change](http://www.knol.google.com/k/attitudes-and-attitude-change)  
[www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newPPM\\_78.htm](http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newPPM_78.htm)  
[www.leadingresources.com/learning/tools/strategicplanning/strategicimpact/](http://www.leadingresources.com/learning/tools/strategicplanning/strategicimpact/)  
[www.outcomemapping.ca/](http://www.outcomemapping.ca/)

### IMPACT MATRIX

	Low impact	Medium impact	High impact
Low effort	✓	✓	✓
Medium effort	●	✓	✓
High effort	●	●	✓

# 3.

# Campaigning

***“One person can make a difference, and everyone should try.”***

- John F. Kennedy

Campaigning has several definitions. The following is just one example:

Campaigning is “...putting a problem on the agenda, providing a solution to that problem and building support for acting on both the problem and the solution” - SARA/AED Advocacy Training Guide

## Links to Definitions of Campaigning:

[www.thefreedictionary.com/campaigning](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/campaigning)

[www.making-prsp-inclusive.org/en/8-advocacy-and-lobbying-influencing-policies/81-advocacy-lobbying-and-campaigning-some-definitions.html](http://www.making-prsp-inclusive.org/en/8-advocacy-and-lobbying-influencing-policies/81-advocacy-lobbying-and-campaigning-some-definitions.html)

<http://knowhownonprofit.org/campaigns/campaigning/about-campaigning-and-lobbying/whatis/whatis>

Broadly speaking, campaigning is about getting the public involved in changing things for the better. Campaigning can include many of the types of actions covered in this resource, such as lobbying, letter-writing, demonstrations and using the media. However, it is different in that it has a planned strategy to make a change and it has a defined target group. Campaigning is fun and gives you the chance to be creative but, it also includes a lot of hard work. This is why it “...***is usually only done when all else has failed. It involves a conversation with society; persuading people to take an unusual interest in supporting a move that would not normally happen. It means setting up and sustaining processes that are not normal or business as usual. All the time the forces of normality will try and shut***

***your campaign down or put your issue back in its box.***” - Chris Rose, Greenpeace, joint leader of the Brent Spar campaign

***“Changes are products of intensive efforts.”***

- Muhammad Yunus

Think about how many people you need to reach to influence decision makers, and which people will have the most influence on them. Sometimes you only need a few people to spark will into action. Other times even seemingly overwhelming public concern produces no apparent results, for example, public opposition around the world to the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

There is a theory that assumes that effort is required to convince the public that certain actions are beneficial and once this is achieved the public will sustain the necessary process. This can be described as a certain activation point beyond which further campaigning/efforts will not be necessary. An activation point needs to be achieved. In other words, once the *right people* at the *right time* are persuaded to *take an action that leads to measurable changes for important social issues*. Persuasion is key to creating an activation point and translating talk into action. For many campaigns, there may be multiple activation points. You may need to activate a different number of people at different stages of the campaign.



1

Number of soldiers' moms needed to galvanize the public to start questioning President Bush about the war

9

Number of parents who successfully petitioned a school board in California for abstinence-only education

10

Number of families that pressed for the 9/11 Commission

200

Number of chefs who came together with SeaWeb to turn sustainable seafood into a hot commodity

218

Number of members of Congress needed to move for stem-cell legislation

100,000s

Number of immigrants throughout the United States calling out for immigration reform

Credit: [www.activationpoint.org](http://www.activationpoint.org)

## How to plan your campaign

1. **Problem:** What is the problem you are addressing? Unlike the blind men in in Bhudda's parable who felt a portion of the elephant and thought that this part represented the whole animal, keep in mind that there will be various components or sub-issues to the problem. What is the particular aspect that you can address now? What other organisations, or people can contribute to other areas. How do you work effectively together?
2. **Solution:** What is the particular solution that you are campaigning for? Is it realistic and compelling?
3. **Objectives:** What needs to happen to bring about this solution? Why is it not in place yet, if it is so good?
4. **Target:** Who has the power to bring about that outcome or had the capability to do something?
5. **Allies, audiences, opponents:** Who can influence your target? Put yourself into his/her shoes! What is the best way to get the target, who or what would influence them to do what you want? Therefore, who do you need to be convincing/mobilising/working with?  
  
Divide them into the following three groups: (1) Allies, your partners who have similar interests (maybe a non-governmental group, a Union, other neighbourhoods, etc.); (2) The audience (the people you want to take action); and (3) Your opponents who will be working against you.
6. **Action:** What action do you want your allies and audiences to take? What needs to be done to get your target to do what you want?
7. **Critical path:** Draw a map of the problem - the people involved, the organisations, and the institutions. Note who is for and against. Look at how they relate to each other. Work out all of the steps you need to take to get your change made.
8. **Action message, messenger:** What does your audience already believe and need/want in order to take the action? Therefore, how can you craft the right call to action and persuade the right people to achieve them? Where are the triggers?! How will you keep people engaged and motivated? How will you get them to talk to you and provide you with feedback? See the section on "How to communicate your message".
9. **Tactics:** What tools, activities and materials will you need to help or get people to take action? For example you may need to provide training,

visit them at the right places, place your action message in the newspaper they read, etc.

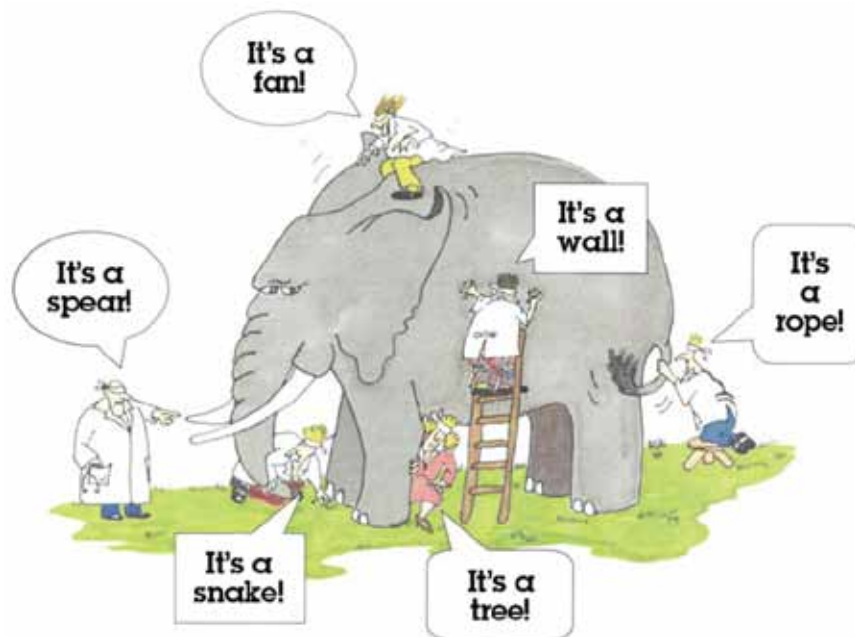
- 10. Timeline:** What is the timeline for the tactic to eventually lead to the objectives? What is happening in the world around you that you can 'hook' your actions onto? What events can you create?
- 11. Resources:** Do you have the resources and power to do this? If not: start again! Perhaps, you could also start thinking about campaigning for resources before undertaking other actions.

Credit: [www.campaignstrategy.org](http://www.campaignstrategy.org)

This is just one way to plan a campaign. The following links will introduce you to a few of the many other ways:

### Links:

- [www.campaignstrategy.org](http://www.campaignstrategy.org) -Chris Rose's 12 basic guidelines for campaign strategy.
- [www.thechangeagency.org](http://www.thechangeagency.org) -Workshop-outlines and support material for campaign strategies
- [www.planning.continuousprogress.org](http://www.planning.continuousprogress.org) - advocacy checklist (policy focused):
- [www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook/rules.html](http://www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook/rules.html) - Saul Alinsky's Rules for Radicals
- [www.geaction.org/chapter2a.pdf](http://www.geaction.org/chapter2a.pdf) - checklist for choosing an issue
- [www.takingitglobal.org/themes/mdg/campaign\\_kit.html](http://www.takingitglobal.org/themes/mdg/campaign_kit.html) -Taking It Global
- [www.millenniumcampaign.org](http://www.millenniumcampaign.org) - MDG Campaign Toolkit
- [www.bond.org.uk/data/files/Advocacy\\_and\\_campaigning\\_How\\_To\\_guide\\_January\\_2012.pdf](http://www.bond.org.uk/data/files/Advocacy_and_campaigning_How_To_guide_January_2012.pdf) - advocacy and campaigning: How To Guide, January 2012



# 4.

## Communicating Your Message<sup>2</sup>

Communication is pivotal to any campaign strategy because its role will be both to inform and inspire people. Whether you are discussing issues with your co-workers, friends and family, lobbying decision makers, or campaigning using the media and public events, you will need to think about how you get people to listen to and understand your point of view. The following guidelines will help to improve your communication and increase the reach of your message.

### Communication Strategies:

**One-to-one communication:** most powerful but time consuming. Having a network of supporters ready and willing to speak out is invaluable.

**Outreach to groups:** speaking engagements, library tours or mailings - ability to reach key audiences who share particular interests and concerns.

**Mass media:** most effective in reaching large numbers of people.

### Questions to ask yourself when deciding which strategy to use

**WHO** is the audience?

**WHAT** is the best way to convey the information to the target audience - radio, TV, direct mail, social media, other? What kind of image do you want to project? Will it be an effective part of your total communication effort?

**WHEN** is the deadline? Will your message be distributed in time to be effective?

**HOW** much will it cost? Is this the most effective use of available funds?

**WHY** is this the best strategy for this audience?

Link: [www.causecommunications.org/download-signup.php?id=toolkit](http://www.causecommunications.org/download-signup.php?id=toolkit)

### Know your audience(s)

Who are the people you want to involve? Targeting everybody is rarely successful. You need to identify the people who are interested in your message and who can influence the policy makers and opinion formers that are your ultimate target. Find out what they already know and think about your issue, what they care most about and what will encourage or prevent them from changing their behaviour and attitude.

### Your key message

Decide on one simple key message (8-10 words) that will be easy to remember. Develop a different slogan reflecting your key message for each audience. Remember to start where your audience is at, not where you want them to be. For example, activists will already have some knowledge of the issue and will need detailed messages using rational arguments linked to their priorities whereas the public with little knowledge will need simple messages using emotional arguments.

### Get and keep their attention

#### The **AIDA** model

Capture your audience's **A**ttention  
 Keep them **I**nterested  
 Inflammate their **D**esire to do something  
 Support them to take **A**ction

<sup>2</sup> This section is highly indebted to the handouts and group discussions during the Inspiring Supporter Training provided to Comhlámh by Ian Curtis and Bond in 2010.

## Capturing hearts and minds

Once people care about an issue they will take the time to learn more about it. But first, you need to get their attention and interest:

**Dramatise your messages or use the element of surprise**

- ✓ Make complex issues accessible
- ✓ Get people asking questions
- ✓ Use images and cartoons
- ✓ Use provocative statements and quotes e.g. the % of food we import to Ireland from Africa
- ✓ Juxtapose positive and negative aspects

## Delivering your message/Use of language

There are lots of ways to use language and images to get people to think differently and ask questions. Below are a few ideas, but first...

### Do no harm!

Choose your words and images carefully. They will hugely influence how your audience thinks and feels about the people affected by global injustice. While representing them as helpless may win you a short term gain it may also damage long term goals of building empathy and solidarity between people. Your audience may have latent attitudes and prejudices that they are not even aware of. Try to make sure that your messages don't reinforce those prejudices, for example, the idea that poor people deserve to be poor (believe it or not this is still a common subconscious belief of many people). For more information on how to activate and strengthen certain values while diminishing other unhelpful values, see "The Common Cause" report.

### Questions to ask yourself

- How do you portray the relationship between Irish people and people in developing countries?
- Are you dehumanising or stereotyping the people you're representing?
- Are you showing people as passive victims who are dependent on others, or as positive actors in their own survival and development?

### Useful resources:

'Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages', [www.dochas.ie/code](http://www.dochas.ie/code).

'Common Cause: The Case for Working with our Cultural Values,'

[www.assets.wwf.org.uk/downloads/common\\_cause\\_report.pdf](http://www.assets.wwf.org.uk/downloads/common_cause_report.pdf)

## Wordplay

Wordplay is a literary technique and a form of wit for the purpose of reinforcing meaning or amusement. Examples include puns, spoonerisms, oxymoron, tongue twisters, obscure words and meanings and oddly formed sentences. Wordplay shows how closely things are related or highlights the ridiculous or hypocritical using the following:

**Comparisons:** "A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle." (Gloria Steinem)

"When you give food to the poor, they call you a saint. When you ask why the poor have no food, they call you a communist." (Archbishop Dom Camara)

**Opposites:** "Washing one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral." (Paulo Freire)

**Phrase Reversals:** "Ask not what your climate can do for you, but what you can do for your climate." "More fuel! Less food!"

**Puzzle-Solution:** "The world is very different now. For man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty and all forms of human life." (John F Kennedy)

**Simplify complexity, capture the audience's attention or re-frame their understanding of an issue using:**

**Metaphors:** the unfair playing field

**Proverbs:** "A stitch in time saves nine"

**Parables:** The loaves and the fishes

Highlight and ridicule using humour

**Irony:** (Saying one thing but meaning another) "As clear as mud."

**Satire:** Read the magazines, "The Village" and "The Phoenix" for lots of examples.

**Puzzles, Jokes & Questions:** "How many ministers does it take to change the climate? Don't worry it'll change by itself."

**Make it memorable and emphatic using lists of three**

**Identical words:** "Education, Education, Education" (Tony Blair)

**Different words:** "Liberté, égalité, fraternité" (National motto of France)

**Phrases:** "Government of the people, by the people, for the people." (Abraham Lincoln)

"The inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." (American Declaration of Independence)

- put the longest item last

For more ideas see "Lend me your ears" by Professor Max Atkinson (2004, Vermilion).

# 5.

## Getting The Most From The Media

***“The news is what somebody somewhere doesn’t want publicised... all the rest is advertising”***

- William Randolph Hearst

### What is Media?

Generally, “media” refers to various traditional means of communication such as, television, radio, and the newspaper. The term is also used as a collective noun for the press or news reporting agencies.

To raise awareness about an issue you need to target the media. The media can reach high numbers of people with your message. It also informs and influences the public debate on issues. There are basically two forms of media campaigns – social marketing and media advocacy. Social marketing uses traditional advertising methods and requires purchasing television, radio or print ad space. Media advocacy involves garnering media attention about an issue by developing relationships with television, radio and print reporters. Media advocacy is often used to influence public policy by sending a message to legislators through the media. If you want to affect individual behaviour, social marketing will probably work better. If you want to affect public opinion or the opinion of legislators, media advocacy is the way to go.

***“If you don’t exist in the media, for all practical purposes, you don’t exist”***

- Daniel Schorr, commentator, National Public Radio

### Useful links:

[www.apha.org/NR/rdonlyres/A5A9C4ED-1C0C-4D0C-A56C-C33DEC7F5A49/0/Media\\_Advocacy\\_Manual.pdf](http://www.apha.org/NR/rdonlyres/A5A9C4ED-1C0C-4D0C-A56C-C33DEC7F5A49/0/Media_Advocacy_Manual.pdf) - APHA Media Advocacy Manual

[www.amnesty.ie/our-work/media-campaigning-tool- media as a campaigning tool](http://www.amnesty.ie/our-work/media-campaigning-tool- media as a campaigning tool)

[www.cfoc.org/index.php/media-campaign-toolbox/developing-your-own-media-campaign-developing your own media campaign](http://www.cfoc.org/index.php/media-campaign-toolbox/developing-your-own-media-campaign-developing your own media campaign)

[www.ivillage.co.uk/campaigning-and-the-media-150-basic-principles/79707?field\\_pages=1-campaigning and the media – basic principles](http://www.ivillage.co.uk/campaigning-and-the-media-150-basic-principles/79707?field_pages=1-campaigning and the media – basic principles)

[www.odi.org.uk/resources/docs/192.pdf](http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/docs/192.pdf) - Successful Communication: A toolkit for Researchers and Civil Society

### What makes a story newsworthy?

Try to include some or all of the elements below in your story:

- It is current and has a ‘hook’ or ‘peg’ (See below for more on this)
- It has some element that is new or different
- It is controversial
- Somebody of note or status (perhaps a celebrity) is associated with it
- It’s a ‘first ever’ or ‘one and only’

### The ‘hook’ or ‘peg’ is very important

Try to think of how your story relates to what is happening now. Journalists need to be able to explain why they are covering your story now and what makes it relevant to their readers or listeners?

### Examples of hooks or pegs upon which to hang your story:

- Anniversaries
- Special days such as Mother's Day, May Day, Valentine's Day
- Seasons, Christmas, Spring Equinox, Lent, and Winter Solstice
- Exam time, back to school time, European years, International days
- World events that have a local or national angle
- Current public political issues and debates
- Recently published reports
- Pending legislation

The ether is the general atmosphere. It can be social, political, cultural, or anything at all. How are people feeling? What is the pervading sense of the times? The ether is something that lasts longer than a few days. It is a more long term, background influence upon people than a 'hook'. Examples of the ether are: the ongoing economic crisis, the climate crisis, a lack of belief in government and other institutions.

### Letter to the Editor

Newspapers' readers send letters to the editor for publication about issues of concern to the public or a response to a previously published letter. Letters to the editor are the most widely read part of the newspaper and a great way to generate a wide coverage for your campaign.

#### Tips for writing a letter to the editor:

- ✓ Be opinionated, conveying campaign messages and statistics.
- ✓ Be brief and focused – keep your letter around 250 words in length.
- ✓ Respond promptly to an article you've read before it becomes old news.
- ✓ Include a contact name and address.

#### Useful links:

[www.rtc.ruralinstitute.umn.edu/advocacy/editorials.htm](http://www.rtc.ruralinstitute.umn.edu/advocacy/editorials.htm)

[www.snapnetwork.org/letters\\_editor/guidelines1.htm](http://www.snapnetwork.org/letters_editor/guidelines1.htm)

### Press releases

A **press release**, **news release**, **media release**, **press statement** or **video release** is a written or recorded statement for members of the news media declaring something to be apparently newsworthy. They are usually posted, faxed or e-mailed to assignment editors at newspapers, magazines, radio stations, television stations, and/or television networks.

#### Why use a press release?

- To attract media attention.
- To avail of the standard method of communicating news to your intended target.
- To increase the authority of your campaign.

### What makes a good press release?

#### A catchy headline

This is vital for a press release. Journalists sort through many press releases every day. You need to grab their attention enough to get them to continue reading your press release. You may also need a sub-title to back up your headline.

#### The first paragraph

This is the core of the release. It contains the five 'W's - **who, what, where, when, and why**. The most important elements of your story come first. This isn't an essay for school or college, so don't save your best until last. Many people will only read the first paragraph, so it needs to have all the vital information.

#### The rest

Each subsequent paragraph expands on the story. Use direct quotes from relevant people. Make sure the quotes are attention grabbing. Keep your sentences short and clear, not convoluted. Don't try to say too much. Keep it to one page. Remember to give contact numbers, email (and website if you have one) at the end.

#### Who to send it to

Once you've written your press release you need to get the right people to read it. Think about this carefully. You want to build relationships with journalists. Don't 'spam' them by sending all of them every press release you write. Who you target depends on the story you want told. Journalists have different briefs and interests. In other words, they tell different kinds of news.



If it has news angle send it to news editors. If not, send it to special interest sections of the media, e.g. specialist correspondents, social affairs, foreign affairs. You can also send it to special sections of the papers, such as the education supplement or to specialist magazines and relevant websites. If it is a story with national interest, send it to national papers, TV and radio, but if it has local interest send it to local papers, TV and radio.

You may need to alter your press release depending on the type of paper you are sending it to. For example, is it a broadsheet or a tabloid? Read the papers you are targeting to see the kind of language they use, stories they print, and 'hooks' they pick up on.

### Useful links:

[www.mediacontact.ie](http://www.mediacontact.ie) -The Irish Media Contacts Directory is published annually by Mediacontact. ie, 2 Argus House, Greenmount Office Park, Dublin 6W

[www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_newspapers\\_in\\_Ireland](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_newspapers_in_Ireland) - Newspapers in Ireland

[www.irishpressreleases.ie](http://www.irishpressreleases.ie)

[www.indymedia.ie/newswire/pressrelease](http://www.indymedia.ie/newswire/pressrelease)

[www.rte.ie/about/pressreleases/index.html](http://www.rte.ie/about/pressreleases/index.html)

### When to send it

For an event send a short diary entry a week or so ahead. Generally, send the press release two or three days beforehand. To control a story you may 'embargo' but be careful! An embargo is when you send a press release out to journalists to let them know something is going to happen, but asking them not to release the information yet. They may find this irritating. Also, they may ignore your request and break the story.

Get confirmation that your release is accepted. If not, you may have to explore other options.

### Radio Interview

Radio is a great way to reach people in an interesting and effective way. Radio can travel anywhere with the listener. Access to radio through the internet has increased the potential to communicate with a wider audience even in the workplace. In addition, there are many local stations around the country that are often looking for people to interview.

For more information visit [www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radio\\_in\\_Ireland](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radio_in_Ireland) and <http://www.craol.ie/1/0/home.html>

### *The cardinal rules for being interviewed is to be prepared*

- Never talk about any issue unless you are competent to do so.
- As far as possible never go into an interview unprepared.
- Research the facts about your topic.
- Prepare the three key points you want to make. Say to yourself 'when I listen back to this interview what key things do I want to have said'.
- In three/four minutes you can make three points.
- See if there are interesting anecdotes or stories that will illustrate the points you want to make.

### *The basics*

- Check how much time you have for the interview.
- Find out in what way and for what programme your interview will be used.
- Ask if it is live or pre-recorded, is it over the phone or in the studio.

### *Avoid mistakes*

- Prepare for the question you don't want to be asked.
- Prepare an answer for these questions even if it's a polite refusal to answer.
- Be clear if you have any 'wriggle room'. You may not if you are speaking on behalf of an organisation.
- Be clear about what you can and can't say - and refuse to budge!

## Giving the interview

### *Preparation*

- Make sure you are comfortable about where the interview is taking place.
- Make an alternative suggestion if you are unhappy, though this may not always be possible.
- Always ask for a glass of water, but avoid fizzy drinks.
- Be clear whether you are speaking on your own behalf or on behalf of an organisation.
- Don't go into a studio with reams of notes. Bullet points on a small index card can suffice.

### During the interview

- Use the interviewer's name sparingly if at all.
- Try and get off to a good strong start, **not** "thank you for having me on the programme".
- Don't feel you have to 'tell all'.
- Never lie.
- Be comfortable about exercising your right not to answer a question.
- Answer the questions in a clear and direct manner, avoid long rambling sentences that will be cut if pre-recorded and interrupted if live. (Prepare!)
- Don't just let the interviewer drag you anywhere. Answer the question and go on to make the points you want to make.
- Try to distinguish. Is the interviewer interrupting you because you are rambling or are they not allowing you to make your point? If it's the latter you can politely make the point again.
- If you make a mistake, correct yourself and move on. Don't dwell on it and spoil the rest of the interview.
- Don't be defensive, the interviewer is only doing their job, so don't take it personally.
- Avoid the clichés and jargons of your profession, like NGO's and GDP's.
- Use statistics sparingly.
- In a panel discussion, don't always wait to be brought in by the interviewer. Take up the points that other people make, be proactive.
- If an interview is likely to be contentious, you can record it in its entirety as it is conducted.

### Style

Don't talk too quickly or too slowly. Use your normal voice, not a 'put on' accent.

### Tone

This can vary depending on the type of interview. In general be polite and professional not cosy and overly friendly with the interviewer. Never be aggressive. Assertive or emphatic is enough - when necessary.

***Don't make any secret revelations off mike, before or after the interview! There is no such thing as 'off the record'.***

## TV Interview

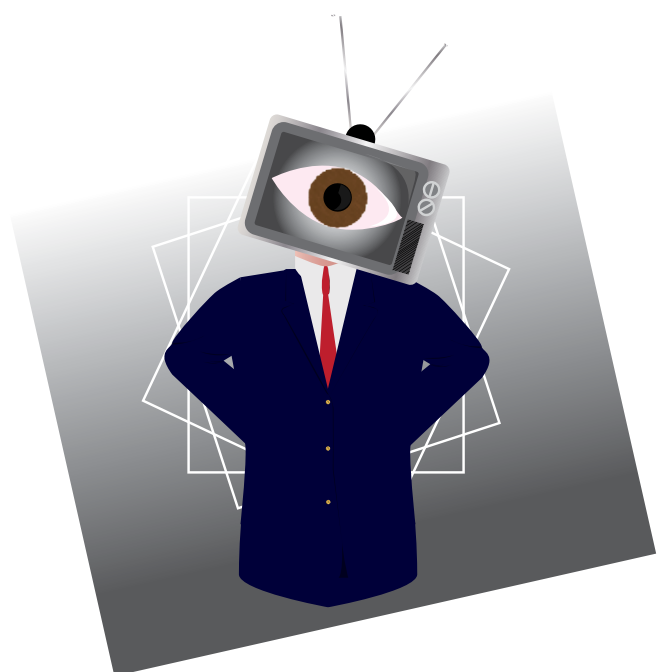
The information on radio interviews also applies to TV interviews but there are some additional points you need to consider.

It is important to take time deciding what to wear. This will depend upon the type of programme, whether it is formal or informal, late night review or lunchtime news. If you aren't sure, ask. In general, avoid wearing anything that would distract the viewer from hearing what you have to say. Black or white clothing should be avoided as they appear extremely contrasting when photographed. The way you dress can also become part of your statement and make you more appealing to certain groups.

Check out the set colour scheme against which you will be shot if you are being filmed outside, at home or at work. Always be aware of the backdrop you are being filmed against. It may give a symbolic message other than the one you want. If so, ask to move it or you!

Always remember there could be a camera on you even when you're not talking. Directors are looking for reaction shots. This means that while someone else is talking you can make a point visually with your body language, such as smiling or shaking your head.

Credit: "Insidious Media", Douglas Tyler, Higher National Diploma in Digital Media, Ballyfermot College of Further Education





# 6.

## Social media tips

Nowadays online and social media are more and more important ways to communicate with people. It is reported that 91% of online adults use social media regularly<sup>3</sup>. Such media are easier to access than mainstream media. You can broadcast your own message directly to your audience, rather than hoping the traditional media will present it the way you want them to.

You need to keep in mind that social media is interactive and conversational. Some would argue that it is much more democratic as a form of media, as the reader can respond to what they read, rather than passively receiving information. This means you can't just broadcast your message at people; you need to involve them in a conversation and respond to them. Dorie Clark, CEO of Clark Strategic Communications and the author of the "How to Use Social Media for Social Change" suggests that you keep the following three goals in mind before you start:

1. Use your time online to stay informed and connected to the organisations you care about.
2. Build relationships with legislators of key opinion leaders you will ultimately need to influence.
3. Build online robust connections with your friends and other like-minded individuals.

### From tweeting to blogging

There are many ways you can use social media to make people more aware of global justice issues. But it's important to be consistent if you want to have a credible voice. Look at the various options and pick one or two that you have the time – and finances – to keep up long-term.

### Facebook

Facebook is popular with 955 million active users<sup>4</sup>. The key advantages of Facebook are that it is easy to use, nearly free and designed for posts to go viral. Technical maintenance is also provided by Facebook. However, the downside of Facebook is that it is not very discriminative and bans only evidently illegal activities. Any campaigning can be mixed up with social activities and games that can undermine the seriousness of the undertaken campaign. There



are also some technical risks such as security of personal identity and exposure to computer hacking and virus attacks.

You first need to create and register your profile (either personal or already dedicated to a specific campaign) and then you can begin by "liking" the fan page of causes you are interested in. This will not only keep you informed of their activities which will appear on your wall, but may also encourage your friends to check them out too. It is easy to re-post interesting posts on your own wall by hitting the "share" button. You can begin commenting and interacting with legislators by liking their fan pages. When you tag someone on Facebook, they will (usually) be notified. Mention elected officials to build your relationship, and mention your cause to keep your friends informed.

### Website

Having a website is important if you are considering raising money for an event, creating awareness of an issue or running a campaign. It should display the type of information the majority of people who go on campaign websites look for, such as name of campaign, contact details, and aims and objectives. The key difference between a website and other forms of media is freedom of contents and forms, and your own identity. There are legal boundaries, typically more relaxed than in the case of printed publications, radio or TV, but the owner of the website may be held responsible also for consequences inflicted by others (stolen identity cases, hacking). You may choose to organise your website nearly in the same way as it is done for Facebook or Twitter, or create a completely new format. Freedom of creativity may be considered a burden by some. There are a lot of technical, artistic and administrative details that will have to be addressed in one way or another. The myths of high costs are not true but ability to allocate specific financial resources to website support will help in all the aspects aforementioned. There are web-supportive services that may be hired to deal with certain aspects for instance, artistic, technical, or administrative.

<sup>3</sup> <http://go.experian.com/forms/experian-digital-marketer-2012>

It is also often forgotten that websites are not self-promoting and some efforts (from posts on social media, like Facebook, to paid advertisements) have to be made to earn both cross-linking with other relevant websites, and the popular web search engines.

## Blogging

A blog is a discussion or informational site published on the internet. It can provide commentary on particular subjects, function as a personal online diary or as online brand advertising of a particular individual, company or action. A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs, web pages and other media related to its topic. It has an interactive format allowing readers to leave comments. This is useful for keeping a sense of activity in a campaign. Until 2009 blogs were usually written by one person, occasionally a small group, and often were themed on a single subject. More recently *multi-author blogs* (MABs) have developed, with posts written by large numbers of authors and professionally edited. Twitter helps to integrate MABs and single-author blogs into society's news streams.

You can start your blogging campaign once you have defined your objectives, constructed your message and identified relevant blogs, message boards and chat rooms where your target audience are engaged. Adopt a conversational tone to help keep your audience engaged. You will need to post at least weekly, and preferably three times a week to keep it current. When you write a post, be sure to email the link to legislators, so that they can spread the message further. To determine the effectiveness of your posts you should carry out a thorough analysis. Revisit your postings on message boards and view the comments made by the audience. Credit: <http://www.mednet-tech.com/newsletter/blogs/what-are-blogs>

## Twitter



Twitter is the fastest growing networking site with 500 million total users in April 2013<sup>5</sup>. Although, it has a smaller user base than Facebook, it is a great way to communicate with an established support group. Twitter provides a more focused broadcast of your ideas. Once you join Twitter, make your first tweets about your campaign and encourage your friends to "follow" you first. As with Facebook, sign up to follow your favourite causes and also your legislators. Be original and interesting in what you are tweeting. Retweet legislators' messages frequently because they can track these statistics

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.businessinsider.com/facebook-now-has-955-million-monthly-active-users-2012-7>

and will see that you are a player. Just as you tag people in Facebook, you can do the same in Twitter with an "@" symbol. This lets people know you're talking about them. However, don't tweet about anything you wouldn't want published in the newspapers and don't tweet for the sake of tweeting. People will stop following you if you have nothing interesting to say. Don't lock your tweets because you will not bring in new people this way. Credit: [www.winningcampaigns.org/Articles/Campaigning-on-Twitter.html](http://www.winningcampaigns.org/Articles/Campaigning-on-Twitter.html)

## Email

Email is a valuable tool as it is a medium you can use to get people to engage. People generally still pay more attention to personal emails rather than social media. Integrating 'old with new' mediums can be an effective strategy to build a strong social media following. It's always a good idea to send out regular emails reminding people to connect with you on social media. You don't want to do it all the time, however once a month should be enough. Credit: [www.websuccesssteam.com/WSTblog/2012/08/email-campaign-build-social-media/](http://www.websuccesssteam.com/WSTblog/2012/08/email-campaign-build-social-media/)

Think about your audience – who do you want to talk to and what do you want them to do. We've just looked at some tools. For any you might just sit down and think about the pros and cons first.

Credit: "Learning to be Free", Justinas Alisauskas, Higher National Diploma in Illustration, Ballyfermot College of Further Education



<sup>5</sup> <http://www.statisticbrain.com/twitter-statistics/>

## Tips

- **Use plain English.** You can find some useful plain English writing and design tips under the following link: [www.nala.ie/plain\\_english](http://www.nala.ie/plain_english)
- **Try to avoid sensationalist language.** Be objective, unprejudiced and transparent. Use language that is respectful and that causes no harm to any person or organisation. Remember the Dóchas Code of Conduct on Messages and Images.
- **Post updates about events that have just happened.** Include information about how the event went and how many people came along. Encourage discussion by asking was anybody there and what did they think of it. Thank people for coming along.
- **Respond to posts on your page from other people, especially if they ask a question.** Monitor and block inappropriate posts.
- **Ask questions.** That will encourage the discussion. Use words/ phrases such as: “Are you interested in...then come along to.../ Do you think? / What do you think?”
- **Be conversational, avoid just posting a news update** - think how you would say it if you were talking to someone in front of you.
- **Updates should be short:** Try to stick to the one sentence rule, maximum 2 short sentences.
- **Use a link:** Always try to include a link to the source of information you are using so that people can get further information and see that your post is backed by reliable evidence.
- **Timing:** Try to post right before lunch or last thing before going home - studies have shown that people check their Facebook and Twitter around these times, and more people are using their phones to check on their way home from work.

Only use materials that are publicly available!

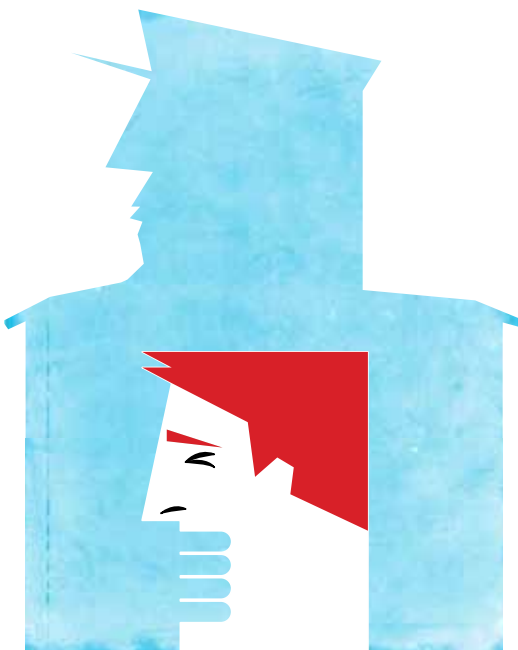
## Other interesting blogs:

Counterpunch, Guardian Comment is Free, Politico.ie, Irish left review

Beth's Blog: Nonprofits and Social Media - [www.bethkanter.org](http://www.bethkanter.org)

Create a blog - [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com)

“Shushhn”, Sean Gibbons. Higher National Diploma in Illustration, Ballyfermot College of Further Education.



# 7.

## Direct Action

Indirect action is when we ask other people to do something on our behalf. Direct action is when we do it ourselves. Direct action gives us a way to do something if our vote, our advocacy and our protests are ignored. We don't have to wait for those who represent us to take action. We can take back our power, identify a change we would like to see and take action ourselves to bring it about.

Direct action can range from moderate to extreme actions. It can be used to raise awareness (e.g. a banner drop), to pressurise decision-makers (e.g. workers going on strike), to create the change we want to see (e.g. guerrilla gardening) or to prevent something from happening (e.g. creating a blockade).

### Non-violence

There are forms of direct action that are violent (such as destruction of property and riots). However, there are many non-violent forms of direct action. People often differentiate between violence against people and violence against property.

In fact, direct action can be a peaceful response to ongoing structural violence. Structural violence is when the way we behave and organise our society harms people or the planet. For example, buying fair trade is a direct response to the fact that most of the goods in our shops are unfairly traded products of exploitation. Structural violence can sometimes be carried out by institutions, including state ones, or by laws that protect the interests of heavily funded interest groups or monopolies, while ignoring the exploitation of more vulnerable groups. Some non-violent actions may provoke violence, which should always be considered.

Direct action has been used as a tactic for change by many famous activists, movements and causes throughout history. Some of the better known ones are Gandhi and the freedom movement in India, Greenpeace's environmental activism, and the Dunnes Stores strikers in Ireland.

***“Non-cooperation with evil is as much a duty as is cooperation with good.”***

- Mohandas Gandhi

### Why take direct action?

Groups that take direct action tend to be flexible and decentralised with power and functions dispersed from central to local branches or groups. This can mean that taking direct action can feel a bit lonely. However, unfair systems can only survive if we support them. As more of us take action and make changes in the way we live - as we refuse to close our eyes to problems and agree to injustice - unfair systems become weaker and better systems become stronger. By talking to others and sharing our stories of how we are making a difference, we become part of a group rather than isolate ourselves. Many powerful organisations have a vested interest or are heavily lobbied to keep things the way they are. This means they may not tell us about unfair systems getting weaker, but that doesn't mean it's not happening. Alternative media sites, for example, provide an avenue for stories not represented in mainstream media to be heard.

In February 2003, millions of people protested against the Iraq War in 800 cities around the world. According to the 2004 *“Guinness Book of Records”*, it was the largest protest in human history. In Ireland between 80,000 and 150,000 attended the rally. However, the invasion of Iraq still went ahead. In democratic countries the people were ignored by their representatives. This event made people more aware of the democratic deficit in many countries. It also raises the question, would other types of action have been more effective in this situation?

Direct action may not get widespread support, however, that doesn't make it ineffective. Civil rights activists in the United States were often advised that nonviolent action was a bad idea and to use reason instead. The first women to picket the White House for the right to vote were criticised harshly by liberals in the media, as were suffragettes in Europe when they took radical action to draw attention to

their cause. In 1999, 50,000 protesters shut down World Trade Organisation talks in Seattle, where major governments had met to discuss global trade rules. Angry at rich countries for excluding poor countries from the decision making, the protesters supported the delegates from the developing countries, made people worldwide aware of what the international financial institutions were and their undemocratic way of working.

***“Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”***

- Margaret Mead, Anthropologist.

### Examples of Direct Action:

#### **Go on strike or go-slow**

In Ireland in 1913, workers went on strike for higher wages and the right to unionise. Factory owners reacted by locking workers out of work. Both the strike and the lock-out are examples of direct action. More recently, in the 1980s unionised Dunnes Stores workers refused to sell South African goods because of apartheid and went on strike.

#### **Tips for organising a strike or go-slow:**

- ✓ Involve as many people as you can.
- ✓ Choose your leaders carefully. Allow all workers to voice their opinions and make suggestions. Then let everyone vote on them.
- ✓ Figure out the most effective ways to shut down the company's operations. This is the only way to make an impression on management.
- ✓ Set rules that everyone has to abide by.
- ✓ Stage mass marches and rallies before the strike.

Credit: [www.ehow.com/how\\_2070003\\_go-strike.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_2070003_go-strike.html)

#### **Boycott**

Use your power as a consumer to buy ethical goods. For example, buy fair trade goods or avoid buying goods from countries carrying out human rights violations.

#### **Tips for organising a boycott:**

- ✓ Identify whom or what you want to boycott.
- ✓ Research the product or group that you are interested in boycotting.
- ✓ Find out if the company's workers or those affected by that country's actions want a boycott, as it may do them more harm than good.
- ✓ Warn the company early on of your plans to boycott. Sometimes just the threat of a boycott does the job.
- ✓ Consult a lawyer about how to boycott effectively without risking a slander or libel lawsuit.
- ✓ Spread the word via word of mouth, e-mail and a website dedicated to the cause. Get a petition going.

Credit: [www.ehow.com/how\\_135682\\_organize-boycott.html#ixzz2BNOY1eNE](http://www.ehow.com/how_135682_organize-boycott.html#ixzz2BNOY1eNE)

#### **Useful Links:**

<http://www.comhlahm.org/ckeditor/uploads/files/pdfs/Focus%2083.pdf>

[www.bdsmovement.net](http://www.bdsmovement.net) - boycotts, divestment and sanctions against Israel campaign

[www.ethicalconsumer.org](http://www.ethicalconsumer.org) - ethical consumer

#### **Civil Disobedience**

In 1955 in the USA, Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a segregated bus to a white man and was arrested. In protest, black Americans in Montgomery boycotted the buses. Eventually the bus company had to desegregate their buses because they needed the bus fares paid by the black community. Another woman had previously refused to give up her seat and been arrested, however organisers chose to hold the protest over Rosa Parks' arrest because she was a respected member of the community, and because she wasn't charged with any other crimes than disobeying segregation. This action of hers is seen as a crucial moment, helping to bring about the civil rights movement in America, which would eventually bring about the end of segregation.

<sup>4</sup> Squatting in Europe, Hans Pruijt, [www.home.kpn.nl/Kiebler/homepage%20Hans/Squatting%20in%20Europe.htm](http://www.home.kpn.nl/Kiebler/homepage%20Hans/Squatting%20in%20Europe.htm)



### Banner Drops and Blockades

In early 2010, activists dropped a banner from the roof of AIB to raise awareness of the amounts of money involved in the bank bailouts and those they held responsible.

In April 2003 anti-war activists protested against George Bush's visit to Belfast by transforming three Derry landmarks. They shrouded the famous wall with the slogan "You Are Now Entering Free Derry" in black, altered the statue of two men known as the Derry Tappers to show them decommissioning a missile, and transformed the statue of Irish goddess Macha at Altnagelvin Hospital into a peace shrine.

### Squatting

Arguing that shelter is a basic human right and opposing high rents, long waiting lists, or badly maintained buildings people worldwide squat<sup>6</sup> (live in disused and abandoned property). Some countries do legalise squats, for example shanty towns tend to start off as squats with minimal basic infrastructure. Christiana, a renowned tourist attraction in Copenhagen is a self-proclaimed autonomous neighbourhood which was created in 1977 when the military moved out and homeless people and inhabitants from the surrounding neighbourhoods began using the empty buildings and unused areas as a playground for their children. It was a protest against the government and the lack of affordable housing in Copenhagen at the time.

### Refuse to be Evicted

For example, in 2009 Ohio Representative Marcy Kaptur, speaking in the US Congress, offered a radical solution to the foreclosure crisis: "So I say to the American people, you be squatters in your own homes. Don't you leave."<sup>7</sup> - [www.huffingtonpost.com/arianna-huffington/barack-obama-must-see-mic\\_b\\_293407.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/arianna-huffington/barack-obama-must-see-mic_b_293407.html). Travellers living at Dale Farm in the UK area also struggling against eviction - [www.advocacy.net/page/dalefarm](http://www.advocacy.net/page/dalefarm). Activists in Ireland are working to reclaim unused buildings - <http://campaigncityarts.wordpress.com/>.

### Occupation/Sit-in

In 2010, UK students demonstrated against education cuts that they felt were excessive and broke politicians' campaign promises, amounting to "attempts to force society to pay for a crisis it didn't cause."<sup>8</sup> Students, and supportive staff, occupied at least 12 universities across the UK demanding that the university managers put pressure on the government not to introduce the cuts.

### Occupy Dame Street

Occupy Dame Street lasting five months in 2011/2012 was one of the longest running protests active continuously in the same location in the Global Occupy Movement. The Occupy Movement which began on September 17th, 2011, as a peaceful occupation of New York City's Wall Street Financial District was inspired by the global financial crisis, Spain's Indignados and the Arab Spring. Since then, it has become an international phenomenon operating in 951 cities in 82 countries. The movement in Ireland began as a Facebook and Twitter campaign while the occupation started on October 8th, 2011. The camp allowed participants to engage in organised meetings, events and activities. The four key demands of Occupy Dame Street include that:

- 1) the IMF and ECB stay out of the affairs of Ireland,
- 2) the burden of private bank debt be lifted from the public's shoulders,
- 3) Ireland's natural gas and oil reserves be returned to sovereign control,
- 4) a system of real, participatory Democracy be introduced in Ireland.

Although, the residents were evicted from the camp by Gardaí on March 8th, 2012, the movement still continues through direct action. A Bank of Ireland branch in Dublin was forced to close temporarily on July 23rd, 2012, when 7 members of Occupy staged a demonstration to raise awareness of bond payments made over the last few days. One of the successes that stemmed from Occupy Dame Street was Unlock Nama.

### Here are a few guidelines you may wish to follow:

1. **Focus the Action** - What aspect of your issue do you want to highlight? On whom do you wish to focus public attention? If you want to oppose, a law like Prop 187, do you pick a state house or a senator's office? Make sure that any building you plan to visit will be open, that any people you want to address will be in, and that you have mapped out where all doors, exits and offices are. Refrain from unproductive actions.
2. **Timing an Action** - Don't do actions that aren't timed right for maximum effectiveness. You may want to spend your time building a strong enough base for a successful action later. If you are in negotiations, this isn't a time for direct action, unless negotiators are stalling on your requests and giving you problems. Students asking their university to endorse the United Farm Workers

<sup>4</sup> Barack Obama Must See Michael Moore's New Movie (and So Must You)! [www.huffingtonpost.com/arianna-huffington/barack-obama-must-see-mic\\_b\\_293407.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/arianna-huffington/barack-obama-must-see-mic_b_293407.html)

<sup>8</sup> Students stage day of protests over tuition fee rises, BBC News Online, [www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-11829102](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-11829102)

Grape Boycott demonstrated after the university refused to meet with them, ignored scientific data on pesticides, and failed to give a statement as promised. Organising on an issue the public knows little about can backfire. Organising around a long standing community problem will increase your numbers, media coverage, community support, and chance for success.

- 3. Compile Facts** - Research your opposition and your issue for education and publicity. This can take time, especially for Freedom of Information Act requests.
- 4. Know Your Rights** - It is imperative to know your legal rights and possible penalties. Consult a sympathetic lawyer. A few simple legal points you should know are: you absolutely have the right to leaflet and you do not always have to have a permit.
- 5. Event Planning & Preparation** - Talk about your goal, how long to stay, and whether to disburse or risk arrest once authorities arrive. Pick a date, time and location for your action. Keep in mind that many effective actions are perfectly legal. If you plan to occupy streets or want to use public facilities, try filing for a permit with the proper police department. Do not meet at the action site, but at an alternative site nearby where you can wait until your numbers are sufficient to move to the action location. What will you do at the action? Prepare chant sheets, get a bullhorn, and ask people to speak or do a skit. Bring banners, signs, flyers and food, beverages and blankets to keep warm. Have enough events to fill your action time.
- 6. Network** - Talk to organisations who support your work and who may join your action. Ask progressive media to cover the event. Do extensive outreach to gain more support. Call people with direct action experience for advice or a short presentation or training. This will make people who are inexperienced with actions feel more assured and knowledgeable.
- 7. Media Promotion** - Send a press release to the media, both campus newspapers and community press. Do not tell the press your complete plan; just give them enough information to interest them in covering it.
- 8. Stay Focused** - Once you have organised a plan, stick to it! If you must make changes to the initial plan, inform everyone at one time. Authorise a few (preferably experienced) people to make immediate decisions and deal with the police, if need be, at your action. Women

protesting a beauty pageant in Michigan were able to remain in front of the building all night, even though they had no permit and should have been much farther away, when one woman who had experience with direct action was able to effectively negotiate with police. Meet once before the action to solidify all plans and deal with last minute problems. The main organisers should not be making changes as they please.

- 9. Problems That May Arise** - Even though your action may be legal, the police may cite violations or arrest. Be prepared for this. If you have a permit, although they are not usually used for direct action, have it ready and have numerous copies. You may experience people trying to impose their agenda at your action. Plan how you will deal with this. A good idea is to ask them to comply with what has been planned and if they refuse ask them to leave. Encourage people to avoid hecklers, doing anything illegal or hitting anyone. Tempers flare, but stay unified! Remember people will be photographed and may be in the news. When you leave, do it in groups, if not all at once.
- 10. Follow-up** - Appoint people to specific follow-up tasks. Someone will need to speak with the media immediately so that the authorities aren't the only ones communicating your reasons for acting. Have people coordinating the legal aspects of your action. Others should be working on having your demands addressed or implemented. As a group, collectively critique what happened and start your future planning.

#### *Create an Alternative*

Set up organisations such as food co-operatives. Produce community papers, zines, and community access radio and TV. Broadcast micro power radio (low power radio in a local area) and low watt community television. Green your community by guerrilla gardening or creating a community garden - [www.getgrowing.ie](http://www.getgrowing.ie). Join or set up a skill share/bartering system.

#### *Just Some of Many Examples in Ireland*

Dublin Community TV broadcasts to about 200,000 homes on UPC 802. Visit [www.dctv.ie](http://www.dctv.ie)

The RAG is a magazine produced by a diverse group of anarchy-feminist women in Dublin. Visit <http://ragdublin.blogspot.com/>

Indymedia is an international independent media centre. Anyone can post news or an article and it is moderated by volunteers who follow the website's guidelines. Visit Ireland's page at [www.indymedia.ie](http://www.indymedia.ie)

<sup>9</sup> SGenetix Snowball-Genetics Campaign pull up crops [www.youtube.com/watch?v=LqII\\_eAx6E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LqII_eAx6E)

<sup>10</sup> Shannon Airport "Pitstop Ploughshares" [www.motherearth.org/prisoner/pitstop.php](http://www.motherearth.org/prisoner/pitstop.php)

<sup>11</sup> The Cochabamba Water Wars [www.democracynow.org/2010/4/19/the\\_water\\_wars\\_marcella\\_olivera](http://www.democracynow.org/2010/4/19/the_water_wars_marcella_olivera)

### And Abroad

Community based media: [www.videovolunteers.org/](http://www.videovolunteers.org/)  
The school of citizenship TV: [www.worldbytes.org/](http://www.worldbytes.org/)

### Sabotage

Prompted by the Israeli bombing of Qana in Lebanon in 2006 nine peace activists in Derry broke into a Raytheon arms factory and destroyed computers causing damage valued at £350,000. In court they maintained that they had acted to prevent war crimes by the Israeli Defence Forces in Lebanon, and were found not guilty by a Belfast jury.

**And many more...**Anti-GM campaigners digging up GM crops<sup>9</sup>, anti-war protestors destroying warplanes<sup>10</sup> in Shannon warplane , citizens in Bolivia refusing to allow the US company Bechtel to own their water supply<sup>11</sup>.

### What to do

1. Identify an action that will achieve the outcome you want to see.
2. Ensure the action is part of your larger campaign plan and have undertaken the steps mentioned previously.
3. Decide who you want to influence – try to be specific.
4. Design your action so that it appeals to, shocks or inconveniences those target groups.
5. Decide if you need favourable media coverage.
6. Check the law – does your direct action break any laws? If you're not sure, get legal advice, and have a legal plan in place.
7. Stay Focused - Once you have organised a plan, stick to it! If you must make changes to the initial plan, inform everyone at one time.
8. Develop a strategy for dealing with likely counter-actions, for example, police blockades, arrests, counter demonstrations.
9. Make sure everyone involved understands the aim and method of the action, and knows the law.
10. Develop alliances and networks.
11. Carry out a risk assessment - what is there to lose if the action is not successful?

## Media Coverage



### It's all in the planning

- ✓ Plan a sustained campaign rather than a one-off action.
- ✓ Give the media time to understand your struggle and the methods you are using.
- ✓ Be ready to explain what you are doing and why you are doing it.
- ✓ Control your action – if you hold a peaceful sit-in and one person breaks a window, the media coverage will focus on the broken window; know those participating in the actions (their other affiliations, past involvement and legal status).
- ✓ People at a protest should still feel safe. Planning ahead can reduce the chance for unexpected threats or dangers. Make sure you survey the area well in advance. Think about all of the potential risks to someone at the protest, and identify what you can do to reduce or remove the chance of something going wrong.
- ✓ Pick a time and location. Different dates, times and locations will have different impacts. Think about who will be protesting and who you want to target. Causing maximum inconvenience (for example in peak hour traffic) may not always result in the best outcome or public sympathy for your issue.
- ✓ Make sure you clean up when you're done. Remember that people have to use that space after you're finished, so leave it the way you found it.



### Communicating your issue

- ✓ Find creative and photogenic ways to portray your action.
- ✓ Present your issue in a way that makes it easy to understand and that explains why you need to take direct action.
- ✓ Put out a press release.
- ✓ Start a blog or spread the message using a hashtag in your social media networks.
- ✓ Avoid or explain jargon.
- ✓ Give photographers a caption that explains your action and who you are.
- ✓ Use symbolic actions and behaviour (such as being calm, polite, reasonable) to present yourselves as the good guys.
- ✓ Speakers can inspire and educate the crowd, but keep the speeches short and sweet. Try to line up a diverse group, so that as many people as possible will feel involved.

### Work with others

- ✓ Build links with the local community and local issues.
- ✓ Find respectable allies.
- ✓ Use local or community media to spread awareness and understanding of what you are doing.
- ✓ Create your own zine or social media platform to get across your message and highlight when other media portray your action unfairly.

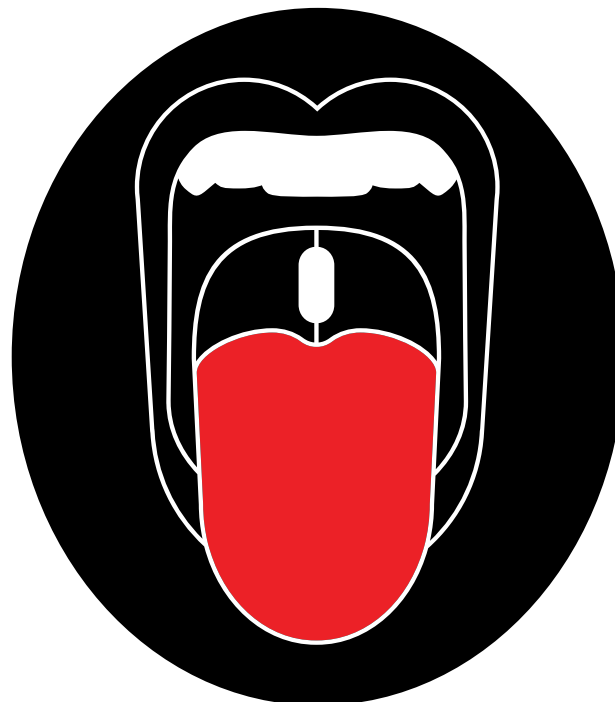
### Legal Advice

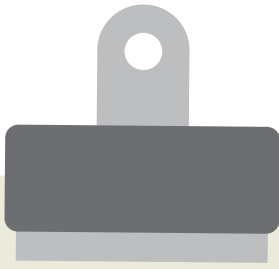
Direct action may involve breaking the law. If you are in any doubt, you should seek legal advice before taking action. If you are to break the law better be aware of it and prepared for the consequences.

### Links:

[www.justanswer.com/ireland-law](http://www.justanswer.com/ireland-law) -Ask an Irish Lawyer

[www.flac.ie](http://www.flac.ie) - FLAC (Free Legal Aid Centres)





## **Courage is Contagious – an Irish activist’s thoughts on direct action in Ireland**

**by Nancy Serrano**

During my undergraduate studies at the University of Limerick, I became involved with running the Environmental Society. In November 2000 we organised a trip to the *UN Climate Change Summit (COP6)* in the Hague, with other environmental and social issues college groups. Participating in the counter-summit workshops and demonstrations was my first experience of the international global justice scene and it blew my mind.

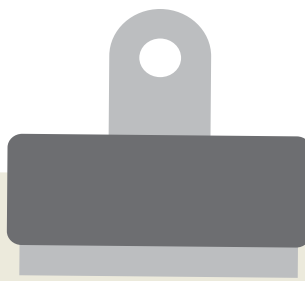
We were buzzing on our way home and full of new-found motivation and inspiration. So, on the ferry we decided to form *Gluaiseacht for Global Justice* ([www.gluaiseacht.ie](http://www.gluaiseacht.ie)), an all-island network for primarily college-based global justice groups. Gluaiseacht uses popular tactics that we learnt about primarily through visiting UK-based campaigns against the Faslane Nuclear Submarine Base ([www.faslane365.org](http://www.faslane365.org)) and the Sellafield Nuclear Power Plant ([stopnuclearpoweruk.net](http://stopnuclearpoweruk.net)). Disillusioned with the traditional ways of expressing ourselves politically, given the many examples of corrupt politicians and the non-participative ‘democracy’ we live in, we strongly latched on to the feelings of empowerment that we had experienced at the COP6 demonstrations and at the Faslane and Sellafield blockades.

Members of Gluaiseacht have become involved in the climate justice movement by organising Climate Camps in Ireland ([www.climatecamp.ie](http://www.climatecamp.ie)) and taking part in UK Climate Camps. These camps look at how we can take direct action against the main causes of climate change ([www.climatecamp.org.uk](http://www.climatecamp.org.uk)). Many Gluaiseacht participants have been involved with the Rossport Solidarity Camp over the years. The Rossport Solidarity Camp does not solely engage in direct action, but uses

it in parallel with all the other usual legal channels such as making submissions at the oral hearings. The Shell to Sea campaign ([www.shelltosea.com](http://www.shelltosea.com)) has successfully used direct action for the last 11 years to frustrate, delay and try to stop Shell’s destructive project. We take direct action because the government has failed us. The authorities that are supposed to protect communities and the environment have refused to act, so we have no choice but to protect it ourselves. Shell’s Corrib Gas Project is already a decade late and three times over budget - impressive for a rural community fighting one of the biggest multinationals in the world!

Direct action speaks of the courage and determination that people have to voluntarily put themselves in harm’s way to stop a project, not because they wish to be heroes or martyrs, but because they have been left with no other choice. It takes time to overcome the fear of ‘breaking the law’ since as we are all conditioned into thinking that the law must always be right, right? Wrong. Overcoming this fear recently myself has given me new freedom to act. Direct action is not something that appeals to everyone, but we must not dismiss those individuals who have the courage to act in this way. As Frederick Douglass the US anti-slavery speaker said (1857):

*“If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet depreciate agitation...want crops without plowing up the ground, they want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters.... Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.”*



## Pressure on Politicians: by Stephen Burns

My first introduction to the harmful effects of international rules created by rich countries on countries in the Global South came during a training course by Viatores Christi for those preparing to work as volunteers overseas. With Conall O’Caoimh, then Campaigns officer with Comhlámh, we worked on case studies that opened my eyes to the way global international institutions operate.

In 2006 I moved to the island of St. Vincent where I worked for a year as a science teacher. I saw firsthand how difficult it is for small producers to compete with heavily subsidised produce from Europe and the U.S. However, there were also positive stories, in particular the premium price that Fair Trade paid to some banana farmers.

On my return home, I kept myself informed by attending courses such as *“Comhlámh’s Trade Justice”* and *“Introduction to Development”* and becoming involved in campaigning for trade justice. Before the June 2009 European Elections, I participated in email campaigns to the candidates and was amazed how simple it was to be involved.

In June 2010 the Irish government put trade agreements with African countries to the Dáil to be ratified, before many of the African countries involved had even agreed to these trade agreements. In protest the Trade Justice Group wrote to the Minister for Overseas Development, Peter Power. During Africa Day we discussed the problem with hundreds of people and asked them to sign a petition which we then sent with the letter. This was an excellent opportunity to raise awareness about trade justice with the public. We also wrote letters to other TDs, in particular, those who were party spokespersons for trade, or on the relevant committee in the Dáil. Some of these letters thanked TDs for speaking out against European trade policy. It was clear from the replies that certain politicians were in support of our views and also amazing that others didn’t even bother to reply.

I have taken part in campaigns with other groups too, including the Stop Climate Chaos campaign

to pressurise TDs to produce a Climate Bill that would help to reduce Ireland’s carbon footprint and promote global climate justice. All TDs were invited to a hotel next to Leinster House to sign a commitment to produce a worthwhile Climate Bill. I met face to face with my elected representatives and discussed the issue. I was quite nervous that day. The organisers had a list of questions and advice on how to interact which helped me to prepare. I felt great after, the TDs were so easy to talk to and made me feel very comfortable. It was challenging also, the TDs were well prepared and knew a lot about the issues we were highlighting. I have also written to my TDs and gathered signatures for petitions for the Dóchas campaign, Act Now on 2015 that is asking the Irish Government to meet their commitment of 0.7% of GNP to their overseas Aid budget.

Global justice, I believe, must be part of our lifestyle so I have tried to integrate this into my work as a teacher. Over the last two years we have celebrated *“Fair Trade Fortnight”* by opening up a Fair Trade shop in the school where I work. This shop is run by a group of 5th year students. For those weeks the tea, coffee and sugar in the staffroom were also changed to Fair Trade. Unfortunately I haven’t yet persuaded the principal to make that a permanent change! Also this year a Development Studies module for Transition Years has been added to my timetable.

I am also involved with my sending agency, Viatores Christi and have set up a Global Justice group to highlight problems caused by us in the Global North. I came to realise that to have a positive impact on people’s lives we all have a part to play. Changes to our lifestyles are not enough we have to tackle the root causes of poverty and global inequality as well. A few years ago, I would never have considered contacting a politician but now I feel my campaigning is holding them to account. Nowadays, I look forward to debating with my local representatives in the knowledge that I can make a difference.

# 8.

## Lobbying The Powers That Be

*“Ten people who speak make more noise than ten thousand who are silent.”*

- Napoleon Bonaparte

Lobbying means trying to influence the actions of decision makers such as business leaders and politicians in order to pass legislation or conduct an activity that will help a particular group. It is a focused form of advocacy that can be done by anyone.

Credit: [www.businessdictionary.com/definition/lobbying.html#ixzz22rPZnzzB](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/lobbying.html#ixzz22rPZnzzB)

### Other links:

[www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lobbying](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lobbying)

[www.odi.org.uk/resources/details.asp?id=5278&title=lobbying](http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/details.asp?id=5278&title=lobbying)

Advocacy means arguing for a cause or policy that may or may not require changes in the law.

*“We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.”*

- Elie Wiesel

### Why lobby?

Developing countries are hugely affected by policies and legislation agreed in Ireland and the EU by our politicians. So, in order to influence this legislation, we have to talk to our representatives.

It's important because corporations spend €750 million - €1 billion lobbying in Brussels every year. There are somewhere between 15,000 and 20,000 lobbyists in Brussels (and these are the ones we know about). The figures are vague because there

is no transparency on this topic in Brussels. Over 70% represent corporate interests<sup>12</sup>. Lobbyists do not have to register and it can be extremely difficult to find out who is being lobbied and on what issues. There are also a number of lobbyists in Ireland, and no lobby register here either.

The 'revolving door' phenomenon is also common, where EU politicians or civil servants within the EU end up working as corporate lobbyists and possibly using privileged information and contacts, and vice versa. This increases the likelihood that politicians will be more interested in helping businesses to profit, than working for their citizens - us! - or people in developing countries.

### Useful links:

[www.politicalreform.ie/category/topic/lobbying/](http://www.politicalreform.ie/category/topic/lobbying/)

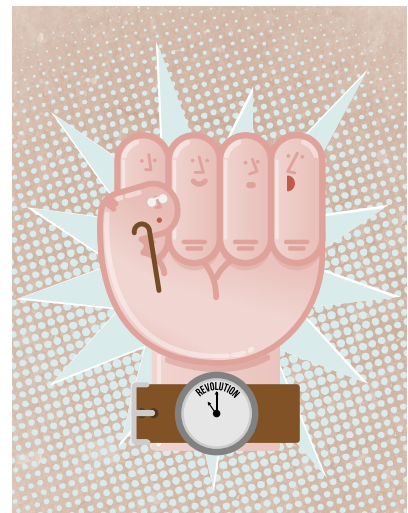
[www.corporateeurope.org](http://www.corporateeurope.org)

[www.alter-eu.org](http://www.alter-eu.org)

[www.eapn.ie/eapn/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/definitive-guide-to-lobbying-eu-institutions-training.pdf](http://www.eapn.ie/eapn/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/definitive-guide-to-lobbying-eu-institutions-training.pdf)

[www.tcd.ie/policy-institute/assets/pdf/Cronin.pdf](http://www.tcd.ie/policy-institute/assets/pdf/Cronin.pdf)  
-Lobbying in Ireland: How does it measure?

“Revolution,” Sean Gibbons, Higher National Diploma in Illustration, Ballyfermot College of Further Education



<sup>12</sup> [http://www.actionaid.org.uk/100300/corporate\\_lobbying.html](http://www.actionaid.org.uk/100300/corporate_lobbying.html)

# 9.

## Using Ireland's Political System

### Why?

Ireland is a democracy. Of course, there are debates about how well our type of democracy works, but in many ways we are lucky to live in such a political system, and shouldn't take it for granted. In fact as we get involved in the political system, we can also support efforts to improve it so that it is more transparent, accountable, and fair.

We might be cynical about politicians, but we have elected them and their job is to act on our behalf. We pay taxes and have a right to know how our money is being spent. Irish politicians are much more open to hearing from and responding to their constituents than politicians in many other countries. We can use this to create a better world!

The government is responsible for making sure that we are informed, free to publicly criticise them, and able to present alternatives. We have both a right and duty to have a say in how our government works and what it does. If we are not involved, our government can make decisions without being aware of our opinions or needs. Our job as citizens is to raise issues of concern with them.

Comhlámh has been campaigning on EPAs (Economic partnership Agreements-Free Trade deals being negotiated between the EU and African, Caribbean and Pacific countries) for many years, alongside other trade justice organisations and movements across Ireland, Europe and the world. Its campaigning actions have made a difference. Ireland is one of the countries in Europe which takes a progressive stance on EPAs, regularly speaking up to raise concerns of developing countries about trade deals, and to call for more flexibility. This would not have happened without public pressure from campaigners voicing their concern to policy-makers and their political representatives.

### Starting out

**Before getting involved it may be useful to know:**

- Who is in power and what they are responsible for;
- How they got there;
- How policies, laws and decisions are made;
- When and how to target your political representatives;
- Your rights.

The Constitution ([www.constitution.ie](http://www.constitution.ie)) outlines all citizens' fundamental rights. The rights are under five broad areas: personal, the family, education, private property and religion. A citizen can use the Constitution to sue the government. For example, in 1995 Patricia McKenna successfully brought a case that the government couldn't use government money to press for a 'yes' vote in an EU treaty referendum.

### Who's in charge?

**TDs and the Dáil - Key facts**

Ireland's parliament is made up of 2 Houses, together known as the Oireachtas or Parliament:

1. Dáil Éireann (Irish Parliament or House of Representatives)
2. Seanad Éireann (the Senate).

At the moment we elect 166 Teachta Dála (TDs) to Dáil Éireann. Ireland is divided into 43 areas (constituencies). Each constituency is represented by 3-5 TDs. They are either a member of a political party or an independent representative.

After elections, the political parties assess who has the most seats. If no party has a majority, they engage in negotiations towards a coalition with other parties. These TDs form a government, which is led by the Taoiseach (prime minister) and the Tánaiste (deputy prime minister), and is responsible for making laws and formulating policy.



The other TDs make up the opposition. They are responsible for holding the government to account and representing other views in the Dáil. They can do this in a number of ways, for example using parliamentary questions (PQ) and motions, contributing to debates, and sitting on committees. You can send your TD a PQ to ask on your behalf or ask them to represent your views in debates and on a committee. Current TDs are listed at [www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/tdssenators/](http://www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/tdssenators/)  
For more information: [www.kildarestreet.com/tds/](http://www.kildarestreet.com/tds/)

## Senators and the Seanad - Key facts

Senators also pass legislation, but the Seanad's powers are much weaker than those of the Dáil. It can only delay laws with which it disagrees, rather than veto them. On the plus side, it often has time to debate issues at more length and in more detail than the Dáil. In theory, the Seanad does not recognise party connections. However, in practice its make-up tends to reflect party strengths in the Dáil, and many Senators vote along party lines. Unlike TDs, Senators are not elected by the Irish public. The Seanad's 60 Senators are elected as follows:

- 11 by the Taoiseach;
- 43 by five panels representing vocational interests (Cultural and Educational, Agricultural, Labour, Industrial and Commercial, and Administrative);
- Six by the graduates of the National University of Ireland and the University of Dublin (Trinity College).

### Links:

[www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/about/seanad/](http://www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/about/seanad/)  
[www.citizensinformation.ie/en/government\\_in\\_ireland/national\\_government/houses\\_of\\_the\\_oireachtas/the\\_seanad.html](http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/government_in_ireland/national_government/houses_of_the_oireachtas/the_seanad.html)

## The President

The Presidency is mainly a ceremonial role. The President acts on the advice and authority of the government and an advisory Council of State (made up in part by ex-Presidents). However, the President does perform a few legal functions. S/he is responsible for signing legislation and can, before signing a Bill, seek a Supreme Court ruling on whether it violates the Constitution.

## Local Authorities

City or county councils ([http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/government\\_in\\_ireland/local\\_and\\_regional\\_government/local\\_authorities.html](http://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/government_in_ireland/local_and_regional_government/local_authorities.html)) are run by councillors who are elected every five years. You can contact them on issues such as planning, housing, waste, facilities (such as libraries, swimming pools, and parks). Often politicians spend some time as councillors before they become TDs.

## Departments

Government business is carried out by departments (listed in full at [www.gov.ie/en/tag/departments](http://www.gov.ie/en/tag/departments)). If you want to know who's working on an issue, call the departments and ask or check out their websites. For many issues, you will need to contact more than one department. Civil servants can have a lot of influence so it's worth being in touch with them.



**"The Mission of the Department of Foreign Affairs is to advance Ireland's political and economic interests in the European Union and in the wider world, to promote Ireland's contribution to international peace, security and development both through the European Union and through active participation in international organisations, in particular, the United Nations, to protect our citizens abroad, and to pursue reconciliation and partnership on the island of Ireland." <http://foreignaffairs.gov.ie/>**

If you're interested in global justice issues you may interact with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFA) and its subsection Irish Aid. Irish Aid ([www.irishaid.gov.ie](http://www.irishaid.gov.ie)) is the Irish Government's programme of assistance to developing countries. Ireland's development cooperation policy is an integral part of Ireland's wider foreign policy.

For public service information contact the Citizen's Information Board, [www.citizensinformation.ie](http://www.citizensinformation.ie), visit a Citizens Information Centre or call the Citizens Information Phone Service 1890 777 121.

## Committees

Both the Dáil and the Seanad have a committee system. Each key issue has its own committee, such as foreign affairs and trade, justice, health, environment, and agriculture. Committees advise on a wide range of legislative, social, economic and financial business. They examine, debate

and amend Bills in detail and hear presentations from different civil society actors on topics of relevance. Visit <http://debates.oireachtas.ie/committees/2011/>

On June 19th 2012, Nessa Ní Chasaide from Debt and Development Coalition Ireland addressed the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade regarding Ireland's engagement with international financial institutions and in particular, the World Bank. She focused on four key areas: the debt distress levels and debt cancellation needs of southern countries; the need for responsible lending and borrowing standards and practices; the roles of private sector investment and the International Finance Corporation in the World Bank Group; and the need for democratisation at the World Bank.

<http://debates.oireachtas.ie/FOJ/2012/06/19/00004.asp>

### Make a Submission

A detailed account on how to make written and oral submissions to Oireachtas Committees, protocols to follow, as well as your rights and duties can be found on the following link:

[www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/media/michelle/Guidelines-on-making-Submissions-and-Presentations.pdf](http://www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/media/michelle/Guidelines-on-making-Submissions-and-Presentations.pdf)

A submission made by a coalition of partners campaigning under Turn off the Red Light: End Prostitution and Sex Trafficking in Ireland on the "Discussion Document on Future Direction of Prostitution Legislation can be found on the link [www.turnofftheredlight.ie/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/TORL-Joint-Submission-.pdf](http://www.turnofftheredlight.ie/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/TORL-Joint-Submission-.pdf).

### Ask a Parliamentary Question

On Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays TDs may ask members of the government questions relating to Public Affairs connected with their departments and official responsibilities. They reply on a 5-week rota basis, meaning that every minister can be questioned regularly. On Tuesdays and Wednesdays the Taoiseach answers questions that relate to his/her department. In 2009 about 54,000 parliamentary questions (PQs) were processed. Replies are published as part of the Debates and form part of the Official Report. Visit: [www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/oireachtasbusiness/parliamentaryquestions/](http://www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/oireachtasbusiness/parliamentaryquestions/)

### Who decides our laws?

To make new laws and policies the government presents its proposals as Bills or Motions. These are debated and amended in committee and in the Dáil, and agreed on, if necessary by a vote. Once passed by the Dáil, it is sent to the Seanad to be debated and passed by them. Finally, the President signs it. It is now an Act and civil servants put it into practice.

### Get your voice heard

When the Bill is in committee or the Dáil you can contact your TDs and the TDs on the relevant committees. Ask them to voice your concerns or table an amendment to a Bill on your behalf. If your TD is not on the relevant committee ask them to contact the TD in their party who is.

### Where to find out what's going on

- You can find out what bills are being considered by asking the policy staff of non-governmental organisations who work on the issue you're interested in.
- Find the Dáil's weekly agenda, published each Wednesday, at [www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/oireachtasbusiness/weeklyagenda](http://www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/oireachtasbusiness/weeklyagenda)
- Sign up for email updates of what's happening in the Dáil, Seanad and committees at [www.oireachtas.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=/documents/ThisWeek/subscriptions.htm](http://www.oireachtas.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=/documents/ThisWeek/subscriptions.htm)
- Search or sign up for the Oireachtas Brief, the information service for social justice NGOs and voluntary sector activists interested in issues of poverty and social exclusion in the Oireachtas [www.oireachtasbrief.ie](http://www.oireachtasbrief.ie)
- Watch debates on Oireachtas TV - [www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/watchlisten](http://www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/watchlisten) - this is really handy! You can go back and create or edit a clip yourself. For example, in 2010 Comhlámh created a clip of the Foreign Affairs Committee hearing on trade justice issues - [www.comhlamh.org/take-action-on-epas-now-e-action-june-2010.html](http://www.comhlamh.org/take-action-on-epas-now-e-action-june-2010.html) (scroll down a bit)
- [www.oireachtas.ie](http://www.oireachtas.ie) also gives names of all Committee members - and name and contacts for the Clerk who serves the Committees. It has a search facility and verbatim text of all debates. It has contact details for each member of the Oireachtas and the text of all Bills in progress through the Houses, and all Acts that have been passed into law.

## Who can vote?

Citizenship	Types of election
Irish (including refugees)	All elections and referenda
Graduates of Trinity College Dublin and the National University of Ireland (NUI), Outgoing Seanad, Incoming Dáil, Members of County Councils and Panels	Seanad
UK	General, European and local elections
Other EU Citizens	European and local elections
Non EU Citizens	Local elections

### Ireland's Political Parties

At the moment Ireland has the following parties: Fianna Fail ([www.fiannafail.ie](http://www.fiannafail.ie)), Fine Gael ([www.finegae.org](http://www.finegae.org)), Labour ([www.labour.ie](http://www.labour.ie)), The Green Party ([www.greenparty.ie](http://www.greenparty.ie)), Sinn Fein ([www.sinnfein.ie](http://www.sinnfein.ie)), The Socialist Party ([www.socialistparty.net](http://www.socialistparty.net)), and People before Profit ([www.peoplebeforeprofit.ie](http://www.peoplebeforeprofit.ie)).

The number and type of political parties have been determined by the social divisions in Ireland, and the history of the country. Some main differences between parties are their views on environmental sustainability, worker's rights, and ownership and distribution of wealth. You can read more about their history and policies on their websites.

### Join a political party

One obvious way to engage in the Irish political system is to join a political party. Visit a party's website to find out how to join them. Most have an application form and charge a small fee. If you are a member you can:

- Attend meetings, propose motions, raise issues, vote on party decisions;

- Join a section e.g. a women's section – a particular space for those interested in women's issues;
- Run for office

### Stand for election

If you are at least 21 years of age and an Irish citizen you can run for election to Dáil Éireann.

### Local government

You don't have to be an Irish citizen to be elected to local government. In 2007, Nigerian refugee and politician Rotimi Adebare was elected mayor of Portlaoise. If you are at least 18 years old and resident in Ireland you can nominate yourself or be nominated by a registered voter. You can be nominated in more than one area and you do not have to be affiliated to a political party. There is normally a period of one week during which candidates can be nominated for election and this takes place approximately four weeks before the polling day.



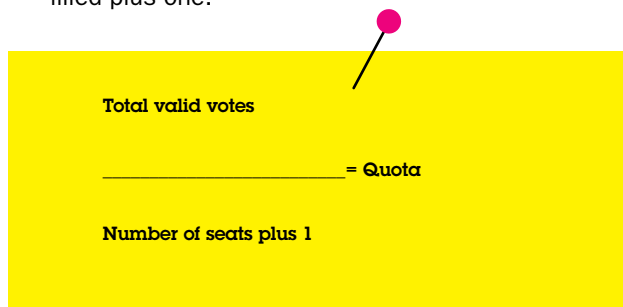
## Voting

The main way that we act as citizens is by voting in elections. To legitimately be in power governments must hold regular, free and fair elections. You vote in person at an official polling station. Some overseas workers and students, people with disabilities, members of the Defence Force and the Garda Síochána can use the postal vote.

## Making the most of your vote

Most European countries use the list or 'first past the post' system. This means the candidates with the most votes win. In Ireland, we use the Single Transferable Vote (STV). This is a system of preferential voting called Proportional Representation. You vote not only for the political party you want, but also for the candidate you want.

When you vote you get to rank some or all candidates on your ballot slip. To win candidates must get enough votes to achieve the quota. The quota is calculated by dividing the total number of valid votes received, by the number of seats to be filled plus one.



Once a candidate has achieved the quota, their leftover votes (in excess of the quota) are transferred to their voters' second choices. Also, once the candidates with the least votes are eliminated, their votes are redistributed according to their voters' second preference. This continues for as many counts as are needed until all seats are filled. This means that your vote may go towards anyone you have given a preference to, whether they are your first or last choice. You do not have to fill in all of the boxes.

It sounds quite complicated, but it's also quite an interesting system, and makes for long dramatic counts, which many Irish people enjoy!

## Types of Elections

**General election:** To elect TDs to the Dáil and is held every five years

**By-election:** To fill a political office that has become vacant between general elections

**Local election:** To appoint local public representatives to each city and county council

**European election:** To elect members of the European parliament (MEPs)

**Seanad elections:** To elect Senators to the Seanad. This is held within 90 days of Dáil Éireann being dissolved

**Presidential election:** To choose the President every seven years

**Referendum:** To vote for or against a specific proposal, law or policy

## Registering to vote

You must be at least 18 years old and have your name on the electoral register. Check the register at your local authority or county registrar, public libraries, post offices, Garda stations and online at [www.checktheregister.ie](http://www.checktheregister.ie)

"Mother Tongue," Garth Nicholls, Higher National Diploma in Digital Media, Ballyfermot College of Further Education.



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## Talking to your political representative

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#### **Don't worry**

While to begin with it may seem a bit scary to start a conversation with your political representative about big and complicated global issues, many people feel very empowered and engaged once they get into the swing of it! Remember it's just a conversation. You may find that you know more about the topic than they do!

Keep in mind that you can make politicians in Ireland aware of the needs of people around the world who don't have a voice here, and who may not be lucky enough to have access to their own decision-makers.

If you are still anxious about lobbying your representative do contact us for advice or look for lobby skills training.

#### **Your Goal**

You want to build a relationship with your representative and become indispensable to them. Gaining changes to policy and winning credibility takes time. To keep them aware that you are there:

- **Stay in contact with them:** Send them your newsletters, any research you publish, invite them to speak at conferences/public meetings you organise, attend their events and other events they may be attending, and so on.
- **Be reliable:** Let them depend on you for some things they need
- **Let losses go:** Don't harp on old battles or attack them for their record on your issue, and do not disparage government or politics.
- **Avoid jargon:** Do not use technical terms or acronyms, unless you are certain that they will understand them.
- **Help them:** Focus on how you are helping them to do their job, to stick to their mandate, and live up to their responsibilities.

- **Don't pester!** Don't expect them to show up at everything you organise, nor that they read everything you send. Just that they see your publications and events' invitations will keep them aware of you, and your issue.

#### **Finding your representatives**

For TDs and Senators' contact details call the Oireachtas on 01-6183333, or visit [www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/tdssenators](http://www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/tdssenators). Contact your MEPs in either their Brussels or their Irish office, visit [www.europarl.ie/view/en/irish\\_meps.html](http://www.europarl.ie/view/en/irish_meps.html). When choosing who to target bear in mind that it's probably best to concentrate on your own constituency representatives, spokespeople, or Ministers working on your area of interest, as well as relevant committee members.

Before you contact them find out their interests, what committee(s) they are on, and any actions they have taken on your issue. You should also find out who is the chair or vice chair of your European political group and/or who is the Irish political party spokesperson on your issue. Prioritise lobbying full committee members over substitutes.

#### **Letters & Emails**

Postcards, standard letters and standard e-mails can be used to highlight an issue, especially if sent by a large number of people, however your representatives are most likely to respond to a personal letter or e-mail. These must be signed and contain your name and address. If they can't see that you are definitely one of their constituents, the letter is likely to be binned. They may write back to you explaining their position on an issue and actions they have taken. See this as an opportunity for further engagement and reply to them. Perhaps set up a meeting or phone call.

#### **Pledges**

Pledges are a useful tool, which help you record your impact. You can draft a pledge on your issue, and request election candidates or politicians to sign up to it publicly.

## Phone Call

Have a list of the points you want to make ready, including the action you want them to take on your behalf. Send a follow up email or letter documenting your conversation and sending any follow up information.

## Fact to Face

During elections your representatives may come to you, so be prepared. When they come knocking have your points, questions and things you want them to do ready! At other times you will need to set up a meeting.

## Setting up a meeting

Write to them explaining your concerns and requesting a meeting. After 3-4 work days follow-up with a telephone call. This is important as they may not contact you but are more likely to agree to meet if you stay in touch. Make it easy for them to meet with you. Offer several possibilities and do your best to accommodate their schedule. Another way to meet your TDs or MEPs is to attend lobby events organised by organisations such as Comhlámh.

In 2001 anti-racism campaigners in Ireland succeeded in getting all political parties who have had candidates elected to Dáil Éireann to sign up to an Anti-Racism Political Protocol. This Protocol promised that during elections candidates would avoid inciting hatred or prejudice by scapegoating people on the grounds of 'race', colour, nationality or ethnic or national origin, religious belief and membership of the Traveller Community. In the run up to the general election in February 2011 ENAR Ireland updated the Protocol and got candidates to publicly recommit to it. (For more visit [www.dorasluimni.org](http://www.dorasluimni.org), go to 'Press Releases' or European Network Against Racism (ENAR) Ireland, [enarireland.org/2011](http://enarireland.org/2011)).

## Preparing for the meeting

Identify concrete things that the person you're meeting can do for you, as well as your long term objective. Learn in advance where your representative stands on your issue or the work of your organisation. You could invite a board member or community person, already known to them, along to the meeting.

### Prepare a good fact sheet

This fact sheet should prepare your representative to speak to your issue, and answer any challenges or questions they may face on it. It needs to include the arguments for your position, but also to counter the arguments against it. Explain how your organisation or issue affects voters in their constituency.

If you are going to the meeting with other people share out your points and questions and decide on a speaking order. Each person sticks to their point and responds to the questions asked in relation to their point. For each point, mention evidence, impact, and the change you're looking for. You may have to prioritise your points, as you might run out of time and not get to cover everything.

Agree on one person to chair (ideally someone who is not presenting most of the information). They are responsible for introductions, thanking the representative for the meeting, keeping time, taking notes, summarising at the end, and taking follow up actions after the meeting.

Don't take up too much of their time - the meeting will probably last around 30 minutes and less than an hour.

## During the meeting

### Be Punctual, Prepared, & Polite!

Dress appropriately (normal business clothes). Start with a short introduction: Who you are, what you do, and what you need from them. Refer to your fact sheet and make sure at the end they have a copy of it in their hand.

Present only the pre-agreed points. Don't diverge into details. If you do not know the answer to a question, say you will find out and get back to them – and follow through!

Let them know when you are making your final points. Before you leave, ask how you can be of help to them, and thank them for their time. Finish by your chair listing what has been agreed during the meeting, who will do what, and laying the groundwork for further contact.

## After the meeting

Send a follow-up letter thanking them for the meeting, briefly summarising what was discussed and what they committed to do. Provide any information that you promised during the visit.

## Getting local media coverage

You could use local media coverage to help publicise the fact that your representative supports your issue, or that they don't! You might want to check with them first. After meeting your candidate, you could issue a press release or write a letter to the local paper outlining the issue and your representative's position on it. Blogging or tweeting about it are also options.

### Links

Friends of the Earth Wales have produced an online resource containing good advice on how to lobby your MEPs, which is also relevant if you're targeting local or national politicians. You can read it online at: [www.foe.co.uk/resource/how\\_tos/cyw\\_69\\_lobby\\_mep.pdf](http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/how_tos/cyw_69_lobby_mep.pdf)

## Training on how to lobby

Check <http://www.activelink.ie> and Dóchas Wednesday News [www.dochas.ie](http://www.dochas.ie) for training courses and workshops.

If you have any questions please don't hesitate to get in touch with us. Comhlámh lobbies the government and the EU on trade policy and we can put you in touch with people lobbying on many issues.









# [www.comhlamh.org](http://www.comhlamh.org)

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