

# *Public Relations Global Network CEO Interviews – United Europe?*

*An analysis of requirements and  
habits of European journalists*

- 14 European countries
- 165 participants

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*Joint study of European PRGN partner agencies*

*Wiesbaden/Geneva, April 2014*

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# 1. Introduction - our survey approach



## » Objective

What are the most important requirements and habits of European journalists regarding CEO interviews?

What are the key differences between journalists from different European countries in their approach to CEO interviews?

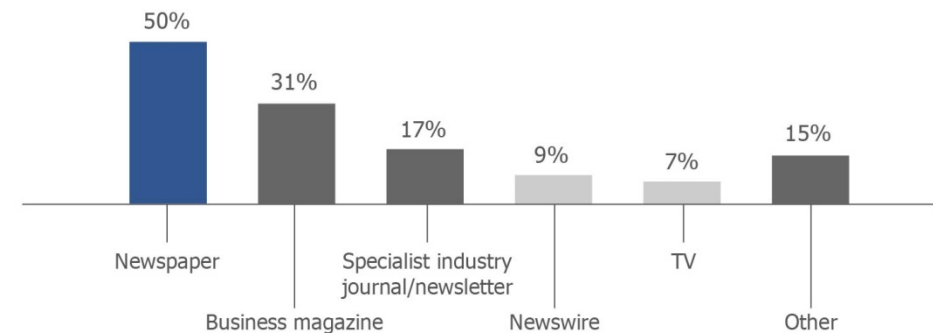
## » Stakeholders/Methodology

- 15 PRGN partner agencies from 14 European countries
- 165 journalists with economic background
- 7 on-topic questions
- Online survey

## » Analysis structure Europe / each country

- Top results
- Top take-aways for CEOs
- Appendix with detailed q&a from the survey

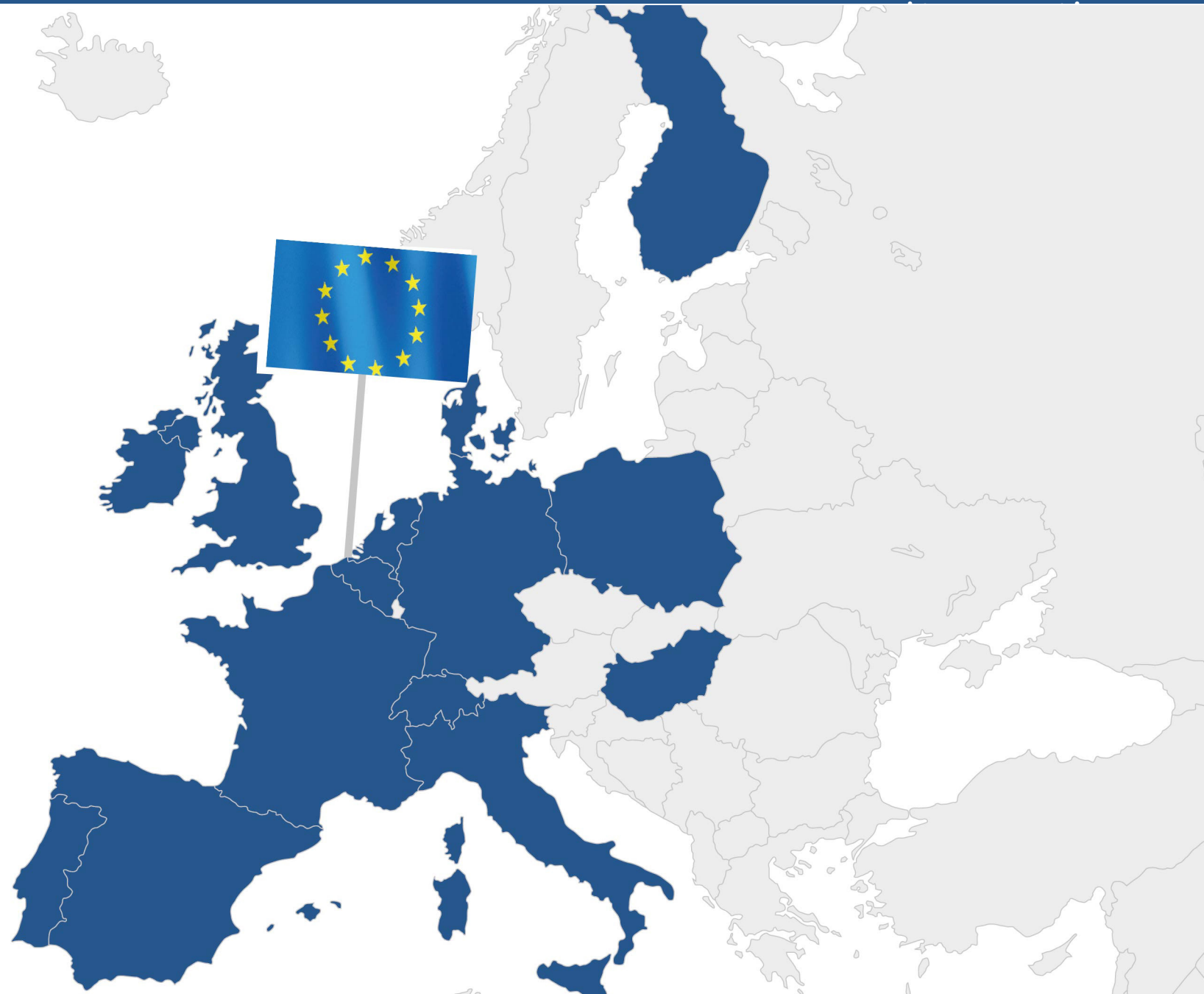
## » Newspaper dominating: Share of media in the survey



## » Majority of the participants publishes both paper and online



## 2. European results (average for all 165 participants)



# CEO interviews: Requirements and habits of journalists in Europe



## Research sources for journalists

- 64%** Company annual report
- 59%** Company press releases
- 58% each** General media coverage/  
previous interviews

## Social media research channels for journalists

- 54%** Business networks (e.g. Xing, LinkedIn)
- 50%** Twitter
- 41%** Facebook

## Interviews: Preferred medium / place

- 67%** Company office/production site
- 55%** Restaurant, bar, public places
- 53%** Phone



## Most important characteristics / skills of CEOs from the journalists point of view

- 92%** Knowledge of the company and its market
- 86%** Personality
- 72%** Track record, performance

## Top interview "No Go's" for CEOs

- 75%** Being arrogant
- 73%** Not answering critical questions
- 62%** Talking in platitudes

## Reviewing quotes and articles

- 41%** of the journalists **always** allow to review  
**quotes**
- 21%** of the journalists would allow to review  
the **whole article**, depending on the  
relationship with company/PR agency

# CEO interviews: Requirements and habits of journalists in Europe



## *Top 6 recommendations*

### **1. Know your IR- and PR-Documents: Annual reports are a highly relevant research source**

The majority of European journalists chose annual reports and press releases as their top research sources.

### **2. Be well informed about what media write about you and your company**

European journalists have a close look on your past media coverage, trying to elicit additional and exclusive information from you. So take care of what has been written about you and your company – and remember what you said in past interviews!

### **3. Journalists want to get an impression of your company – on site**

The majority of the European journalists wants to see their interview partner in person, e.g. in the company's offices or production sites. Meeting in a informal atmosphere, e.g. in a restaurant, also seems to be adequate – for off-the record conversations perhaps.

### **4. Be yourself and know the company you represent**

Convince journalists with deep knowledge of your company and its markets and be aware of how much your personality affects media judgement, even more than your actual track record.

# CEO interviews: Requirements and habits of journalists in Europe



## *Top 6 recommendations*

### **5. Be humble, open and factual**

Journalists should be treated with the same respect as you give a client/customer – stick to the facts and be as open as positive, even to difficult questions.

### **6. Know the rules of the game**

41% of the European journalists will give you the chance to review your direct quotes. Sometimes – e.g. when there is a good relationship with the PR agency and the journalist – you can even get the whole article. But don't bet on that and watch for the regional differences!

# CEO interviews: Requirements and habits of journalists in Europe



## *Top 10 take-aways (European average vs. country-specific results)*

### **1. Journalists want to be independent? Not always!**

In Anglo-Saxon countries (UK, Ireland) and South European countries (Spain, Portugal, Italy), it is not natural to let the interviewee review quotes – not to mention the whole article. Mid, North and East European journalists are more relaxed (The Netherlands, France, Switzerland, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Denmark, Finland) and usually allow to review at least the quotes, sometimes even the whole article, depending on the relationship with the company/PR agency. The German and Dutch results are indeed noteworthy: In Germany, it is common practice to let the interviewee review the quotes for 54% of the journalists – but 75% never allow to review the whole article. The other way around in the Netherlands, where 67% of the participants said, they would allow to review even the whole article.

### **2. Journalists in many countries strongly influenced by previous CEO interviews**

Those interviews are an important source of information for an European average of 58%. This result shows a gap when you break it down on country level: For Italy (89%), Portugal (88%), The Netherlands (78%) and the UK (78%) the importance is above average. In Spain (39%), France (38%) and Finland (36%) we see a lower relevance of previous interviews. This shows, that CEOs shouldn't expect that their previous statements will be forgotten and that journalists are probably biased by interviews as a top research source.

### **3. Annual reports crucial for research purposes**

Top research source with European average result of 64%. The Netherlands (89%), Portugal (88%) and Ireland (86%) lie above the average. None of the French journalists chose annual reports as a top 5 research source.



# CEO interviews: Requirements and habits of journalists in Europe



## *Top 10 take-aways (European average vs. country-specific results)*

### **4. Swiss journalists follow the swarm**

For 94% of them the general media coverage is the most important research source, versus 58% European average – followed by annual reports (72%) and previous CEO interviews (61%). So once a CEO of a company starts being written about in a certain way, it may be difficult to shift perception.

### **5. Social Media Professionals vs. Social Media Denier**

Somewhat less than expected, only 16% of all European journalists chose social media as a top 5 research source. The use of Social Media is very different in each European country. British journalists are frequently using the professional channels Twitter (89%) and Business Networks (78%) but are not interested in other Social Media platforms such as Facebook (14%). In Italy it seems that journalists prefer traditional ways to get their information – 56% are not using Social Media for research at all.

### **6. British and Irish journalists are somewhat reluctant to visit your company's office**

Only 33% (UK) and 43% (IE) want to make site visits, vs. 67% European average. However, both countries' editors - but especially the British - are very receptive to interviews via phone, as well as Danish journalists (both 100%). This is somewhat contrary to the fact, that the journalists in UK and Denmark are very much interested in the personality of the interviewed CEOs (both 100%). The best way to come to know a CEO is to meet the CEO in person!

### **7. Your education is a matter of importance – but only in Italy**

67% of the Italian journalists have a close look on the educational background. In all other European countries it is of far less importance – Finnish and British journalists almost ignore it.

# CEO interviews: Requirements and habits of journalists in Europe



## *Top 10 take-aways (European average vs. country-specific results)*

### **8. Italian and German journalists watch your private life**

Almost half of these journalists in Italy and Germany take your private life into account within their research activities, whereas especially their British, French, Spain and Finnish colleagues don't care. Some personal details can probably make a reportage much more interesting – who's the person behind the job?

### **9. Good manners preferred in Spain**

Especially Spanish journalists say that CEOs shouldn't show themselves as arrogant, 94% vs. 75% European consensus. Even interruptions during the interview are not welcome. From the journalists point of view that's what most damages the company's image.

### **10. Irish and Italian journalists don't accept a "no comment"**

Not answering on critical questions is the main interview no-go in these countries – for each 100% of the journalists vs. 75% European consensus. They very much expect to talk to a well-prepared CEO who's able to give answers to every question.