

# Workshop: "Extracting stories from your daily load and presenting them efficiently online" (10 April, Amsterdam)

**Objective: Boost the capacity of programme communication staff to tell programme-wide stories online.**

**Gareth Harding, Clear Europe**

## Main learning points

- Prepare thoroughly before writing. Be clear what type of story you are writing – a more personal blog, analysis, feature or op-ed.
- Know who you are writing for. Assume your reader knows nothing about the topic, axe all jargon and explain everything simply. Don't fall victim to the 'curse of knowledge.'
- Write your story in one or two sentences before you start the article. It will help you focus and prevent meandering.
- Interreg highlights are not stories for stories sake. There must be an underlying message. But be subtle. Hook the reader before bombarding them with messages.
- Look for unusual stories with unexpected twists or extraordinary characters. 'The first hospital in Europe with double nationality' in Interreg Highlight '[Medicine knows no borders](#)' story intrigues.
- Focus on people. Find one or two characters to drive the story. [UNHCR stories](#) are great at this.
- Splashes of colour – eyewitness descriptions or vivid quotes –keep readers interested. Like this from the Interreg Highlight article on [European cultural heritage](#):

A comforting sea breeze with birds squeaking in the sky – a tranquil moment on a day hike on the new route along the Baltic Sea coast in Latvia. In the meantime, a bunch of families have taken their children to try out how it is to work as an archaeologist in the Dutch countryside, and many Romanians are listening to a language quiz on Radio Europa. While these Europeans might not be aware of it, they're participating in a joint celebration.

- Give your story structure. One classic storytelling device is to start with the problem, then concentrate on the solution. "Back then...now...thanks to..."

- Headlines should act like adverts, intriguing readers and drawing them in. They should be backed up by a standfirst or subhead – a short description of what the article is about. Like this:

**Two Minutes of Happiness**

## **A Failed Journey on the African Migrant Trail**

**Majid Diallo set off for Europe carrying the expectations of his friends, family and village. But he didn't make it. His story is one of struggle, imprisonment, several brushes with death – and an excruciating return home.**

- Your opening paragraph is key. It should make the reader want to know more, using techniques like providing an eyewitness account, a surprising or shocking event, an intriguing happening, a colourful quote or rhetorical questions to involve the reader. Write and rewrite.
- Quotes should be quotable. Colour, contrast and simple, everyday language; not data, process and technocratic jargon. For example: “Many women gave birth on the road,” in Interreg Highlight ‘[Medicine knows no borders](#)’ article.
- Use social media to transport readers to your story. Tell short stories in tweets and Facebook posts. Make sure posts are visually rich and say something.
- Read and reread [Interact Communication Toolkit](#) and [Interreg Highlights instructions](#) for writers. Also, the European Commission’s ‘[How to Write Clearly](#).’
- Be bold. Experiment with innovative storytelling techniques. Try to have fun and never be boring.

### **Reminder**

If you have a story for [Interreg Highlights](#), please contact [eva.martinez@interact-eu.net](mailto:eva.martinez@interact-eu.net) and [linda.talve@interact-eu.net](mailto:linda.talve@interact-eu.net)