



[Research](#) - [How to cite this article](#) - [referees' reports](#) - [scheduling](#) - [metadata](#) - [PDF](#) - [Creative Commons](#)

[DOI](#): 10.4185/RLCS-65-2010-904-354-367-EN - ISSN 1138 - 5820 - RLCS # 65 - 2010

## Analysis of Institutional Press Releases and its Visibility in the Press

**José Antonio Alcoceba-Hernando**, Ph.D. [C. V.] Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology IV - Complutense University of Madrid

**Abstract:** The relationships between institutional communication and media communication influence the shaping of social representations of public issues. This research article analyses these relationships based on the case study of the external communication of a public institution, the press releases of Spain's Youth Institute (*Instituto de la Juventud*, aka, *Injuve*), during three years and their repercussion in the press during the same period of time. The results obtained in this research allowed drawing conclusions on the types of communication production of the aforementioned institution and the news treatment of such pieces of information by the printed and digital media. The press releases and the news items were studied using quantitative media content analysis which focused, especially, in referential issues like the information treatment, the thematic analysis, youth representations in the case of the releases; and the visibility of the press releases in the making of news

**Keywords:** Institutional communication; media communication; press analysis; representations of youth.

**Summary:** 1. Introduction. 2. Methodology. 3. Results. 4. Conclusions. 5. Bibliography. 6. Notes.

Translation by **Cruz Alberto Martínez-Arcos** (University of London)

### 1. Introduction

The following article aims to systematise the results of a research commissioned in 2008 by Spain's Youth Institute (*Injuve*) to a group of researchers from the Department of Sociology IV at the Complutense University of Madrid, as part of the [Studies on Information, Technology and Communications](#) of this institution

Previously, the *Injuve*, in view of the institutional need to investigate the media treatment of youth, had commissioned the same research team another work focused on analysing media representations of youth, by examining the news on the printed press, radio and television during September-November 2006. The results of this work served for the elaboration of a "[Handbook of good practice for the treatment of youth in the media](#)", which was published in 2007 [1].

Along this media analysis, aimed to improve the informative treatment of youth in the mass media, some questions were raised regarding the sources used by the media to produce youth-related news. Taking advantage of the free access granted by the *Injuve* to its archive of press releases and youth-related news, a second research project was designed to observe the ways in which a public institution produced external information directed to the media; and at the same time, analyse the media products related to such institutional communication.

This research examined the press releases generated by the *Injuve* during 2005, 2006 and 2007 and the news related to such press releases that appeared in that period of time in the printed and digital media.

#### 1.1. Justification

##### 1.1.1. The relationship between institutional communication and media communication

The public media have been constituted, as Garcés Corra (2007) says, as sources of definition and interpretation of reality; they have acquired great importance as channels through which is possible to offer a particular vision of social organizations in general and public institutions in particular.

The social image of and public opinion about the public institutions depend in good measure on the appropriate management and the proper treatment of the information these organizations generate. Government agencies are not entities isolated from this reality, and they cannot ignore the need of visibility and social justification of their existence.

On the contrary, as claimed by Camacho Markina (2001: 1), public administrations "must be integrated in their environment and keep in continuous contact with the citizens, who are the recipients of the services they provide [...] The institutions are obliged to inform taxpayers the ways in which they manage public money, the decisions they take and the activities they carry out".

Among the communicative tasks of social institutions is the development of information about their activities and operation to be disseminated in the media; an activity that sometimes has been, and still is, considered a second level task. Although no political organization denies the importance of the relations with the media, as Xifrá Triadu (2003) affirms, it is relatively frequent to limit those relationships to a sporadic and testimonial relationship that does not attract the attention of communication professionals

Equally, it should be noted that in recent years the public institutions have been taking awareness of the importance of the treatment and management of internal information, and its external diffusion to audiences through the media. The creation and consolidation of institutional press offices and services has extended to most public institutions, be they national, regional or local.

One standardized modality of this external communication is the press releases that are sent to the media with the intent that they will reflect the work and activities of the organizations, offering the point of view that benefits those institutions. Press releases should try generating a relationship of mutual need, and to achieve so their production and frequency must have a certain cadence in the editorial departments.

This relationship between institutions and the media becomes a reality through the mediation process by which the media sometimes take into account these press releases, and reflects in its totality or in part those events narrated in them. The aim is that these institutions become reliable and accessible sources for the media.

### 1.1.2. External Institutional communication

External communication is an essential tool in the communicative processes of public and private social organizations. In fact, as Canel (2007: 28) points out, "the survival of the public institution is linked to its ability to define itself, to show its objectives, to justify its actions and to involve others. Its identity is then not only constituted by the law, but also through the interaction it establishes with the people related to it".

This external communication, in the words of Bel Mallén (2004: 158), is an essential part of the concept of corporative identity: external communication serves the aims of the corporative identity and the latter establishes the informational content of the former. All systems of communication in this area are at the service of the corporate identity, and allow communicating the press releases that differentiate the identity of the organization to all the publics, either directly or indirectly related.

As García Rivas (2003: 4) says, "an organization uses the institutional communication as its own official expression towards society through all media available to them [...] it facilitates the internal operation of the organization itself, through what is called internal communication. And secondly, it favours the creation of a particular public image of the organization, through its external communication".

The exchange between institution and public (in this case, citizens) should be essential in the communication strategy of public organizations. Sometimes this process is not granted the importance it requires, and this poses a serious obstacle in the visibility of institutions, the production of their social identity, and the configuration of its foundational objectives.

"The communication process that the institution establishes with its publics has a goal: to produce change in a given direction [...]. The one who communicates has objectives towards which all of its actions are oriented. The communication of the public institution is, therefore, a strategic process" (Canel, 2007: 29). This strategic character must be reflected in concrete communicative interests of the institution itself, translated in communicative products that the institution is interested in producing and transmitting.

The message is a reflection of the strategy that incorporates the objectives that the institution has set (Izurieta, 2003: 233). "A light, watery or contradictory message denotes lack of strategy [...] Political communication, then, is focused in transmitting an approach to reality, because not all parties in a conflict or a political problem consider an issue in the same way".

In view of the different interpretations, versions, or approaches, viewpoints should be oriented towards the legitimacy of the institution and its social need. "The State institutions are organizations that require initial legitimacy and constant renovation" (Cancelo San Martín, 2007: 74).

Therefore, message transmission is directed towards the legitimacy of the public service of the institution and its acceptance by citizens. In this regard, institutional communication processes must transmit information that consolidates the trust of citizens towards such institutions through the dissemination of its socio-political activities.

Political institutions orient societies in certain directions through public policies. Messages about these policies (created by the institutional communication) must transmit the different dimensions of the social problems they deal with, transmitting at the same time the need for the social intervention on the problem, usually associated with the political action of the institutions.

These messages from organizations must be governed by an integral communication plan that based on their needs and resources guides their communicative relations towards the community.

The implementation of institutional communication policies is usually done through press offices; departments that

increasingly have acquired great importance in the organizational structures, due to the importance the work of informing and creating an appropriate image for the public opinion have acquired in our society.

"The contemporary significance of communication departments as generators of information is unquestionable, as they are shown as the major suppliers of events" (Castillo, 2004: 201). Communicative products created by these departments offer a wide range of services ranging from the preparation of press *dossiers* to the holding of informational events (press conferences and meetings), and including the development of new products related to the use of the ICT.

The creation of a press department involves, as Mateos Martín (2003) notes, introducing a specialized professional factor at work to manage the informational relations. That professionalization should govern the principles of the communication professionals working at the departments:

- Transmission of plural and verified informational content so that the public opinion can evaluate the quality of their political representatives.
- In view of the difficulty to become visible in the media, communicators must specialise in a treatment of the information that has a place among the media's informational content.
- In the information age, the professionals must adapt their communicative work to the dynamics imposed by the 21st century society: use of new resources and media, direct contact with the media, etc.

As Aranes Usanbizaga (1996: 212) maintains, the communicative professionalization of an institution should be conceived transversally: "the approach that considers the information systems as part of the organizations is exceeded by the approach that sees the informative mechanisms globally and in a manner applied to the organizational life. In a structured way, we would be faced with the establishment of articulated and integral information systems, which would conjugate all informational aspects: the operative-instrumental, the tactical and the strategic".

This integral dissemination of the institution's activity in the media should be guided by principles of quality in the messages (transparency, veracity, and speed) they want to get across to the public. And at the same time, as Coldwell, (2001: 8) maintains, institutional communication must ensure the highest standards of professionalism and ethical conduct. "With transparency and rigour, [...] the external communication is able to transmit the image, the principles and functions of your organization" (García Rivas, 2003: 7).

## 1.2. Objectives of the research

In general terms this investigation pursued a dual purpose.

1. The first objective was to analyse the production of institutional public communication, based on the study of the creation of external information through press releases directed to the media with the aim of becoming present in the news they produce about the reality of that institution, and in this way to justify its institutional presence as leading actor of national youth policies.

The purpose was to observe how press releases have been developed during this period and what facts and events have been regarded as relevant by the institution regarding its functioning and social presence.

2. The second objective was to study the visibility of such information in digital and printed media. The study sought to identify the relationships between the original press releases and the news production resulting in the media.

We identified and selected the news offered in the Spain press (at national, regional and local levels), collected in the Injuve's *dossiers*, which included references to these press releases, with the aim of establishing relations, analogies and differences between the news and press releases.

Our work focused specifically on the study of the communicative work the Youth Institute (Injuve) based on the press releases it generated in the three years from 2005 to 2007 and their impact and treatment in the digital and printed Spanish media during the same period of time.

From the outcome of these two levels of analysis we aimed to obtain answers regarding the development of institutional communication and its impact in the media; and also about the mediational models of the press for the creation of informative references generated by social organizations.

In short, our overall research objective was to examine the external institutional information of a public organization and the news production processes that determine the impact and visibility of this information in the mass media.

This work tried to compare different social and communicative planes:

<b>Public Institutions</b>	<b>Communicative organizations</b>
<b>external organizational communication</b>	<b>Public Communication</b>
<b>Institutional production of information</b>	<b>Media's Communicative production</b>

## 2. Methodology

The methodology used for this research is quantitative media content analysis. This technique allows the systematic study of a significant amount of information.

Content analysis, as Sánchez Aranda [2] proposes, involves systematically implementing previously fixed rules designed to measure the frequency with which certain elements appear within a whole mass of information that we have previously selected to study some aspects that seem useful for our research purposes.

The media department of the Youth Institute gave us access to its informational databases:

- Database of press releases: this database served to analyse the design, presence and socio-political participation of the press releases produced for the media.

In the three years period of research, we identified a total of 158 press releases, distributed quite evenly: 53 notes in 2005, 55 in 2006, and 50 in 2007.

- News database from the press service. The aforementioned department reviews daily the media content and selects the news items that are related to youth affairs and give visibility to the institution itself. From this selection of news we only took into account the news that appeared in the press and made reference to the press releases issued by the Institute during the triennium examined.

The revision of these databases provided the set of communicative products that became the object of study of our research. We finally selected 158 press releases and 161 news items concerning these press releases.

We reviewed each of the stages of the methodological approach mentioned by Sánchez Aranda for a quantitative content analysis like this:

- Concretise the idea of the research and the overall approach. Study of the press releases and their visibility in the printed media
- Establishment of the general methodological decisions. The quantitative media analysis for the study of press releases and the news
- Initial establishment of the code and categories. Establishment of protocols for the collection and analysis of information.
- Taking of specific methodological decisions. Implementation of analytical decisions.
- Selection and training of encoders. Participating analysts conducted a pilot testing with a small number of questionnaires to set the common criteria for the handling of variables and categories, and for the coding of open questions.
- Testing, improvement and final fixing of the code. Debugging, optimization and categorical recoding, based on the joint decision of researchers.
- Data collection or encoding. Once the units of analysis were identified, we proceeded to perform the first codification of the units and their relations.
- Data input and analysis. Final data input in the database (File Maker Pro) following the protocols previously established. Afterwards the data was exported to a programme of statistical analysis (SPSS) which allowed obtaining output frequencies, variable crossing, etc.
- Results presentation and description. The first level of analysis of the results provided the output frequencies in different planes and filters of different questionnaires. That first description level provides the most basic results of the investigation
- Obtaining of results and comparison with other data. With the results obtained in the first level, the definitive operating plan was concretised, and completed with the comparison with other sources (especially secondary and research sources).

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Injuve's communication strategy

A good way to learn about the image of an institution is through the analysis of the media's news content about it, since audiences' perceptions about the work and functioning of the institution will largely depend on the mediation process carried out by such media (between the activities performed by organizations and the knowledge that people have of

such activities).

As mentioned, the analysis of the public institutional communication in this case focused on the systematic study of the press releases issued by the Youth Institute during 2005, 2006 and 2007. To us, this time period seemed enough to observe the different modes of production of institutional communication about the operation of this official Spanish organization.

The *Injuve* is an autonomous body that during the period analysed was part of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs [3], whose performance is governed by three general principles listed in its Service Letter.

- Promote equal opportunities for the youth.
- Encourage the free and effective participation of the youth in the political, social, economic and cultural development of Spain.
- Stimulate the collaboration with other ministerial departments and other public administrations, whose activities impact this sector of the population.

All messages issued must be perfectly coordinated by a strategic plan of communication that responds to these principles and outlines a particular image of the institution to society. To do this, the internal communication should be fully integrated in the corporate culture of the organization, and the external communication should consolidate an image of confidence in society.

Therefore, the communication plan that must govern the development of institutional communication circulated by the press department must be based on a work planned and coordinated with those responsible for the communication policy of the organization, and they should be aware of such basic principles.

The basic lines of the communication strategy of each organization provide the general performance framework. This framework can be delimited by following the situational factors of Garnett's strategic contingency model (Canel 2007):

- Communication objectives. In this case they are transmitting the philosophy of the *Injuve* in relation to the scope of public youth policies.
- The target audience of the communication, which differs depending on the background, role playing in relation to the institution, interests, needs, etc. In this case, we consider two types of recipients: the journalistic recipient (journalists and broadcasters) and the public (citizens in general and youth in particular).
- Dynamics of the organization's work: routines, organizational climate, technological capacity, style of its leader and political context. The own and particular structure of each public institution conditions the information it generates. In the present case, since it is a national political institution, it is subjected to the ups and downs of the political cycles, which sometimes involve profound organizational changes that affect its communicative processes.
- Person playing the role of communicator: position occupied skills and credibility. In this case, the fact that it is a very prestigious public institution, offers a guarantee as a source of information on youth. The work made in the Communications department should be directed towards the consolidation of the organization as a stable and reliable source of information within the field of public action.

Moreover, the institution must take into account that each contact with the media is an occasion that should be used to reinforce the institutional relationship and the image of the *Injuve* as a relevant source of information on youth issues. For this reason, each press release directed to the media must be planned and justified. The best press offices are not always those producing more press releases. The information policy of the public institutions has a good deal of negotiation.

Public institutions have not always understood their communication departments as a necessity within their organization charts and technical bodies. Lately, although they are taken more into account, the communication offices are usually allocated scarce material and human resources to carry out their mission. But still, as La Porte (2001) points out, we should remember that regardless of the size of organizations, the number of people or the greater or lesser commitment to communicative tasks, it is important not to neglect them or reduce them to positions lacking real competences.

The informational relations of a public institution with media serve to reinforce the institutional relationship with media and the consolidation of the image of the institution as a relevant source of information on youth issues.

### 3.1.1. Analysis of press releases

This section presents the quantitative media content analysis completed in this research. Firstly we tried to delineate the informational functions of the press releases.

Three informational modes of press releases were identified among the sample analysed:

1. Informative about the internal activities of the Injuve. They refer to the promotion of internal activities, the operation of the institution itself, or programmes and activities promoted by the institution.
2. Informative about the external activities involving the Injuve. They are about activities in which the organization participated with other public and private institutions, generally in favour of the deployment and development of youth policies.
3. Invitations to press conference. They are a small number of releases that, while referring to internal or external activities, were used to summon the media through press conferences where the *Injuve* was usually represented by one of its representatives.

Most of the press releases considered in this research were equally about internal and external activities (41% and 41%, respectively), whereas the number of press calls was much smaller (18%).

1. Internal activities: Presentation of the Youth Institute's own and exclusive activities. The aim was to make the institution and its activities visible to the whole of society through the media. These notes provided information about the operation of the institution, the internal performance and the social presence that the *Injuve*, being a political institution, wanted to show to society.

In this regard, the releases informed about the activity of the institution in relation to its programmes and services, forming the external image of the institution as a public body responsible for implementing youth policies

2. External activities: participation of the *Injuve* in events of other or with other institutions.
  - Solidary collaboration with other public institutions. Together with other public institutions, the Injuve organizes and participates in social events and acts related to the promotion of public youth policies. In these cases the Injuve often works as the main promoter or subsidiary of other institutions.
  - According to their fields of action, the public institutions with which the Injuve participates can be classified in:
    - International. Fostering of international networks, with public institutions especially from Latin American and the European Union.
    - National. Especially the Ministry of which the Injuve is part (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs), other ministries and public organizations.
    - Regional. The Injuve participated with the autonomous communities and their bodies and representatives in the promotion of agreements and regional frameworks for the implementation of youth actions and policies.
    - Local. Directed to the implementation and creation of youth-aimed spaces and programmes. The *Injuve* collaborated with municipalities and local corporations which sought its institutional support to endorse their political actions in favour of local youth, mostly rural.
    - Collaboration with institutions and private organizations. Some private institutions, especially non-profit (foundations of large companies and banks), allocate resources for the promotion and development of activities for more or less specific youth groups (unemployed, researchers, entrepreneurs, artists, etc.).

The relationship with other institutions reflects an image of the Injuve's social work. The Injuve's social networking work with public institutions (international, national, regional and local), and private organizations (foundations and companies) forms the functioning and implementation structures of the public youth policies in Spain.

3. Invitations to press conferences. Mainly referring to internal activities but also in some cases referring to external activities that involved the Youth Institute.

In these cases, the institution invites journalists to personally tell them something, usually through a qualified representative related to the general directorate.

From the structural and formal point of view, the invitations were generally a single page long and did not provide, from the informative point of view, relevant data beyond the mere press invitation to talk about the subject in question. These press calls are of interest for the institution and reporters.

- For the institution. Because it seeks to attract journalists to personally inform them about certain events considered important by the institution, because it offers and reinforces a particular point of view.
- For the reporters. Because they obtain information on the spot about the subject in question from the people responsible for the institution; journalists are able to question the speakers about the subject matter and other socio-political issues considered of interest.

The use of press invitations by the Injuve mostly reinforces the “staging of public management” as Canel (2004) notes; in this case this staging focused especially in subjects of youth leisure, culture and emancipation.

### **The institutional role of the Injuve**

The study was also interested in establishing the political role of the Youth Institute as reflected in its press releases. The predominant role during the period analysed was of promoter, advocate, and financier of campaigns and/or social programmes aimed to young people (46%). This was followed by the informative press releases featuring the *Injuve* as a cultural promoter (22%).

Press releases referring to research related to youth’s social problems (6%), the promotion or reception of awards (6%) and the promotion of education and training (6%) were less frequent.

Most of the press release during 2005, 2006 and 2007 informed about activities related to the implementation of public policies; where the *Injuve* appeared as a promoter, advocate, or financier of social campaigns and/or programmes.

### **Thematic of the press releases**

The thematic classification of the 158 press releases issued during 2005, 2006, and 2007 was designed around the strategic areas of action proposed for the development and implementation of the *Plan de Juventud* (Youth Plan) 2005-2008.

A) Area of emancipation: getting employment and independent housing

B) Area of participation

C) Area of coexistence and diversity

D) Area of healthy lifestyle habits and environment

E) Area of leisure, culture and free time

F) Area of training.

This classification intended to observe the relationship between the Injuve’s production of internal Institutional communication and the national political-administrative youth-aimed areas of action.

Most of the notes produced in this period referred to a generic youth thematic (26%), followed by those that reported information relating to leisure, culture and spare time (22%), issues related to youth emancipation (17%), training (13%), coexistence and diversity (10%), healthy living habits and the environment (6%), and youth participation (6%)

The thematic treatment of the press releases reinforces the institutional vision about youth. The Injuve intervenes communicatively highlighting the need for its intervention in productive fields as youth emancipation, but also in other fields in which in theory its interventions might not be as necessary, as youth leisure.

### **Treatment of youth**

The treatment of youth in the press releases was dominated by a generic and stereotyped vision: the mentions were almost always collective (the young people in general, the young artists, the young entrepreneurs, etc.). As Machado e Silva (2008) points out, in this sense the media build the social reality, create narratives full of representations and disseminated them as the absolute truth. The social narratives that feed the collective imagination are simplified and often stereotyped.

This generic treatment of youth, which in many press releases did not even included explicit references to the male and female youth, reinforces the abstract discourse where this group is treated more as an object than as a group of individuals.

This standardization of the juvenile discourse from the institutions, public in this case, generates homogenous representations that delimit the concept of youth and control it by pointing out the aspects and objectives dictating its existence

When reference was made to the different specific groups of young people, the treatment of such situation highlighted the institutional support through programmes and measures (of cooperation, research, business, etc.), focusing more on possible solutions than on causes and the real problems.

This discourse emphasises power relationships, which reinforces a vision of youth associated with a state of necessity that make public social institutions appear as responsible for solutions, which justifies the reason for their existence.

In our case, the information that the Youth Institute transmitted in its press releases coincides with this approach. It

mainly dealt with general issues that determine the collective imagination with which the image of youth is built. A youth that is debtor of public initiatives that benefit it to, paradoxically, continue being subordinated.

A research on the representation of young people in the political discourse based on the analysis of press releases issued by the *Secretaría de la juventud de la Generalitat* (Youth Secretary of the Generalitat), coincides with this institutional vision of youth as an abstract collective. The discourse values the institutional events and their repercussions; it does not directly talk about young people. As Machado e Silva (2008) points out, the discourse itself will form the subject and not vice versa.

### 3.2. Analysis of the media visibility of the public communication: study of the press releases in the media

Yanes Mesa (2007) considers that political organizations that aspire to direct a human collective through a popular election must communicatively convince the media professionals. The professional journalist is the recipient of the message, but becomes immediately the sender of the message once it has been re-formulated, the professional journalists act as links, interpreters and mediators between the organization and its publics (Xifra Triadú, 2008).

The effectiveness of the press releases sent to the media is very low according to a study conducted by a communication study undertaken by *Demométrica* [4].

According to this survey, journalists only publish 12% of the releases, i.e. they throw out 85% of the press releases that companies and institutions sent to their editorial departments, and pay more attention to declarations than data. These are some of the most striking findings of the report "Periodistas, Empresas e Instituciones, 2007" (Journalists, Companies and Institutions, 2007), which involved 220 chief editors and heads of the sections of economy, society and health information of the Spanish media.

The 12% is a share very similar to the one registered by the social psychologist White in 1950, when he analysed the role of a teleprinter editor that had to justify the reasons why he selected only 10% of the news he received daily from agencies.

Why do daily press releases fail? Basically because they were not drafted with a journalistic mindset, they advertise too much, do not include sufficient information and have little content (Velilla, 2007).

On the other hand, this study also found that only one of three press conferences that the press is invited to attend is perceived to be useful for journalists. Journalists expect an informational event to provide quality information directly from the protagonists or a vision that is different from the colleagues of other media and more than 60% only attend if the information is worth it. The most important thing in a press conference is the statements.

Based on the previous considerations, it is important for any institution interested in disseminating information to have an open attitude towards the introduction of changes in the informative relationship they have with the media.

#### 3.2.1. The relation with the content of press releases

All the news items selected in this research were related to any of the press releases issued during the aforementioned time period. The review and comparison of the two databases (of press releases, and news), referred to in the methodology section, showed that from the 158 press releases the *Injuve* sent to the media, the latter only took into account a third part (52 press releases), with which the national media produced a total of 161 news items.

Although the number of press releases selected by the media does not seem large (52 press releases), it reflects a reasonable percentage of acceptance by the media (1/3 of the press releases issued).

The use of these press releases as information material by the media was codified taking into consideration whether the release was reproduced integrally, in a reduced form, or an extended version.

Most of the news about the releases reduced the information it included. In many cases the most specific information was deleted: data, secondary actors, excessive statements by officials, and contextualization of specific programmes or objectives of the institutional work.

A significant number of news expanded the press releases. These news items very frequently referred to invitations to press conferences and generally the news item was completed with information and statements that journalists obtained at the event.

Finally, it was not uncommon that certain media (especially digital) reproduced the press releases integrally, and in some cases only replaced the headline.

Considering that the media's creation of news about youth did not normally offer graphic material to support or strengthen the written information, we can argue that the media prepared the news items taking as the main reference the messages or information provided by the press releases.

With information from the press releases and regardless of whether the releases were reduced, enlarged or reproduced integrally, the media almost exclusively developed news. In the three years examined in this investigation, only three

articles were produced from institutional press releases issued in that period.

It seems that the media's social production of communication obtains its references around current issues, which are better reflected by the news item.

The creation of other informative products, such as articles, which can allow more critical and reflective visions of reality, is neglected by the media. This should make us reflect on the information that is generated from the institution itself and the treatment of the subjects. The provision of alternative material (data, photographs, graphics, etc.) along with the press releases (together in a press dossier), could facilitate journalists' creation and treatment of news and other informative genres

The study of the Injuve's press releases and the related news, suggests that the media's informative treatment, in three of four news items (74%), took into consideration only information provided by the Institution (in its integral form 14%, or in a reduced version 60%). 26% of the news extended the information with material obtained from other sources.

#### 4.2. The media that presented the news

The *Injuve's* systematic collection of information from the press has been expanded in recent years. Digital media have been recently taken into consideration in the selection of news about youth, which was previously based only in conventional printed media.

According to the news database provided for this research, the majority of news came from digital media. This is a problem since there is currently a lack of knowledge about the audiences and consumption of these in digital media. They are gaining space, but this is still an initial process and the construction of the institutional image remains anchored in the coverage made by the traditional media.

The first analysis of all the news related to the *Injuve's* press releases during the period analysed, showed that the press releases about the *Injuve's* operation had a greater impact in the digital media (2 of 3 news), than in the printed press (1 of 3 news), in a ratio of three to one in favour of the digital media.

The selected news that were presented by the printed media came from newspapers with national coverage (*El País, El Mundo, Abc*, etc.), regional coverage (*La Vanguardia, La voz de Asturias, Levante, Extremadura hoy...*) and local coverage (*El diario de Soria, El diario de Albacete*, etc.).

Regarding the digital media, most of the news came from informative media (50%), i.e. media mainly devoted to the informative treatment of current affairs and events.

This is followed by news in digital media of general interest (20%), which corresponded to online portals, whose most significant example in Spain would be Terra.es. In order of importance, the sources that stand out based on the number of news items are websites edited by civil society institutions with 17% (NGOs, associations, public and private institutions, etc.) and news agencies with 16% (online news from traditional agencies, like *Agencia Efe* and *Servimedia*, and exclusively digital agencies).

Digital media are gaining audiences among the new generations of young people, who are more familiar with these new products transmitted through channels that are alternative to the traditional public communication, represented by the news from the printed media.

The analysis showed that the media that incorporated the *Injuve's* information did so in secondary pages with little coverage. This assessment should be taken into account to try to make an effort to reach the press with greater capacity for dissemination and to reach the pages and sections with the most informative relevance.

#### 4. Conclusions

Any social organization needs to publicise their activities to their specific and general publics. The use of public communication through the media as an informative tool to spread messages to numerous and heterogeneous groups was improved and consolidated in the last quarter of the 20th century by public and private institutions.

The dissemination of messages through institutional information products that provide information about the functioning and activities of the organization seeks to facilitate the communicative work of the media. Audiences' image about the institution and its operation will depend to a large extent on the result of this relationship, focused on the information selection and treatment.

This tension between trying to awake the media's interest and at the same time to disseminate messages considered useful and necessary to make the institution visible, is a task that requires both internal knowledge (of the organizational communication needs) and external knowledge (of the media's informative needs and particularities).

The analysis of the Youth Institute's information production through its press releases, and of the selection, treatment and visibility of such information in the media produced the following conclusions:

##### On the press releases

The systematic analysis of the *Injuve's* news production via its press releases produced some general considerations:

- From the formal/institutional point of view, the press releases have remained very stable regarding its format in the three years analysed; which facilitates their quick identification as information source for the media.
- The institutional form of the headline. The headlines of the press releases studied, even if being mostly informational, are excessively institutional, offering a very unattractive political/administrative vision of the youth's reality in journalistic terms. In this sense, the headlines do not seem to be designed for their actual recipients journalists and citizens
- Content on the operation of the institution. Most of the press releases offer internal information about the institution or inform about its external activities with other social organizations.
- Press releases informing about internal activities offer the image the Injuve wants to project about its performance as a reference for the implementation of public youth policies, and about the necessity of its social existence in the youth sphere. They refer to a large extent to the definition of the general frameworks that delimit juvenile problems.
- The press releases about the organization's external activities offer information about the social structure of (public and private) organisations that work with the *Injuve* in enforcement of these institutional youth policies.
- Invitations to press conferences. They play a double informative role:
  - The institution aims to personally guide the treatment and focus towards topics considered particularly relevant. The more or less informative effectiveness will depend on the interest the topic generates and on the specific information supplied to the media through primary sources (institutional leaders) or secondary sources (interesting data held by the organization).
  - Journalists seek to take advantage of the presence of the institution's leaders to obtain information that is different from the one institutionally produced.

The use of invitations to press conferences during the period analysed has served above all for the "staging of public governance" by the Injuve, especially focused on its role as an interventor necessary in the implementation and enforcement of policies about Emancipation (through employment and housing) and as a cultural promoter in the area of leisure, culture and spare time.

- The thematic of the press releases: the thematic treatment of the institutional communication links the institutional communication especially to two youth-aimed political-administrative national areas of action, one that is part of the socio-political world (the emancipation) and another part of everyday life (leisure and spare time).

These themes refer to two spaces of youth considered essential in modern socialization processes:

1. Youth emancipation, which has transformed their trajectories, turning them into complex and uncertain processes, in which the instability on youth employment and housing needs have become the major obstacles for the social development of youth.
2. Youth leisure and culture have been consolidated as key and essential spaces in the construction of youth identities.

The frequent treatment of these themes in the press releases reinforces the institutional view on youth. The Youth Institute intervenes communicatively by highlighting the need of its political activity in productive areas like youth emancipation, but also by intervening on other spaces of socialization and identity construction like youth leisure and culture.

#### **On the visibility of the institutional communication in the press**

With information from the press releases, the printed media produced a total of 161 informative products in that period of time. This production was materialized almost exclusively in news items, therefore focusing on current youth issues.

- The media that presented the news. The media visibility of *Injuve's* press releases was greater among digital media (2 of 3 news), than among the traditional press (1 of 3 news).

This fact should not go unnoticed for public institutions nor the media. In the case of information on young people, and thinking of young audiences, the press does not appear as the preferred informational space; however other type of services like the free press and especially the Internet, are closer to young people, their interests and their everyday practices (the consumption of information online through portals and websites intended for the young public is very frequent).

Digital media are creating new specialised sections, where youth content has found a more flexible arrangement, even in specific youth-aimed sections. The public institutions should not be alien to these changes in the treatment of youth-aimed information, when orienting, and even suggesting the inclusion of new sections that respond to the new themes related to the field of youth.

- The spaces and times where the youth events are located offer a centralist and present-day-focused view.
- The public space of the news associated to public institutions promotes a centralist institutional discourse, due to the national scope of the Injuve.
- The times in which news events are located are markedly focused on the present-day and determined by short-term political times. This reinforces the vision of the youth as a transitory state, where it is rare that a prospective future towards the adult world is offered. When future references are offered about the events reflected in the news, institutions often intervene on the dynamics of juvenile socialization, offering ideal future scenarios of the institutional response.
- Thematic treatment of news. The thematic assignation of the events selected by the media from the institutional press releases shows some particularities:
- The general thematic treatment reinforces a pragmatic vision of youth related to its situation, generally disfavoured over themes like employment, housing, general public policies, or research on social problems. There are also news items focused on the needs of intervention aimed at alleviating youth deficiencies in cultural and leisure fields.

The institution appears as interventor and redeemer of specific unfavourable situations both in productive (employment and housing) and reproductive areas (leisure and culture).

- The digital media give especial importance to the news about entertainment, culture and leisure, over news about participation, coexistence and diversity.

The interest that the issues of leisure, values and attitudes (participation and coexistence, and diversity) produce among the digital media (which are commonly used by young people), could be an interesting future scenario to place institutional communication on active policies that may serve to overcome youth stereotypes and media prejudices.

- The homogenous treatment of topics in the news and the press releases highlights the existing mediator model between the institutions and the media. The selection of information coming from public bodies follows the thematic orientation proposed by that institution. This consolidates the role of the institutions as trusted and reliable sources for the media.
- Analysis of the institutional actors. Among the objectives of the study of the actors, the main focused was on the treatment made of the Youth Institute, according to the analysis of its programmes, services and representatives.
- During the three years studied, the *Injuve's* treatment of internal informational has been marked by the institutional activity primarily associated to the agenda of the government.
- The social structure in which the institutional youth discourse is developed, regarding the actors outside the Injuve, is formed by public institutions (International, national, regional and local), and civil society organizations (NGOs, foundations, associations, unions, etc.).
- Both press releases and news offer an institutional vision of youth, which is treated as a homogeneous group, which makes difficult, firstly, to identify differences within it and, secondly, offers few elements of identification for young people.

## 5. Bibliography

Aranes Usandizaga, J. I. (1996): "La comunicación institucional de la administración pública: entre la lógica autista-instrumental y la democrática". [Zer: Revista de estudios de comunicación](#), nº 1. pp. 201-213.

Bel Mallén, J.I. (2004): *Comunicar para crear valor. La dirección de comunicación en las organizaciones*. Pamplona: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra S.A..

Camacho Markina, I. (2001): "Comunicación institucional. Funciones de los gabinetes de comunicación en la administración local". *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 44. [en línea] Retrieved on 9 December 2009, from: <http://www.revistalatinacs.org/2001/latina44septiembre/4403camacho.htm>

Cancelo San Martín, María de las Mercedes. (2007): "[La comunicación gubernamental](#)". *Revista Latinoamericana de comunicación Chasqui*, June, # 98. Centro Internacional de Estudios Superiores de Comunicación para América Latina. Quito, Ecuador. Pp. 72-75.

Canel, M. J. (2007): *La Comunicación de las Instituciones Públicas*. Madrid: Editorial Tecnos.

Corliss, R. (2009, 20 de mayo): "[Study Shows Social Media Releases Are Less Effective Than Traditional Press Releases](#)". HubSpot's Inbound Internet Marketing Blog. [en línea]. Retrieved on 20 September 2009, from: <http://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/4789/Study-Shows-Social-Media-Releases-Are-Less-Effective-Than-Traditional-Press-Releases.aspx>

Coldwell, I. (2001, 7 de abril): "The Ethics Of Political Communication". Political Studies Association Conference, Aberdeen. [en línea]. Retrieved on 20 September 2008, from: <http://www.psa.ac.uk/journals/pdf/5/2002/coldwell.pdf>

Castillo Esparcia, A. (2004). "Comunicación empresarial e institucional: estrategias de comunicación". *Zer: Revista de estudios de comunicación*, nº. 17, pp. 189-207.

Garcés Corra, R. (2007): "La construcción simbólica de la opinión pública". *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico*, nº.56, pp. 55-81

La Porte, J.(2001): "Principios de comunicación interna en el tercer sector". *Comunicación y Sociedad*, vol. XIV, n. 1, pp.7-27

García Rivas, M. (2003): "Presente de la información institucional de la Universidad española. El caso de la Universidad de Murcia". *Comunicación y Sociedad*, vol. XVI, n. 1, pp.29-56.

Machado e Silva, E. (2007): "Representación de los jóvenes en el Discurso Político Institucional: Análisis de las Notas de Prensa Emitidas por la Secretaría General de Juventud de Catalunya- España". Barcelona. [online]. Retrieved on 23 October 2009, from: <http://www.comminit.com/es/node/272931/2714>

Martínez Solana, Y. (2004): *La Comunicación Institucional. Análisis de sus problemas y soluciones*. Madrid: Editorial Fragua.

Mateos Martín, C. (2003): "Descripción de la estructura funcional del gabinete de prensa político en los entornos informativos locales". *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 54. Retrieved on 10 January 2010, from: <http://www.revistalatinacs.org/20035414mateos.htm>

Oliver, L. (2009, 28 de julio): "How to: write the perfect press release for journalists". Journalism co. uk.: The essential site journalism [online].

Retrieved on 2 October 2009, from: <http://www.journalism.co.uk/?cmd=ArticleJump&id=535287>

Velilla, J. (2007, 21 December): "[La \(baja\) utilidad de las notas de prensa](#)". [Do great brand ideas become shackled by advertising?](#) [en línea]. Retrieved on 18 December 2009, from: <http://www.javiervelilla.es/wordpress/2007/12/21/la-baja-utilidad-de-las-notas-de-prensa/>

Xifra Triadú, J. (2008): "Modelos de las relaciones públicas políticas: Análisis de la situación en Cataluña". *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 63, pages 392 to 399. La Laguna (Tenerife): Universidad de La Laguna. Retrieved on 26 November 2009, from [http://www.revistalatinacs.org/08/32\\_789\\_50\\_Girona/Jordi\\_Xifra.html](http://www.revistalatinacs.org/08/32_789_50_Girona/Jordi_Xifra.html)

Yanes, R. (2006): "La nota de prensa como género de la comunicación política". *Espéculo. Revista de estudios literarios*. Universidad Complutense de Madrid. [en línea]. Recuperado el 25 de octubre de 2008 de <http://www.ucm.es/info/especulo/numero36/notapre.html>

## 6. Notes

[1] Alcoceba, J. A. and Mathieu, G. (2007): *Manual de buenas prácticas para el tratamiento de los jóvenes en los medios de comunicación* (Handbook of good practice for the treatment of youth in the media). Madrid: Injuve. Available online at: <http://Zeus/INJUVE/contenidos.item.action?ID=2017337609&menuId=572069434>

[2] In Berganza Conde, M. R. and Ruiz San Román, J. A. (2005): *Investigar en comunicación. Guía práctica de métodos y técnicas de investigación social en comunicación* (Communication Research. Practical guide for methods and techniques for social research in communication). Madrid: McGraw Hill.

[3] In the period of research (2005-2007), the *Injuve* was an autonomous body belonging to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. In 2008, it became part of the Ministry for equality ([Royal Decree 438/2008, of 14 April 2008, which approves the basic organizational structure of the ministerial departments. Article 17. Ministry of equality](#)).

[4] "Periodistas, Empresas e Instituciones, 2007" (Journalists, Companies and Institutions, 2007), a study directed by *Demométrica*. Also involved the participation of the Federation of Associations of Spanish Journalists (FAPE), the Association of Journalists of Economic Information (APIE) and the National Association of Health Journalists (ANIS). <http://www.ElMundo.es/ElMundo/2006/06/27/comunicacion/1151414416.html>

**HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE IN BIBLIOGRAPHIES / REFERENCES:**

Alcoceba-Hernando, J.A. (2010): "Analysis of Institutional Press Releases and its Visibility in the Press", at *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 65, pages 354 to 367. La Laguna (Tenerife, Canary Islands): La Laguna University, retrieved on \_\_\_\_th of \_\_\_\_ of 2\_\_\_\_, from [http://www.revistalatinacs.org/10/art2/905\\_Compluternse/27\\_AlcocebaEN.html](http://www.revistalatinacs.org/10/art2/905_Compluternse/27_AlcocebaEN.html)  
DOI: 10.4185/RLCS-65-2010-905-354-367-EN

**Note:** the [DOI](#) number is **part** of the bibliographic references and it must be cited if you cited this article.

To send this article to a friend, just click on the little envelope: 