

Dealing with the press

Grundtvig Workshop, May 2013

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How does a journalist work?

The job

- Partnership: a journalist is not an expert
- Mediation: understanding a problem and being able to explain it to a large public
- Curiosity: What? When? Where? Who? Why? How?

How does a journalist work?

The framework

- Little time – go fast
- Little space – go to the point
- Large public – be understandable
- Lots of information – make choices

PRESS RELEASE FROM CERN

New results indicate that particle discovered at CERN is a Higgs boson

14 Mar 2013

Geneva, 14 March 2013. At the Moriond Conference today, the ATLAS and CMS collaborations at CERN's Large Hadron Collider (LHC) presented preliminary new results that further elucidate the particle discovered last year. Having analysed two and a half times more data than was available for the discovery announcement in July, they find that the new particle is looking more and more like a Higgs boson, the particle linked to the mechanism that gives mass to elementary particles. It remains an open question, however, whether this is the Higgs boson of the Standard Model of particle physics, or possibly the lightest of several bosons predicted in some theories that go beyond the Standard Model. Finding the answer to this question will take time.

Whether or not it is a Higgs boson is demonstrated by how it interacts with other particles, and its quantum properties. For example, a Higgs boson is postulated to have spin 0, and in the Standard Model its parity – a measure of how its mirror image behaves – should be positive. CMS and ATLAS have compared a number of options for the spin-parity of this particle, and these all prefer no spin and positive parity. This, coupled with the measured interactions of the new particle with other particles, strongly indicates that it is a Higgs boson.

(...)

DEFINITION BY WIKIPEDIA

The Higgs boson or Higgs particle is an elementary particle initially theorised in 1964, and tentatively confirmed to exist on 14 March 2012. The Standard Model and other theories within particle physics. In this discipline, it explains why some fundamental particles have mass when the symmetries controlling their interactions should require them to be massless, and—linked to this—why the weak force has a much shorter range than the electromagnetic force. Its existence and knowledge of its exact properties are expected to impact scientific knowledge across a range of fields, and should eventually allow physicists to determine whether the Standard Model or a competing theory is more likely to be correct, guide other theories and discoveries in particle physics, and—as with other fundamental discoveries of the past—potentially over time lead to developments in "new" physics, and new technologies.

(...)

EXTRACT FROM NEW YORK TIMES, 5 March 2013

« CHASING THE HIGGS », BY DENNIS OVERBYE

Dr. Sharma and his colleagues had every reason to believe that they were closing in on the Great White Whale of modern science: **the Higgs boson, a particle whose existence would explain all the others then known and how they fit together into the jigsaw puzzle of reality.**

(...)The stakes were more than just Nobel Prizes, bragging rights or just another quirkily named addition to the zoo of elementary particles that make up nature at its core. **The Higgs boson would be the only visible manifestation of the Harry Potterish notion put forward back in 1964 (most notably by Peter Higgs of the University of Edinburgh) that there is a secret, invisible force field running the universe.** (The other theorists were François Englert and Robert Brout, both of Université Libre de Bruxelles; and Tom Kibble of Imperial College, London, Carl R. Hagen of the University of Rochester and Gerald Guralnik of Brown University.)

Elementary particles — the electrons and other subatomic riffraff running around in our DNA and our iPhones — would get their masses from interacting with this field, the way politicians draw succor from cheers and handshakes at the rope line.

Without this mystery field, everything in the universe would be pretty much the same, a bland fizz of particles running around at the speed of light. With it, there could be atoms and stars, and us.

(...)

The story

- A good article is a good story
- LGBT families is a social and human issue – it needs stories and faces
- In the best case, a good story will help to explain complicated issues (law etc.)

Gay Couples' Marriage Rights Unequal and Uneven

Europe and the United States have one thing in common when it comes to marriage rights and civil unions for same-sex couples: inconsistency.

New York Times, July 25, 2012. By Paul Geitner

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/26/world/europe/on-gay-marriage-europe-strains-to-reconcile-27-interests.html?pagewanted=all>

CASTEL MAGGIORE, Italy — When 1-year-old Kirsi Bestetti tripped and cut her lip at her grandparents' house last summer, her mother Elisa Bestetti rushed her to the emergency room, panicky about all the blood.

Once there, she also worried whether the hospital staff would accept her as Kirsi's mother.

Ms. Bestetti is Italian, but towheaded Kirsi is Finnish like her birth mother, Emmi Pihlajaniemi. The two women have been married in all but name for five years at home in Finland, and each has given birth to a daughter who has been legally adopted in Finland by the other partner.

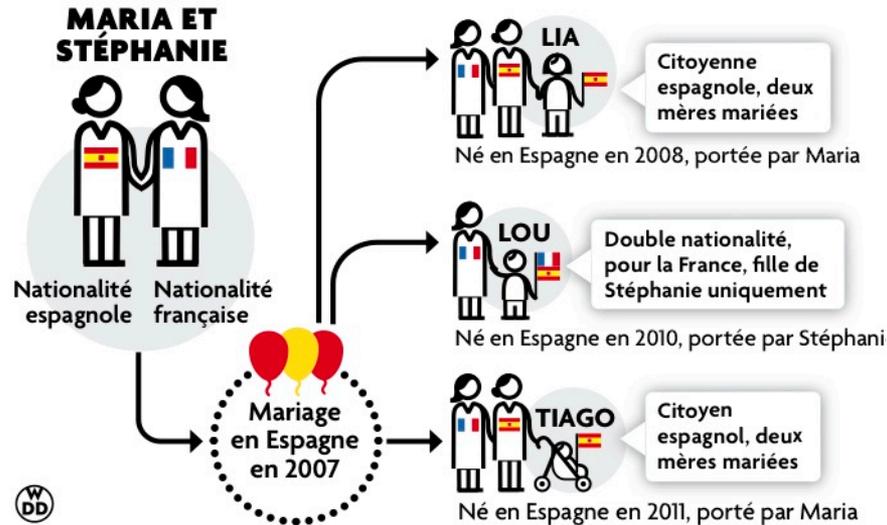
But Italy does not allow a child to have two mothers. Same-sex couples in Italy are not allowed to marry, to register partnerships, to adopt a child or benefit from assisted reproduction. Within the European Union, such family law issues remain the jealously guarded domain of the 27 individual countries, each with its own history, culture and legal tradition.

On the intertwined Continent, which prides itself on its open borders and a single market — as well as on being a trailblazer in banning discrimination based on sexual orientation, even electing openly gay politicians to high office — the resulting differences are more than symbolic. Increasingly they are leading to practical difficulties in all kinds of areas, like taxes, parental rights and inheritances, as people move around for work, love or just vacation. (...)

Mutual recognition explained by a graphic

« Les couples binationaux unis pour le pire des casse-tête administratif », Têtu 172/2012, by Taina Tervonen

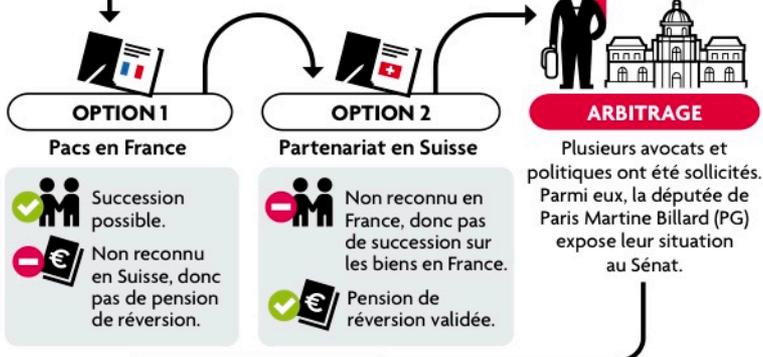
Graphic by WeDoData





AUJOUR'HUI

Bruno est gravement malade
 Le couple cherche à assurer l'avenir de Pascal si Bruno venait à décéder.



LA SOLUTION

Voici la procédure, telle que décrite au *Journal officiel*, suite à la question de la députée :



How to talk to a journalist?

- Make your message clear, keep it in mind and repeat it
- Go to the point, explain afterwards
- Be clear and use simple sentences
- Use concrete examples and stories
- Be true and honest
- Answer all the questions, even the silly ones

How to prepare an interview with a family?

- Ask the journalist for details: focus, motivation, deadline, timing, specific needs
- Take time to discuss and explain
- Make suggestions

How to use images?

- Think of an image that will symbolize your message – that's what cameras look for!
- Make sure you get interviewed in front of the « subject » (demonstration, action...)

How to reach out for the press?

- Press releases: What? When? Where? Who? Why? How?
- Direct contacts with journalists / Using built up long term relations with journalists
- Social media
- Good timing: not too early, not too late!

Things to keep in mind

- What's new? What's going to be the focus?
- Timing and deadlines
- Human faces make good stories
- Talk to a wide public
- Need for expertise