

Summary Report on the Working Group **Media Outreach & Public Relations**

European Cheon Il Guk Assembly 2016
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Presenters: Ely Loew, Yulian Marianov, D. Zoehrer

*“There is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about,
and that is not being talked about.”*
– Oscar Wilde



Public Relations (PR) and media outreach matter because they shape the public perception of our movement. Developing a stronger coherence in our PR and media approach on a European level was the aim of two working group sessions at the European CIG Assembly 2016 in Prague. Each session was attended by over 30 interested participants.

In the first session on the evening of Friday, 8th of April, Mr. D. Zoehrer shared about existing strategies in the area of PR and media outreach. He stated that Witnessing and PR relate to each other as the internal, *Seongsang*-aspect and the external, *Hyeongsang*-aspect. Each aspect influences and supports the other. Thus, to enhance the effectiveness of witnessing activities, the development of a lasting PR and media strategy is inevitable. Mr. Zoehrer then discussed three current PR approaches: (1) indirect defensive PR which consists in the protection of our fundamental freedom rights, including religious freedom (i.e. the work of the [Forum for Religious Freedom](#)); (2) a more direct defensive PR, including the identification and confrontation of stereotypes about New Religious Movements often propagated by church apologists or the leftist media as (i.e. writing critical text analyses of apologetic literature); (3) a pro-active PR strategy that aims at taking our positive message out into the public sphere (i.e. through regular press releases, Social Media such as Twitter or Facebook, [smartphone apps](#) or cooperation with documentary producers). Both, the defensive PR approach as well as the pro-active approach are important to support the success of Tribal Messiahs in the field.

The next presenter, the national leader of Ireland, Rev. Ely Loew, shared about his experience with website building for the [FFWPU Ireland](#) and explained the need of and requirements for online

advertising. His talk was followed by an engaged discussion on how to become an opinion leader, branding and search optimization techniques.

The second session in the late morning of Saturday, 9th of April, started with a presentation by Rev. Peter Zoehrer. He emphasized that PR & media outreach are powerful tools to establish *Cheon Il Guk*. It is necessary to create a favorable environment for society to be able to receive TP's word, thus realizing Vision 2020. Rev. Zoehrer also gave an overview of examples for reactive PR situations (i.e. fighting the anti-cult lobby) and pro-active PR approaches (i.e. filing effective press releases, developing a PR folder, etc.). Rev. Zoehrer then enumerated past PR disasters that occurred outside and within our movement and introduced some useful PR tools for sustainable media work. Furthermore, he mentioned the positive case of Austria, where the yearlong struggle to gain official recognition as a confessional community has finally payed off. Other examples of nations in which our movement has gained an official legal status are Spain, Iceland UK, Norway and Poland.

The next speaker, Mr. Yulian Marianov, gave an overview of his [web outreach ministry](#). As Bulgarian journalists had only access to negative sources, Mr. Marianov started his own blogs out of the necessity to offer unbiased information about True Parents and our movement. His blog covers various themes such as True Father's life and words, the works of our movement, discussions about morality, Humanism, Communism, Darwinism and new developments in the sciences. Through this approach a broad audience is attracted and thereby given the opportunity to get a more direct impression about our foundation. Mr. Marionov quoted True Mother in the HDH session following the 50 year anniversary in Vienna last year: **“You must use the internet and witness online about True Parents!”** His conclusion was that without succeeding in the internet we cannot be successful in witnessing.

Through a SWOT-analysis moderated by Rev. Loew the participants expressed their thoughts on strengths (S), weaknesses (W), opportunities (O) and threats (T) of our current PR approaches in Europe. The comments are briefly summarized here:

- S – Global vision, motivated people, content, peace-oriented activities, international networks (including the UN, UNESCO, OSCE, AfPs, etc.), “product”: TP, DP, Blessing.
- W – No budget for PR and Media Outreach, fragmentation, slow decision making, public stigma, lack of experts. Numerous slanders in the internet against TPs and the UC and long outdated information just remain in the web and have never been challenged. The power of Google and digital media is used well by our opponents, but is largely neglected by us. Thus our public image of a “destructive cult” still remains largely unchallenged.
- O – Create a European level PR team, apply for a grant (from Korea?), promote 2nd generation involvement, consult PR agencies. We need to claim our human rights and equal treatment. (Every major religious organization has an office or an NGO that deals with human rights, i.e. CSI (Catholic), Open Doors (Protestant), Anti-Defamation League (Jewish), Hans Noot Foundation (Mormons), etc.) A great opportunity would be provided by an efficient use of social media such as Facebook or Twitter.
- T – No follow-up, no ownership, no time, no money, opponents such as anti-cult activists (apologists of mainstream churches, FECRIS, etc.) or leftist media, problems within the movement (i.e. schisms in the True Family).



The working group concluded by defining four possible action steps: First, a person with an ownership mentality needs to be found who works on a 20h/week basis. Second, his task would consist in forming and leading a European level PR team (approx. five core members). Objectives of such a team would encompass standardizing and branding a long-term European PR approach, the development of a general guideline for PR work, organizing workshops that offer relevant skills and tools as well as collaboration with the US and Korea. Third, the question of appropriate funding must be solved in order to get a European PR team started. Fourth, volunteers, who are interested in PR work, need to be recruited. PR representatives should be appointed at least in the providential and strategic nations.

Mr. Christian Hausmann, co-national leader of Germany, repeatedly emphasized the importance of a coordinated European effort in the field of PR and the importance of allocating funds to support a professional team: **“Sustainable success of our witnessing activities depends on an effective PR strategy!”**