

EurekAlert!

What is EurekAlert?

EurekAlert <https://www.eurekalert.org/> is a global online news service. The service can be used by universities, journals, companies, and other organisations involved in research to take their research news to the media.

EurekAlert is used by more than 3,000 universities and other institutions, which share their research and technology news with journalists and the public all over the world. Over 12,000 journalists from 75+ countries have subscribed to EurekAlert and have access to the news entered to EurekAlert. The public portal of EurekAlert is visited by roughly one million people per month.

The input of Estonian research institutions into EurekAlert is communicated by Research in Estonia (RiE), an initiative of the Estonian Research Council (ETAg), through the **collection form** in the www.researchestonia.eu/eurekalert. Representatives of the R&D institutions, which would like to enter their messages/news to EurekAlert, need to open the collection form found online, enter the text of the message, their contact details, and the required further information. Then, the information entered in the form is forwarded by representatives of RiE to the EurekAlert portal, where the information is checked by the administrators of the portal and published.

This information material will assist you in entering information in the collection form.

1. What is a piece of news?

A piece of news meets the criteria for news values. The criteria for news values are used by journalists at the editorial boards of magazines to decide, which stories to publish, to highlight the important stories, and leave others on the background or in the reserve. There are many different criteria of news values and the use of the criteria depends on different factors, however, there are some news criteria, which are more common and influential than others, including:

- topicality, freshness and/or relevance;
- the conflicted nature;
- the impact (how many people does it influence);
- the uniqueness or unusualness;
- the human or geographical proximity (the latter is above all important in Estonia, not globally)

The following are not news for a journalist, especially a (foreign) research journalist:

- Infrastructure development, i.e., construction and opening of buildings, labs, etc.
- Acknowledgements of people, which is important for the faculty, but does not speak to the public in this perspective. Exceptions here are Nobel Prizes and national research awards, but the latter are certainly not interesting for foreigners.
- Publishing of books or opening of exhibitions (a discovery and highlighting of the special nature thereof, however, may have news value).
- Organising of a conference/seminar – there are hundreds of conferences held every day. Conferences at which the results of research work are presented may have news value, but not gatherings of 400 researchers in Estonia.
- Being granted funds. Research cannot do without funding, but it would be more reasonable to discuss, what the money is going to be used for, what is the purpose of the research, what are you hoping to find or develop.

1.1 The message. The message published on EurekAlert is a press release, which highlights the results of research work as a piece of information of news value. Just like a piece of news, a press release begins with a leading section – an up to 25-word sentence, which summarises the most important finding of the news piece. Next, the text will have to provide answers to the following questions, which are of a quite similar purpose with the parts of an academic article:

- What is the topical problem in the world, which requires solving? (introduction, context)
- What did the research attempt to learn? (hypothesis, research questions) + quotes
- Who were studied in the research and which methods were used? (sample, method, research design)
- What was learned? (results) + quotes
- What might have been the limitations of the research? (limitations)
- What good may it bring in real life (conclusions, impact) + quotes

The questions listed may be responded to in the text in the order provided above, but the structure of the text may differ. Any information regarding funding parties is important in these messages, as it makes the background of the research transparent. Mention the funding parties in the end of the text. The text should also include quotes by the author(s) of the research. A quote is a bright, human, and explanatory sentence. It should not be a piece of academic text copied from an article. Quotes speak to the reader and make the topic more relevant for them.

1.2. The title. Let's follow the example of a title of a journalistic news piece, which brings out the most important bits of the information presented in the article. Journalistic titles include an active verb (such as: examined, understood, discovered; refrain from using verbs such as is, happens, gets, etc.). The title of a news piece should be in the past tense, as it reflects something, which has happened in the past. The title may not be longer than 10 words.

Highlight what is really important in the title – which new knowledge was gained? Make sure you leave references to the university, funder, Estonian researchers, cooperation, or the fact that the piece is about a research out of the title – 99% of the news on EurekAlert are based on research, it is not necessary to stress this again.

1.3. Contact details. Contact details must be provided to allow the researcher(s) to be contacted. In most cases, the university e-mail address, the researcher's Skype username, and quite frequently also the telephone number are added, which can be used to reach the researcher. Details of several people may be added to make sure that the journalist can always reach at least one person.

The contact person must be available and prepared to communicate with journalists over these channels on the day of issuing the message and in the next few days. The researchers provided as contact persons on EurekAlert usually respond in less than 24 hours and find time for communication within two days.

1.4. Embargos. Academic journals usually consent to publishing of articles under an embargo on EurekAlert. Only registered journalists get to access materials under an embargo on EurekAlert and this is observed responsibly and strictly. Thus, in the case of materials under an embargo, please contact RiE early, as this guarantees the information reaching a limited number of research journalists with a sufficient amount of time to spare. For the journalists, this means exclusivity on the one hand, and provides them an opportunity to conduct preliminary work and prepare the story by the time of publishing of the information.

2. Further materials of what else are needed by journalist for publishing stories?

2.1. References to academic articles. It is increasingly important to provide references to the original source in popular science. For this purpose, please add a link to the academic article, even if the journal in question is not open access. Links referring to messages on the websites of the research group, university, or, for example, Research in Estonia are not good – they simply do not ensure the same level of reliability as the original article.

EurekAlert also includes messages about presentations at conferences. This is also a good source of information, but in this case, the entire text of the presentation could be made available over a link (e.g., by publishing it on ResearchGate or Academia.edu). These environments also increase the visibility of the researchers' professional profiles.

EurekAlert provides an opportunity to add photographs, drawings, or videos, which does not mean that all of these should be included, but you should at least consider a photo. If finding a photo proves complicated, the specialists of RiE can help you in finding a photo from public databases.

2.2. Photos. A good story draws even more attention if there is a relevant photo or illustration. A photo of what was researched (cells, trees, birds, etc.) would be great. Social sciences are more complicated, as the illustrating material tends to be metaphorical. Even in these cases, however, it would be a good idea to look for illustrative materials (e.g., Wikimedia Commons, Freepik.com, Flickr.com).

In the case of photos, do not forget to specify the name of the author of the photo and please describe, what makes the photo important or, if the photo is of an illustrative nature, how is it connected with the results of the research.

If you can add more than one photo to the text, please use portrait as well as landscape formats. Some publications can use both, the majority, however, prefers the landscape format.

2.3. Drawings. A good drawing is clear at first sight. Popular science articles could be equipped with drawings, which say a lot. The drawings used in academic articles, which usually call for in-depth studying and explanatory texts, cannot be used.

High resolution photos and drawings should be used, as these can also be used in printed media.

2.4. Videos. A video is a moving image, which means that simply using a person taking to the camera is generally not justified. It is a good idea to show: a) what cannot be seen with the naked eye (e.g., microscope images, etc.) and b) informative visual stories. If you have video material of the process of conducting the research, use this. If you would like to shoot a special video, please ask a professional production or communication company to assist you in order to prevent coming across as amateurish.

! Native speaker's language. If possible, have your message proofread.

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