Writing Effective Public Policy Papers

A Guide for Policy Advisers in Central and Eastern Europe

Eóin Young and Lisa Quinn
FOREWORD

In recent years, we at the Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative (LGI), Open Society Institute -Budapest, have started to gradually move towards new forms of international development. Beyond traditional action-oriented, grant-giving and capacity-building activities, we are actively involved in policy design and policy-making. Consequently, we are working with new partners and our outputs have also been modified: LGI commissions more policy papers, provides grants for members of our professional networks to implement comparative and applied policy research, and we cooperate with international organizations in policy formulation and training.

In Central and Eastern Europe we are faced with special problems: English is the second language of our partners and targeted policy-makers, but it is widely used as a common form of communication. Policy paper writers very often have to present their ideas both in local languages and in English when communicating with foreign investors, donors and advisers.

Our objective with these guidelines is to provide support for policy paper writing. This is a handbook which can also be used as a reference guide. But, as it is built on the extensive literature of policy research, policy paper writing and publishing, it could also be the basis of training courses on policy paper writing.

We hope that policy analysts, applied and academic researchers will find this publication useful. Both for LGI and the potential beneficiaries of our projects, it is vital to improve the quality of future publications. Studies, reports, articles and books should be presented in a form which is generally accepted by the policy-making community and by the target audience of policy advisers.

This publication fits into LGI’s “Public Policy Initiative,” which was designed to support think tanks and policy-makers in the region. This program provides management advice and professional support to newly established policy institutes. We believe that these policy paper writing guidelines will help these policy centers as well as our other partners as well as benefit our colleagues in the policy trends in the region.

LGI is very grateful to Eóin Young and Lisa Quinn for their excellent work in writing and editing this publication. We have received professional advice and comments from José de Barros, Petra Kovács, Péter Radó and Viola Zentai during the preparation of the guide. The previous work of Sarolta Kérész and Éva Figder also contributed to the development of this publication.

Gábor Péteri
LGI, Research Director
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Researching the public policy community of Central and Eastern Europe and the nature of policy papers was central to developing this guide. Hence, the authors would like to express gratitude to the following individuals from LGI who generously gave us their time and helped to shape and inform the content of this book: Gábor Péteri, Petra Kovács, José de Barros, Viola Zentai and Tom Bass. We would like to thank the World Bank for giving us permission to use extracts from sample policy papers in this book for the purpose of analysis. Finally, we are grateful to Judit Kovács for the design and layout of this book.

If readers have comments or feedback on this book, please contact us at eoin@bos.org.yu or lisa@bos.org.yu

Authors: Eóin Young and Lisa Quinn

Centre for Academic and Professional Advancement

Belgrade Open School
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 Introduction ............................................................................................................. 1

2 The Public Policy Community ................................................................................ 5
   2.1 Defining Public Policy ....................................................................................... 5
   2.2 Members of the Public Policy Community ....................................................... 6
   2.3 From Political Science to Policy Science ......................................................... 8
   2.4 Policy Science as an Applied Discipline ......................................................... 10

3 The Policy-making Process ................................................................................. 12
   3.1 The Policy Cycle ............................................................................................... 12
   3.2 Role of the Policy Paper in the Policy-making Process ................................. 16
   3.3 Disseminating Your Policy Ideas ..................................................................... 17

4 The Policy Paper: An Overview ....................................................................... 18
   4.1 Different Types of Policy Papers:
       Policy Study and Policy Analysis .................................................................. 19

5 The Policy Paper: Structural and Textual Elements ..................................... 22
   5.1 Outlining Your Paper ....................................................................................... 23
   5.2 Title ................................................................................................................ 24
   5.3 Table of Contents ............................................................................................. 27
       5.3.1 List of Tables and/or Figures ............................................................. 29
   5.4 Abstract or Executive Summary ..................................................................... 31
   5.5 Introduction ..................................................................................................... 36
   5.6 Problem Description ....................................................................................... 42
       5.6.1 Constructing the Problem Description:
            Structure and Argumentation ................................................................. 43
       5.6.2 Constructing the Problem Description:
            Text and Argumentation ........................................................................... 49
In order to effectively support you when writing policy papers, this guide includes many user-friendly and interactive features, e.g., writing and planning checklists after important sections and key-word boxes in the margins. In addition, to allow for reflection on various approaches that writers take, many opportunities to analyze published policy papers have been included. While this guide is primarily designed for self-study purposes, it can also be used to support the teaching of policy paper writing in the classroom.

Policy papers may also take the form of a briefing paper, which typically provides a decision maker with an overview of an issue or problem, targeted analysis, and, often, actionable recommendations. Briefing books and white papers often accompany an oral briefing that targets key findings or recommendations. The decision maker then refers to the extended paper for the deep analysis that supports the core findings and/or recommendations. Core Components: Although the policy paper relies on your authority over the deep research that you have conducted on the issue or problem, you should also pa

Policy Papers: Policy Study and Policy Analysis
The Policy Paper: Structural and Textual Elements
Outlining Your Paper Title
Table of Contents
List of Tables and/or Figures
Abstract or Executive Summary
Introduction
Problem Description
Constructing the Problem Description: Structure and Argumentation
Constructing the Problem Description: Text and Argumentation
v.

Local Government Public Service Reform Initiative
Open Society Institute Writing Effective Public Policy Papers
A Guide for Policy Advisers in Central and Eastern Europe
LGI Documents
Eóin Young and Lisa Quinn.

More information. Producing policy relevant analysis & writing to influence decision making. What is a policy paper? Policy papers are different from the standard research papers in several respects: They are usually addressed at a non-academic audience, such as a particular official, agency, or organization. They often focus on prescriptive questions. They may begin by diagnosing a particular issue or situation, and typically argue for a solution. Policy papers are written efficiently. The audience often does not have much time and does not want to read a book on the subject. Indeed, often policy papers are accompanied by policy briefs which summarize the papers in a page or less. Policy Paper Components. Policy Choice C: Increase spending on public messages encouraging voting. Criteria 1: Legality.