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.

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

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Green papers are written early in the process of policy formulation for general public and stakeholders to identify potential solutions, whereas white papers are written at a later stage to summarise and communicate proposed policy solutions to the general public and relevant stakeholders. Position papers generally express the position taken by an organization in a specified policy area in an attempt to influence policy makers to adopt a stance that the organization is taking. Controlling entails the conformity of the policy paper with the rules of law, standards, and so on, while auditing is the process of trying to improve the public action by measuring the obtained state of affairs with the desired state of affairs. 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.