

FUTURE DEMOCRACY LAB / DEMOCRACY INSIGHTS

POLICY PAPER (PP) GUIDELINE

The PP should focus on one key question which should be: relevant, timely, actionable, answerable (can have many answers, not a “yes” or “no” question), and precisely worded. Decide which type of question (5W1H: What? Who? Where? When? Why? Or How?) will be your key question. The main question determines the structure of your article.

The paper should address topics related to the state of democracy in various regions of the world, as well as issues concerning the potential future directions of the democratic order in a way, which is accessible to both expert and non-expert readers.

Wordcount for the PP should be up to **10,000 words**.

Structure

1. Title

Should

- be accurate,
- use a verb or an implicit verb,
- use active voice.

Should not

- be journalistic, sensational, or misleading,
- use acronyms except for commonly known,
- be a question.

We use narrative titles – a single sentence that sums up the main argument of the article. The more descriptive and catchier the title, the more likely the article is to be read.

Try to avoid questions (Why is Poland so exposed to the effects of Climate Change?) or general topics (Poland and Climate Change). Do not capitalise prepositions in titles unless they are five letters or longer (for example, ‘Before,’ ‘After,’ ‘Towards,’ etc.).

Try and keep titles to sixty-four characters or, if possible, less.

2. Lead up to 70 words

- includes the essence of the article, reveals what it is about and what its aim is (what for?),
- informs what the key question is,
- should catch attention and encourage to read the rest,
- can be thought as a summary or be anecdotal,
- short: 1–2 sentences,
- should avoid: passive voice, redundant words, and expert terms,
- compositionally should be closely linked with the title but both need to stand alone (be clear separately) – three tips of how the lead can correspond with the title:
 - the title is a question, the lead is an answer
 - the title answers the key question, the lead takes it further
 - the title catches the core issue (a thesis, conclusion), the lead takes it further

3. Introduction

Presents the topic and the problem, provides the context.

4. The main body

Divided into 3 to 4 subheadings, which should be consistent in form and style and take separately build into a story (each paragraph should preferably deal with one issue or argument).

5. Conclusion

- is not a summary! – do not repeat what you already said,
- explains the essence of the problem under consideration (a given situation, phenomenon, event etc.) and/or their consequences,
- should be opinion-forming – help to understand and/or take action
- should begin with the main idea / thesis / conclusion
- should leave reader with an answer to a question: Why should I care about this issue/topic? etc.

6. Contributors' bios *up to 100 words each*

References

FDL Democracy Insights uses hyperlinks rather than citations for references.

We encourage authors to provide links directing readers to more detailed reports or other pieces of research, news items, other blog posts, especially when quoting facts, figures and speeches etc.

Open access sources are preferred.

Please insert a hyperlink at the relevant point in your piece that you would like to reference – e.g., “Joe Bloggs has said [insert hyperlink on the next word]”.

To insert a hyperlink in Microsoft Word, copy the address of the website, highlight the phrase you'd like to appear as a link in the text, and press “Ctrl” and “K”. This will bring up an option menu that allows you to paste in the web address.

Please try to avoid using footnotes wherever possible.

Common Language Issues

Ensure consistency by using either British or American spelling throughout.

The paper is in the English language, and so the names of all institutions, organisations, and quotes should be translated to English with links to original sources provided (if required).

Try to minimise acronyms, or at least spell the full name or phrase first, and then bracket the acronym for use going forward.

FDL Democracy Insights uses the Oxford comma; i.e., in a series of three or more items, add a comma before the conjunction. Thus, we would write ‘Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia make up the Visegrad Group’ rather than ‘Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia make up the Visegrad Group’.

‘Policy-making’ should be one hyphenated word, while ‘healthcare’ should be one word without hyphens.

With the exception of such widely-used phrases as ‘status quo’, ‘laissez-faire’, etc., italicise foreign terms and phrases.

Avoid contractions.

Spell out 'percent' rather than using the symbol %.

Unless you are referring to percentages (e.g., 'According to one poll, 60 percent of respondents say that...;' 'The European Commission predicts 3 percent GDP growth for the region...'), spell out all numbers less than one-hundred as well as all multiples of one-hundred and one-thousand, one-million, etc. Examples: 'Joseph Stalin is seen as responsible for twenty million deaths;' 'In the twenty years since Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic joined NATO..., etc.