

Writing a Policy Brief

General recommendations

- Keep the Policy Brief short: **Usually 2–4 pages.**
- Use plain language: Avoid jargon and technical terms. If you use technical terms, explain what these mean first.
- Be persuasive: Focus on convincing decision-makers.
- Use visuals: Graphs, tables, and bullet points help readability.

Resource: Guide on Writing Policy Briefs for Impact

- Focus: Helps EU-funded research projects translate findings into actionable policy briefs. It was published in 2025 thus most examples listed below do not follow the guide.
- **Reference:**
European Commission: European Research Executive Agency, *Sharing evidence with policymakers – Guide on writing policy briefs for impact*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2025, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2848/0209192>

Structure and examples

Title: Include the issue and main goal of your recommendations, and who can address it. Make it short.

Title examples:

“Recommendations for EU and national policy makers to accelerate the circular transition in cities” – [ICLEI](#)

“Advancing a Just Urban Transition How the European Commission can support local governments in managing an inclusive and socially fair energy transition” – [ICLEI](#)

Key messages or Summary:

(Use 3-5 bullet points for this section.)

- Start by presenting the context. What problem are you tackling and why is it relevant now?
- Highlight 1-2 actions policy-makers can take to address the problem and make sure to specify the policy-makers level you are addressing (local, national or European) depending on the scope of your findings.
- Back the recommendation stating a few facts and findings from your research

- Link the recommended action with a potential benefit or positive impact at the level you are targeting (local, national or European)

Key messages examples:

- iisd Starts with general data and finishes with some call for action
- SEI Summarizes the 4 recommendations in the last bulletpoint

Introduction and context

- Formulate a specific question that the brief aims to address.
- Identify, if relevant, any shortcomings of current policies, arguing why and how the current approaches could be improved.
- Point to gaps in state-of-the-art revealed through your project activities.
- Outline barriers and challenges, particularly those affected by policy.
- Consider including visuals such as graphs and tables, to complement the main text

Example of identifying shortcomings, gaps, in policies:

Page 6-7, “Advancing a Just Urban Transition How the European Commission can support local governments in managing an inclusive and socially fair energy transition” – ICLEI

Policy recommendations

- Present a list of 1-3 actionable, evidence-based recommendations showing how recommended action solves the problem and where uncertainty exists.
- Propose a manageable number of actions in a list, ranked by impact or urgency.
- Be specific and outline how actions could be taken up by policymakers (at local, national or european level, depending on your target).

Examples:

Page 8-9 – ICLEI Recommendations for circularity in construction include to who it is directed to and a few examples from cities already applying them

Page 11-12– NetZeroCities recommendations on how to support Energy Communities explain the issue, sometimes with examples from cities, highlights the main points.

Note: Most Policy Briefs place the Policy recommendations after the evaluation. We recommend not to, following the Guide on Writing Policy Briefs for Impact

Evidence and Analysis

- Summarise the most compelling evidence / results (e.g. project results, expert opinions, concrete examples etc.) with the aim and audience in mind, in a clear and understandable format, that doesn't require specialised knowledge.



- Mention a concrete example that could be a striking illustration of your research results (and where the recommendation might be coming from).
- Incorporate visuals where possible to engage reader and enhance their comprehension of the data, complementing the text. Visual aids may help distil complex information.
- State any limitations of your conclusions

Contact email

A policymaker might contact you for a follow up call to clarify recommendations or a meeting. Include at least an email address.