

Style Guide for the Policy Department for writing in English

All organisations that produce publications have a style guide or style book setting out their own 'house style'. It is an important part of the organisation's identity or brand. The style guide sets out, for the sake of consistency, the in-house rules on spelling, punctuation, typographical styles, use of capital letters and small letters, names, figures and other usage. It contains an alphabetical list of entries and is a living document, which is regularly updated.

The entries in the following Style Guide are in alphabetical order. Much of the information is taken from the [English version](#) of the EU's [Interinstitutional Style Guide](#) and the [English Style Guide of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Translation](#). Both documents are available online. Appendices at the end contain additional information, references and links.

Abbreviations (acronyms and initialisms)

Write out the text in full once before using any abbreviation. Only *extremely* common abbreviations can be introduced without being explained. Don't rely on your own sense of 'common'!

If the abbreviation only appears once or twice in the text, write it out in full each time.

Plurals of these are made by adding an 's' without an apostrophe:
(*SMEs, UFOs*).

In acronyms of six or more letters, only the first letter is capitalised (*Unesco* or *Cetelec*, as opposed to *NATO*).

When to use 'a' or 'an'? In the case of initialisms (abbreviations pronounced as a series of letters, such as *MEP*), use 'an' rather than 'a' if you would when speaking:

An MEP is not a UFO.

(The letters A, E, F, H, I, L, M, N, O, R, S, and X take 'an')

Acronyms (abbreviations pronounced as words, such as *NATO*) that are proper names do not take the **definite article** even if the full names do (*Cenelec, NATO, Unesco*). Acronyms that are common nouns, however, may have an article (*a WASP*).

Initialisms generally take the **definite article** if the expression they stand for does (*the EU, the OECD, the WTO but TNT*).

Abstracts

Since the aim of our abstracts is to provide a summary — not a road map — of the pages that follow, describe your content and conclusions in this short text. Try to avoid phrases such as, 'this briefing will' or 'in this study'.

~~*This study will examine what the role of the EU should be...*~~
The role of the EU should be...

Administrator

While this title sounds perfectly acceptable within the EU, to English-speaking natives in the outside world, the title may have dreary connotations, evoking a frustrated pencil-pusher. *Civil servant* is a more neutral job description.

Aim

A project or person *aims to do something*, or is *aimed at doing something*. (A project does not *aim at* its purpose, although it can *aim a message at its audience*.)

His *aim* was to get drunk. His *objective* for achieving this was to drink five pints of beer in an hour

Al-Qaeda

Inside a sentence write 'al-Qaeda' with a small 'a'; at the beginning of a sentence write 'Al-Qaeda' with a capital 'A'.

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)

al-Shabab

This spelling is used by The Economist.

Apostrophes

Apostrophes are used for:

- possessives (*women's rights, footballers' salaries*)
- contractions (*don't*)
- plurals of single lower-case letters (*minding your p's and q's*)
- thousands in tables: *'000 tonnes* (alternatively, write *thousand tonnes* or *thousands of tonnes*, but not *1 000 tonnes*).

Apostrophes are not used for

- plurals of abbreviations (*MEPs, OCTs, SMEs, UFOs*)
- plurals of figures (*Boeing 747s*).

Apostrophes can have quite an impact on the phrase:

The NGO's opinion of NGOs was lower than the MEPs'.

(=The opinion of one NGO about several NGOs was lower than that of several Members of Parliament.)

Arab Uprisings

Better to say 'Arab Uprisings' rather than 'Arab Spring'.

As well as

As well as is not the same as *and*.

~~*The briefing was drafted by authors, scribblers as well as hacks.*~~

The briefing was drafted by authors, scribblers and hacks.

The briefing was drafted by authors and scribblers, as well as hacks.

Grammatically, '*as well as*', '*in addition to*', '*similarly so*' and such phrases are 'prepositional' and do not inflect the verb:

My eye as well as my mouth tells me that the 'coffee' in the Parliament is suspect swill.

Australian Labor Party (ALP), also Labor

Official name of a political party in Australia. It was 'Labour' before 1912 but is now spelled 'Labor'.

Bibliographies and bibliographical references

References within the text include the author's surname in parenthesis (**Barrett**) as well as the year of publication if it is necessary to distinguish between publications (**Barrett, 1991**).

The bibliography is printed in alphabetical order.

Single works (e.g. books) should be listed with:

- the author's surname and initial(s) or first name followed by a comma;
- the title in italic (and, where appropriate, edition number);
- the publisher; place of publication; year of publication; relevant pages, etc.
Butcher, J., Copy-editing: The Cambridge handbook, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1975, p. 17.

Works from series should be listed with:

- the title of the article with inverted commas;
- the title of the periodical or the series (in italic);
- the number, date or frequency;
- the publisher, the place of publication when listed, the year of publication (if there is not date for the issue); relevant pages, etc.

X [George F. Kennan], 'The Sources of Soviet Conduct', *Foreign Affairs* No 25, July 1947, pp. 566–582.

Blue

The European Parliament logo uses a specific blue colour: Pantone Reflex Blue. If you want to use this colour, you can do so by defining its components.

On your computer screen, this would be done with 'RGB' (Red-Green-Blue values: **red 12; green 77; blue 162**). In Word, select either the shading 'Font colours' (the uppercase 'A' in the formatting toolbar) or the background colour for your table, then 'More colours', then the 'Custom' tab. Here you can input the RGB values and reproduce any text in the same blue as the Parliament's logo.

For printing, use CMYB values: cyan 100 %, magenta 80 %, yellow 0 %, black 0 %.

Brackets, parentheses

Use **round brackets (parentheses)** when citing numbered paragraphs from legal instruments, and close up to the article number: *Article 3(1), Article 3(1)(a)*.

A full sentence in brackets should have the final stop inside the closing bracket. (Don't forget the stop at the end of the preceding sentence.)

Square brackets are used to make insertions in quoted material and in translations to provide additional explanations. Square brackets are also used within round brackets (*and may be useful [though unsightly]*).

Capital cities

For the official names of capital cities (for example, in our country briefings), use the names as listed in the Interinstitutional Style Guide: <http://publications.europa.eu/code/en/en-5000500.htm>.

Capital letters

Names are capitalised, but ordinary nouns are not.

Capitals are used for the titles and names of persons, bodies, programmes, articles, legal acts, documents. However, the words *draft* and *proposal* are written in lower case even in the titles of draft legislation.

Capitalise only the first word (and words that are normally capitalised) in titles and sub-titles of briefings, notes, articles, etc.

No capitals for *north, north-west, north-western*, etc. unless part of an administrative or political unit or a distinct regional entity (*South Africa, Northern Ireland but southern Africa, northern France*). Note, however, *Central and Eastern European countries* (because the connotations are more political than geographic).

Quotations within sentences should start with a capital in running text only if the quotation is a complete sentence in itself:

Marie Antoinette never said 'Let them eat cake.'

Jean-Jacques Rousseau described a princess who suggested the peasants 'eat brioche'.

In titles and sub-titles (the part following the colon), capitalise the first word and those words that are upper case in running text:

The ever-flowering metaphor:

An analysis of Pekka Hakala's titular mastery

Colombia

The country is spelled 'Colombia' not 'Columbia'.

Colours

The colours we use for graphics in our notes should be harmonised as much as possible. Avoid 'flashy' colours, particularly fluorescent ones, as these will not print well.

EP Blue (see entry on 'Blue') should be our 'first' colour, followed by dark orange (the colour used on the cover of our studies). Others that will print well include varying shades of blue, purple and red.

Commas

Generally, do not use a comma before the 'and' (or 'but') in a series: 'x, y and z' (not 'x, y, and z'). If, however, there may be confusion about the separation of the items, which could be resolved by inserting a comma, do insert it.

Agnieszka went to see Stefan, an official and a gentleman.

Committees

The names of the Parliament's committees should be written out in full on first reference. This is true even on the inside cover of our notes.

Copyright symbol

The copyright symbol (©) is made by typing ALT + 0169 on a PC.

Currencies

See Interinstitutional Style Guide for currency abbreviations:

<http://publications.europa.eu/code/en/en-370302.htm>

Country names

For the official names of countries (for example, in our country briefings), use the names as listed in the Interinstitutional Style Guide: <http://publications.europa.eu/code/en/en-5000500.htm#fn-mm1>.

Dashes

The dashes used to interject phrases — those that slightly interrupt the flow — are made by choosing insert - symbol - more symbols - special characters - em dash.

Dates

Dates in official texts should be given fully as follows: 6 June 1992.

Many thanks for your letter dated 6 January 2011.

In footnotes dates should be abbreviated as 6.6.1992, not 6.6.92.

Note that 1990–91 is two years. Single years that do not coincide with calendar years are denoted by a forward slash (1990/91), which is twelve months or less.

For decades, write 1990s (not *the nineties*).

Centuries can be written with or without figures: *ninth century* or *19th century*. (And, following the hyphen rule, *19th century* will be hyphenated when used as an adjective [*19th-century mores*] but not when used as a noun.)

Decimal point

The integral part of a number is separated from its fractional part by a point, not a comma (233.25).

Aligning decimal points can be done by using 'decimal tabs' in Word -- assuming your computer is set to recognise points as decimals.

(If you are having trouble with decimal settings, see Elina Stergatou.)

Editing of PolDep Papers

PolDep authors who would like their paper to be revised for English language and style issues, as well as for a careful, critical reading, should plan this in advance with Elina and/or Mary. For planning purposes, authors should try and allow a week for editing as many documents require editing at the same time.

Texts that will be widely circulated (within the Parliament and possibly beyond) will be given priority, as will papers written on our own initiative.

External studies produced by our contractors should be delivered in a finished, polished state. While it should not be necessary to revise these for language issues, PolDep coordinators should regularly spot check the text to verify quality, comprehensibility and originality as part of the evaluation process.

Ellipses ...

Always three dots, even at the end of a sentence; if in the middle of a sentence or phase they should be preceded and followed by a space ... like this. Ellipses are not the equivalent of 'etc.'

EU interinstitutional style guide

Produced by the European Publications Office. It sets out uniform stylistic rules and conventions which must be used by all the institutions, bodies, offices and agencies of the European Union. Obligatory for all those involved in document production (paper or electronic). It is available in 24 European Union languages.

EUR and other currencies

The code for the Euro is EUR, which should be used in all texts when there is a number. The 'EUR' should precede the number with a space:

The amount Julien requires is EUR 12 500.

The words 'euro' and 'euros' (with no capitals) can be used in texts when there is no number that follows:

Pekka is uncertain how many euros he will need.

The euro sign (€) is only for graphics (graphs, charts, etc.) When it is used, there is no space between the symbol and the amount: €200.

With other currencies, use the ISO code and follow the same rules.

Euro area

This is the official term for the group of countries that have adopted the euro as their single currency. Avoid *euroland* and *euro zone*.

European Commission English Style Guide

A handbook for authors and translators in the European Commission.

False friends, false cognates and other problems

Confusing similarities exist between all languages, but **French and English** frequently clash here.

Some examples are: *assister à* (French) which means *participate in* in English; *délai* (French) meaning *deadline* in English; *éditer* in French, which is *to publish* in English; *négligeable* in French, which is *negligible* in English; *ordre du jour* in French, which is *agenda* in English; *agenda* in French which is *calendar* or *diary* in English.

For a more comprehensive list, see Appendix.

Within English, there are also numerous confusing pairs:

<i>all together</i> (in a body)	vs.	<i>altogether</i> (entirely)
<i>capital</i>	vs.	<i>capitol</i>
<i>dependent</i> (adj. or noun)	vs.	<i>dependant</i> (noun only)
<i>discreet</i> (subtle)	vs.	<i>discrete</i> (separate)
<i>enclosed</i> (in an envelope)	vs.	<i>attached</i> (to an email)
<i>license</i> (verb)	vs.	<i>licence</i> (noun)
<i>practise</i> (verb)	vs.	<i>practice</i> (noun)

premisses (propositions) vs. *premises* (building)
principal (adj. or noun) vs. *principle* (noun)
stationary (adj. - still) vs. *stationery* (noun - paper)

Font

The Parliament's [Graphic design charter](#), which defines the visual aspects of the Parliament's documents and publications, specifies that the recommended typeface for texts is **Myriad Pro**.

Footnotes

The Publications Office places symbols for footnotes (those at the bottom of the page) and endnotes (at the end of the document) before the punctuation mark. We should do the same.

Footnotes are numbered continuously and placed at the foot of the page in smaller characters than the body of the text (generally by two points). They are separated from the text by a short rule and space.

When a reference to a note appears in a table, the note must form part of the table, appearing within the frame of the table.

Within the note itself, begin the text with a capital letter (exceptions being 'e.g.', 'i.e.' and 'p') and end it with a full stop (whether the note is a single word, a phrase or one or more complete sentences).

Footnotes do not need to contain the complete reference information. It may be simpler to include the author — and date if necessary for clarity — in parentheses in the text ([Bendini, 2012](#)) and provide the full information in the bibliography (see '[bibliographies](#)' for style).

If you do want to include all the information in the footnote, follow the style defined for bibliographies, but place the author's first name or initial before his or her surname.

J. Butcher, 'O, how I hate these picky details', *Copy-editing: The Handbook*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1975, p. 17.

Don't use 'ibid' in your footnotes. Instead, provide a shortened reference to the work:

Butcher, *Copy-editing*, p. 18.

Foreign words, phrases and names

Italicise these (without inverted commas) and include all original accents (*raison d'être*), unless the word or phrase is in common use and/or considered part of the English language (*ad hoc*, *per capita*).

Personal names should retain their original accents (*Fernando Garcés de los Fayos*).

Verbatim foreign quotations should be placed in quotation marks without italicising the text.

Fractions

When writing these out, insert hyphens if the fraction is an adjective or adverb (*a two-thirds increase*), but not when used as a noun (*an increase of two thirds*).

Avoid combining figures and words:

two-thirds completed, not *2/3 completed*

Full stop

Fear this not. It's only a dot.

French writers may abhor it. But the English do adore it.

Gender neutral language: see inclusive language

Got

In written texts, replace this whenever possible with another word:

Negotiations ~~got~~ became blocked.

Groups

In English-language texts, parliamentary groups should be referred to by their English names, which should be written out initially:

Jose Bové (Verts/ALF Greens/European Free Alliance) objected.

Hyphens

In adverb-adjective modifiers, there is no hyphen when the adverb ends in '-ly':

beautifully phrased sentence.

With other adverbs, a hyphen is usually required:

a well-known problem in the above-mentioned report.

Many phrases need a hyphen only when used as modifiers:

Developing a policy for the long term is a good long-term policy.

Prefixes are usually hyphenated in recent or ad hoc coinages (*anti-smoking campaign*). Latin or Greek prefixes tend to drop the hyphen once they become established (*codetermination, codecision, cooperation, subcommittee*). When in doubt, check.

Identifiers (ISBN and other codes)

All our external studies should include three identification codes, called 'identifiers', which are provided by the Publications Office:

1. The ISBN (International standard book number), which is 13 digits long and specific to each work. The ISBN barcode allows the work to be scanned by libraries and shops.
2. The CA (catalogue number), which is eight digits long, also specific to a single study and serves as a reference number in the Publications Office's own catalogue.
3. The DOI (Digital object identifier), a string of characters for the digital version of the study. A DOI differs from a URL, for example, because a DOI cannot change over time.

Inclusive language

Inclusive language embraces gender-neutral language or gender-inclusive language that should be used in order to avoid bias toward a particular sex or social gender or sexual orientation. Inclusive language also avoids bias on other attributes such as race, disability or age. Where possible, descriptors that refer to personal attributes such as race, gender, sexual orientation, disability or age, for example, should be avoided unless they are relevant and valid. Where relevant, particularly when writing specifically about a person or group of people concerned, the preferred terms or phrases of the person or group should be respected.

Gender-neutral language should be used whenever possible to neutralise any reference to gender or sex.

Nouns

Avoid gender-specific **nouns** such as *chairman* or *spokesman*; use *chair* or *spokesperson* instead.

Avoid words like *actress* (*female actor*) and instead use words like *actor* for persons of any gender.

Use *firefighters* instead of *firemen*; *police officer* instead of *policeman* or *policewoman*; *tradesperson* instead of *tradesman*, *craftsperson* instead of *craftsman* etc.

(See annex for more comprehensive list and refer to OED)

Pronouns

If the text clearly refers to a specific individual on a particular occasion, you know the gender of the person concerned and you know they have no objections to it being specified, use a gender-specific pronoun:

e.g. *The High Representative (Federica Mogherini) voiced **her** objections.*

e.g. *The President of the Commission (Jean-Claude Juncker) said that **he** welcomed the common position reached at the Council.*

Otherwise, depending on the circumstances, try to avoid a gender-specific pronoun and consider the following alternatives:

- Where possible draft in the plural; this is very common in English to render general concepts:

*Researchers must be objective about **their** findings.*

*This does not apply when passengers miss connecting flights for which **they** have reservations.*

- Omit the pronoun altogether:

The chair expressed ~~his/her/its~~ dissent.

The spokesperson voiced ~~his/her~~ opposition to the amendment.

- Substitute 'the' or 'that' for the possessive pronoun:

e.g. *A member of the Court of Auditors may be deprived of **the** right to a pension.*

[instead of *his* right]

- Use *he or she*:

e.g. *This does not apply when a passenger misses a connecting flight for which **he or she** has a reservation.*

However, this becomes clumsy if repeated too frequently and is not fully gender-inclusive; it should therefore be used with caution. If its use is really necessary, prefer *he or she* to *he/she* and avoid *(s)he* or *s/he*.

- Repeat the noun:

*This does not apply when a passenger misses a connecting flight for which **that passenger** has a reservation.*

This can be cumbersome and look excessively formal, but may be a useful technique in a longer sentence.

- In instructions, use the second person or the imperative:

You should first turn on your computer.

or

First turn on your computer.

instead of *The user should first turn on his/her computer.*

Another possibility is to use *they* as a third-person singular pronoun instead of *he* or *she* (to refer back to singular nouns). This is becoming increasingly widespread and is accepted in the English language although traditionalists might argue that it is not grammatically correct:

e.g. *This does not apply when a passenger misses a connecting flight for which **they** have a reservation.*

e.g. *Identify the person responsible and take **their** advice.*

Likewise, use *their* rather than *his* or *hers*:

*If a passenger misses a connecting flight they should give the airline details of **their** reservation.*

However, if the construction is too clumsy and in order to avoid confusion and possible translation problems, this device should be used only when the reference is absolutely clear.

Gender-inclusive language policy

The LGBT+ and trans community are promoting specific gender-inclusive language policies which are being introduced by some organisations (for example universities and government authorities). In certain contexts it may be appropriate to follow them. Under these policies, the gender-neutral pronoun *they* is used as a singular pronoun as opposed to *he* or *she* and the pronoun *them* as opposed to *him* or *her* and the possessive *their* instead of *his* or *her*. Gendered terms such as *man* or *woman* are to be avoided, and inclusive terms such as *person* or *student* are to be used instead.

Disability

Use language that focuses on the person, not the disability. Always put the person before the disability. Use language that emphasises abilities rather than limitations. Avoid negative or value-laden terms that overextend the severity of a disability. Do not label people by their disability.

Example: use *person with a disability* and avoid *the handicapped, the disabled* .

While in most circumstances there will be no need to refer to a person's disability, if the need does arise, where possible, choose acceptable terminology for the specific disability or use the term preferred by the individual. One person with a visual disability may prefer '*blind*' while another person with a similar disability may prefer '*person with low or limited loss of vision.*' Avoid outdated and derogatory terms such as '*handicapped,*' '*crippled,*' or '*physically challenged.*'

(See [Appendix 3: Inclusive language](#))

Race and ethnicity

Avoid references that draw undue attention to ethnic or racial backgrounds. When references are valid, learn the most appropriate specific terminology or use the term preferred by the person or group concerned. Obviously, avoid derogatory or abusive terms.

Courtesy titles

Mrs, Miss, Miss, Ms

Use *Ms* in English unless you know that the person concerned prefers otherwise. *Mrs* means married and *Miss* means unmarried.

Note that the French *Mme* and German *Frau* are likewise courtesy titles: a *Mme* or *Frau* is not necessarily a *Mrs* (i.e. married).

If you use *Mr* or *Ms* you must obviously be sure of the gender of the person in question.

Internet

Following the style of the *Financial Times* and *The Economist* (and generally the UK as opposed to the US), do not capitalise internet.

-ise or -ize? (-yse or -yze?)

Use *-ise* (and *-yse*, as in *analyse*), following British spelling.

Write *organisation* for all but the official names of US organisations.

Islamic State

Write '*Islamic State (IS) group*', '*so-called Islamic State (IS)*' or '*self-styled Islamic State (IS)*' (depending on the context) at first mention and the abbreviation *IS* thereafter.

(If the term '*ISIL*', '*Daesh*', '*Daesh/IS*', '*ISIL/Da'esh*' is used in a piece of text that we are quoting we keep it in the quotation but otherwise we use one of the above formulations).

Italics

Use italics for emphasis ... *sparingly*. Also use italics rather than quotation marks for the titles of books, newspapers or foreign terms.

Kyiv

(not 'Kiev')

Use the spelling in the EU Interinstitutional Style Guide: <http://publications.europa.eu/code/en/en-5000500.htm>

Lists

Punctuation and capitalisation of lists will depend on the list's length and structure.

Short items are introduced by a full sentence and have the following features:

- introductory colon
- no initial capitals
- no punctuation (very short items) or comma after each item
- a full stop at the end.

When each element of the list completes the introductory sentence, you should:

1. begin with the introductory colon;
2. label each item with a bullet, number or letter;
3. end each item with a semicolon;
4. close with a full stop.

When all elements are complete statements without a grammatical link to the introductory sentence, proceed as follows:

- a. introduce the list with a colon;
- b. label each item with a bullet, number or letter;
- c. start each item with a lowercase;
- d. put a full stop at the end.

If any one item consists of several complete sentences, announce the list with a complete sentence and continue as indicated below:

- i. Introduce the list with a colon.
- ii. Label each item with a bullet, number or letter.
- iii. Begin each item with a capital letter.
- iv. End each statement with a full stop. This allows several sentences to be included.

In sum, use a colon to introduce your list. Only if one of the elements includes multiple sentences should you capitalise the first letter and use full stops after each element. The last element always takes a full stop. Commas for short items are optional; use semicolons when separating clauses.

Main

We tend to use this adjective often — too often — in our notes. Consider alternatives: *cardinal, central, chief, essential, fundamental, notable, primary, principal or significant*. (There are more, but these are some of the *leading* options.)

Maps and charts

Our first source for these should be the United Nations, which has a cartographic section:

<http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/english/htmain.htm>

The copyright should be specified. If these are taken from external sources, mention the source. If we have made these ourselves (with MapPoint, for example), the following note should appear below the item:

© European Parliament, DG Expo Policy Dept., YEAR, AD/AS

('AD/AS': initials of the administrator and assistant.)

MEPs

Members are identified by the letters *MEP* (not *MP*) after their name.

Numbers

Spell out numbers one to nine, use numerals for larger numbers. When a sentence includes numbers both below and above nine, use numerals for both: *9 to 11*, not *nine to 11*.

Use figures for

- statistics (*3 new officials were appointed in 2002*)
- votes (*12 delegations were in favour, 7 against; the motion was passed by 20 votes to 2, with 3 abstentions*)

- ranges with a dash (*in 1992-1993*)
- numbers from a series (*Chapter 5, Article 9, Item 4*) unless you are quoting a source that does otherwise (*Part One of the EEC Treaty*),
- units of measurement that are denoted by symbols or abbreviations (*EUR 50* or *fifty euros*).

When a sentence begins with a number, the number should be spelled out in full.

Two hundred people were arrested during the riots.

Twenty MEPs joined the delegation.

The delegation included 20 MEPs.

Avoid beginning a sentence with a year (instead of '1992 ...' write '*The year 1992 ...*')

Use thin, non-breaking spaces in between groups of thousands (these are made with ctrl + shift + space): 5 000 000.

Use thin, non-breaking spaces after the % sign (*inflation rose by 2 %*).

Use a point rather than a comma to separate the integral part of a number from its fractional part (*233.25*).

Abbreviations for *Number* and *Numbers* are *No* and *Nos* (no points).

In text, you may use either figures or words in combination with *hundred* and *thousand*:

300 or *three hundred* (but not *3 hundred*).

Million and billion may be combined with figures:

EUR 3 million

Million and billion can be abbreviated as *m* (not *mio*) and *bn* in tables and in texts where the words would have to be repeated.

Use *billion* for 1 000 million.

Fractions (see separate entry as well) take hyphens when used as adjectives or adverbs, but not when used as nouns:

When the cake was only two-thirds completed, the bowl appeared too small for the last one third.

When a **range** is written out, repeat symbols and multiples:

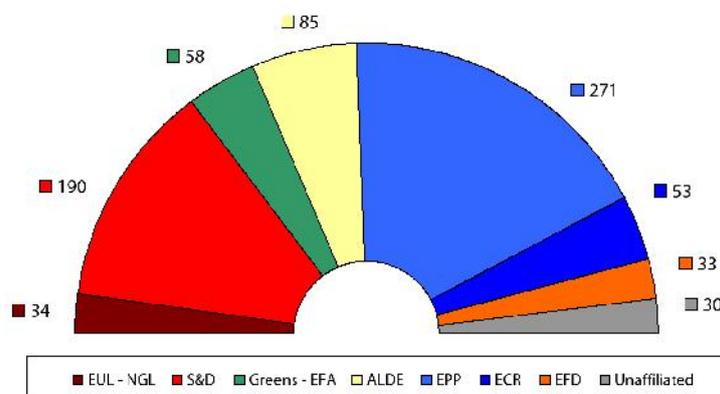
from EUR 20 million to EUR 30 million,

except when the range is indicated by a dash:

€20–30 million, 10–70 °C.

Ranges can be expressed either with words (*from 50 to 100*) or with hyphens (*50-100*), but not with a combination (*from 50-100*).

Parliaments (graphic presentation)



To create a graphic representation of parliamentary groups (and the results of parliamentary elections), use a 'half doughnut' shape. It is possible to create this in Excel and to copy the file into word.

A guide to help you create this graphic is available [here](#). Elina Stergatou can provide instructions.

Participate in

One participates *'in'* — not *'to'* — meetings or talks.

Past tense

When writing from the standpoint of the present moment in time, the **present perfect** is used to refer to events or situations in the period leading up to that time:

The Commission is meeting to consider the proposal. It has (already) discussed this several times in the past.

When the starting point of this period is indicated, the present perfect is often used in its continuous form to emphasise the ongoing nature of the process:

The Commission is meeting to consider the proposal. It has been discussing this since 2001.

If the reference is not to a period up to the present but to a time that ended before the present, the simple past is used:

The Commission is meeting to consider the proposal. It discussed this last week.

Percentages

For the sake of consistency in texts, use the symbol, preceded by a 'thin' ('non-breaking) space (14 %) when referring to specific figures. This space is made by pressing control+shift+space.

When there is no figure, the words should be written as *'per cent'* (two words, no point). *'Percentage'*, on the other hand, is a single word.

Plagiarism

Any unattributed copying may lead to accusations of plagiarism, regardless of the copyright of the source or the 'internal' or 'external' nature of our documents. To avoid potential problems, name the source of the material and, when copying others' texts, use quotation marks for citations shorter than four lines or, for longer citations, indent.

While the boundaries of plagiarism are far from clear, one simple rule of thumb is the 'six word rule': any quotation of six words or more should be marked as a quote and attributed.

Qadhafi

The former Libyan leader.

Longer version **Moammar al-Qadhafi**. This is the closest possible transliteration from Arabic.

Quotations and quotation marks

Use single quotation marks.

Double quotation marks should only be used for a quotation *within* a quotation. (If another quotation appears within the second quotation, revert to single quotation marks.)

If a punctuation mark is part of the quotation, it should be included within the quotation marks.

Use italics rather than quotation marks for the titles of books, newspapers or foreign expressions.

Quotations within sentences should start with a capital in running text only if the quotation is a complete sentence in itself:

Marie Antoinette never said 'Let them eat cake.'

Jean-Jacques Rousseau described a princess who suggested the peasants 'eat brioche'.

SME

When written out, this is either *small and medium-sized enterprise* (one hyphen, no caps) or *small and medium enterprise* (no caps).

So-called

It's better to use quotation marks around a 'tricky' name than to use 'so-called', which has pejorative connotations. However, quotation marks should be used with care as they often denote non-endorsement or irony. Do not use both so-called and quotation marks; choose one or the other.

Spacing between sentences

Use only one space between a full stop and the following sentence.

Statistics

For the sake of departmental consistency, we should try to take the basic statistics we provide about countries and regions from the same, independent sources.

For population figures, GDP and related macroeconomic figures, the EU's statistical databases should be the first sources to consult, followed by the International Monetary Fund (updated twice yearly) and the World Bank (updated yearly).

Do not use sources that are not independent. Be particularly careful that inter-related figures provided in a single document or table (such as population and GDP per capita) derive from the same source. Also, be aware that *The Economist* takes many of its statistics from external sources, and these vary (some population figures are from the International Monetary Fund, for example, while others are from the *World Gazetteer*); it's better to quote the original source.

Tables

While some variation is fine, most Policy Department tables presenting numerical information should follow these rules:

- the preferred form of table to use in Word is 'Contemporary' (under 'Table,' then 'Auto Table Format' choose 'Contemporary');
- no vertical (column) borders;
- numbers should be correctly aligned (right);
- by extension, decimal points should be aligned;
- when possible, all numbers in one category (column) should have the same number of digits after the decimal;
- negative numbers should be marked with a minus sign;
- when a table contains many rows (more than five), a light colour can distinguish alternate rows;
- headings should be in bold and visually distinct.

Aligning decimal points can be done by creating 'decimal tabs' within parts of the table (usually the columns). The numbers will then automatically align correctly (if your computer is set to recognise points as decimals). (*For help with this, see Elina.*)

Name of colleague	Number of hairs	Number of toes	Desk surface visible
Simona	23 253.23	10.08	52 %
Pekka	- 22 562.66	10.24	16 %
Liina	222 356.23	9.76	70 %
Fernando	23 365.45	1 754.36	21 %
Roberto	19 235.62	9.29	0 %
Elina	521 236.33	10.00	79 %

Temperatures

25 °C (the same symbol is also used for alcohol content and degrees of latitude and longitude).

Time

Preferably use 24-hour system: *17.30* (no colon) without 'h' or 'hrs'.

If using the 12-hour system, specify a.m. or p.m. (written with points): *5.30 p.m.*

The full hour is written with (zero) minutes: *14.00* (*2 p.m.* or *2 o'clock*); *12.00* (or *12 noon*); *24.00* (or write the word 'midnight').

Titles (personal)

Mr (plural *Messrs*), *Mrs*, *Ms* and *Dr* (plural *Drs*) do not take a point.

When referring to a person for the first time in texts, spell out the first name as well as the last, then cut the first on subsequent references:

If it is impossible to track down the first name, use only the surname (family name) and do not use an initial for the first name.

Elina Stergatou (first mention), *Ms Stergatou* (thereafter) (not *E. Stergatou*).

Surnames are not normally uppercased in running text, unless the aim is to highlight the names (e.g. in minutes, as in *E. BROK*).

Avoid titles not customary in English. The title *Dr* should be given when it appears in the original, regardless of whether the holder is a doctor of medicine or not.

Note that if you use *Mr* or *Ms*, you must obviously be sure of the gender of the person in question.

Ms — Mme — Frau. As a matter of courtesy use *Ms* in English unless you know that the person concerned prefers otherwise. Note that the French *Mme* and German *Frau* are likewise courtesy titles: *a Mme* or *Frau* is not necessarily a *Mrs* (i.e. married).

Foreign-language titles.

Avoid titles not customary in English, but

For:	write:
Prof. Dr. H. Schmidt	Prof. H. Schmidt
Dipl.-Ing. W. Braun	Mr W. Braun
Drs. A. Baerdemaeker	Ms A. Baerdemaeker
Ir. B. De Bruyn	Ms B. De Bruyn
Me Reuter	Mr Reuter

Titles (of texts)

In titles and sub-titles (following a colon), capitalise the first word and those words that are normally capitalised in running text:

The ever-flowering metaphor:
An analysis of Pekka Hakala's flights of fancy

United Nations

After spelling this out in full on the first mention, abbreviate as *UN* (with no points). When used with the indefinite article, *UN* takes 'a' not 'an' ('*a UN peacekeeping mission*').

United States of America

Shorten to the *United States* after first mention and avoid *the States*.

Abbreviate as *USA* when a proper noun, and as *US* (with no points) an adjective.

USA takes a singular verb: *The USA is in agreement*.

While the *Commission Style Guide* considers *America* and *American* to be 'quite acceptable', our own notes should preferably use *USA* and *US* when referring to the country and not the continent: *The US government* as opposed to *the American government*.

Updates

Updates are *made*.

When making updates to existing briefings, notes and studies, the phrase to be included is

Updates have been made by... (not *have been done by...*)

Verbs: singular or plural agreement?

When using collective nouns, use the singular when the emphasis is on the whole entity:

The Government is considering the matter.

Use the plural when the emphasis is on the individual members:

A majority of the Committee were in favour.

Countries and organisations with a plural name take the singular:

The United Nations was unable to reach agreement.

Appendix 1: False friends, false cognates and other problems

Frequent points of confusion include:

FRENCH	ENGLISH
<i>achèvement</i>	<i>finalisation</i>
<i>adresse</i>	<i>address</i>
<i>agenda</i>	<i>calendar</i>
<i>assister à</i>	<i>participate</i>
<i>commission</i>	<i>committee</i>
<i>compétitivité</i>	<i>competitiveness</i>
<i>contrôler</i>	<i>check</i>
<i>correspondance</i>	<i>correspondence</i>
<i>délai, échéance</i>	<i>deadline</i>
<i>éditeur</i>	<i>publisher</i>
<i>élaboration</i>	<i>development</i>
<i>éventuellement</i>	<i>perhaps</i>
<i>éditer</i>	<i>publish</i>
<i>existant</i>	<i>existent</i>
<i>exemplaire</i>	<i>copy (not example)</i>
<i>à la longue</i>	<i>eventually</i>
<i>indépendance</i>	<i>independence</i>
<i>messenger</i>	<i>messenger</i>
<i>mission (être en)</i>	<i>travel (travelling professionally / for work)</i>
<i>négligeable</i>	<i>negligible</i>
<i> négociation</i>	<i>negotiation</i>
<i>ordre du jour</i>	<i>agenda</i>
<i>organigramme</i>	<i>organisation chart</i>
<i>préciser</i>	<i>specify</i>
<i>procès-verbal</i>	<i>minutes</i>
<i>profiter</i>	<i>benefit (or 'profit' if benefit is financial)</i>
<i>réflexion</i>	<i>reflection</i>
<i>représentativité</i>	<i>representativeness</i>
<i>responsable</i>	<i>responsible</i>
<i>retard</i>	<i>delay</i>
<i>réunion</i>	<i>meeting</i>
<i>réviser</i>	<i>edit</i>
<i>tarif</i>	<i>tariff</i>

Within English, there are also numerous confusing pairs:

<i>all together (in a body)</i>	vs.	<i>altogether (entirely)</i>
<i>capital</i>	vs.	<i>capitol</i>
<i>dependent (adj. or noun)</i>	vs.	<i>dependant (noun only)</i>
<i>discreet (subtle)</i>	vs.	<i>discrete (separate)</i>
<i>enclosed (in an envelope)</i>	vs.	<i>attached (to an email)</i>
<i>license (verb)</i>	vs.	<i>licence (noun)</i>
<i>practise (verb)</i>	vs.	<i>practice (noun)</i>
<i>premisses (propositions)</i>	vs.	<i>premises (building)</i>

Appendix 2: inclusive language

gender-neutral language

Gendered Title	Gender Neutral Title
<i>businessman, businesswoman</i>	<i>business person/person in business</i>
<i>chairman, chairwoman</i>	<i>chair, chairperson</i>
<i>mailman, mailwoman</i>	<i>mail carrier, letter carrier</i>
<i>policeman, policewoman</i>	<i>police officer</i>
<i>salesman, saleswoman</i>	<i>salesperson, sales assistant</i>
<i>steward, stewardess</i>	<i>flight attendant</i>
<i>waiter, waitress</i>	<i>server</i>

When writing about disability

Avoid	Use
<i>(the) handicapped, (the) disabled</i>	<i>disabled (people)</i>
<i>afflicted by, suffers from, victim of</i>	<i>has [name of condition or impairment]</i>
<i>confined to a wheelchair, wheelchair-bound</i>	<i>wheelchair user</i>
<i>mentally handicapped, mentally defective, retarded, subnormal</i>	<i>with a learning disability (singular) with learning disabilities (plural)</i>
<i>cripple, invalid</i>	<i>disabled person</i>
<i>spastic</i>	<i>person with cerebral palsy</i>
<i>able-bodied</i>	<i>non-disabled</i>
<i>mental patient, insane, mad</i>	<i>person with a mental health condition</i>
<i>deaf and dumb; deaf mute</i>	<i>deaf, user of British Sign Language (BSL), person with a hearing impairment</i>
<i>the blind</i>	<i>people with visual impairments; blind people; blind and partially sighted people</i>
<i>an epileptic, diabetic, depressive, and so on</i>	<i>person with epilepsy, diabetes, depression or someone who has epilepsy, diabetes, depression</i>
<i>dwarf; midget</i>	<i>someone with restricted growth or short stature</i>
<i>fits, spells, attacks</i>	<i>seizures</i>

Appendix 3: references and links

IPOL-EXPO Editorial Unit

http://www.ipolnet.ep.parl.union.eu/ipoladm/cms/home/ipol_expo_joint_services/editorial_unit_left/guidelines_1

EP DG TRAD Editing Unit

<http://tradportal.ep.parl.union.eu/editing>

European Commission English Style Guide

https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/styleguide_english_dgt_en.pdf

EU Interinstitutional Style guide:

<http://publications.europa.eu/code/en/en-000100.htm>

The Economist Style Guide

<http://www.economist.com/styleguide/introduction>

Oxford English Dictionary

<http://www.oed.com/>

Glossary links (EP DG TRAD)

<http://termcoord.eu/glossarylinks/>

Debretts (for styles of address, peerage, etiquette, etc.)

<https://www.debretts.com>

Plagiarism

<http://www.plagiarism.org/plagiarism-101/what-is-plagiarism/#>

Plain English Campaign

<http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/about-us.html>