Writing style guidelines for the Youth Partnership

The Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth produces various knowledge products – these are not academic papers, but are high quality, rigorous research and analysis, studies, papers and reports aimed at a variety of audiences including policy makers, youth work practitioners, researchers and young people, who are not necessarily experts on the topic.

The deliverables should be easy to read and to understand, avoiding overly technical and academic language, and must allow for practical applications by policy makers, practitioners and researchers. In general, deliverables are action-oriented and should go beyond problem description, towards informing policy and practice.

Below is the basic structure of how to organise papers. Depending on the topic some adaptation might be needed. An outline/structure should be submitted for approval before starting to write.

Executive summary

- This is a mandatory section presenting the key points, findings and conclusions to be included in all publications, research papers and studies.

Introduction

- What is the main issue addressed in the paper/report/study?
- Why should we care about it? What is its relevance to the youth field?
- Which aspects of this issue does the paper cover? What is the main added value of the paper/report/study? What are other issues of relevance that you will *not* address in the paper but should be kept in mind?

Problem/issue description

- Define the problem/issue analysed in the paper. What is it? How do different types of actors relate to it?
- What is its relevance to the youth field? (broader than in the introduction)
- What has been done on this topic already by the Youth Partnership (including definitions, studies, publications, seminars). Remember that the Youth Partnership is a long-term co-operation project between the Council of Europe and the European Union, therefore the perspectives of both institutions should be reflected. Bring examples from partner institutions initiatives or reflections on the topic.

- Is there an existing institutional framework on this at the EU or Council of Europe level? If so, refer to existing laws, strategies, declarations, recommendations, Council conclusions. The text should cover the perspectives of the two institutions (e.g. review of institutional documents, websites).

Methodology

- **Describe your approach** for addressing the issue. Explain the process of data collection and analysis for qualitative and quantitative approaches, as well as for thematic analysis of the literature.
- For **qualitative approaches**, while anonymisation should be ensured, the paper should explain to what extent the respondents reflect the diversity of the stakeholders involved. Several indicators, such as the number of interviews, their average duration, and the main themes, need to be mentioned. Any qualitative research should limit itself from claims of representativeness and overgeneralisation.
- **Quantitative research** should include, when available, recent statistical data from the partner institutions, with proper acknowledgment. Each statistical table/figure should have a title, the source of the data, and the definitions of the indicators (if applicable).
- All survey-based data collection must be conducted using **approved software**, such as Microsoft Forms or other platforms authorised by the Council of Europe (e.g., SurveyMonkey) and include relevant data storage and use disclaimer.
- The **thematic analyses** of the literature need to make transparent the steps followed in the literature search (e.g. organisations, databases, platforms used).
- Regardless of the methodology, the authors should explicitly state the **limitations** related to the findings that are inferred from data.
- All research designs (quantitative, qualitative, mixed, or thematic analyses based on secondary data such as previous publications) should include **at least one interview with a representative from each partner institution.**

What are the implications/effects/impact of this issue on the youth field?

- Structure the implications/effects/impact based on a specific approach (e.g. thematic/regional) and analyse what this impact means:

  General impact:
  o on young people and different areas of their lives – including civic, economic, political, or social life, education, health/mental health, family life and intergenerational support, housing, leisure, free time.
       OR
  o impact on young people, youth policy, youth work, youth research.

  Specific impact
  o on certain categories of young people (social inclusion, intersectionality). The following list is not exhaustive or a must, it is rather meant for guidance: young women, young people in rural areas or in deprived urban areas, young people with disabilities, early school leavers, young

migrants and refugees, young people experiencing homelessness, and other vulnerable groups.

What were the responses to the above problem?

- Describe how this problem/issue was addressed by different actors:
  - **Youth policy**: Did **governments** take any action (e.g. new funding, new policy/law/strategy developed to tackle this)? In some cases, it could be useful to include information on supra-national and international actors. Do not forget to **refer to both partners institutions** in case the issue at question was also addressed at the European level.
  - **Youth work:** What has **the youth sector** done? How did youth organisations respond? (e.g. adaptation, innovation, new training, new programmes, protests, advocacy). In some instances, it could be useful to include information from other sectors.
  - **Research**: Is there **emerging research** in this area? What lessons have been learned? What works, what sounds promising, what does not work, what do we not (yet) know?

- The analysis may establish connections between the findings and any conducted interviews. It is important to avoid overgeneralisations based on a limited number of interviews or stating assumptions without referencing or arguing clearly.

Conclusions

- Summarise briefly the main points and key arguments of your paper.
- Present recommendations, implications or actionable insights for the youth sector:
  - Youth policy (who should do what at policy level e.g. national governments should…, local government….)
  - Youth work practice (what should practitioners and youth organisations do about this? e.g. training, capacity building, advocacy.)
  - Youth research (what are the main research gaps left regarding this issue. What further evidence do we need?)
  - Other youth work activities
  - If relevant, recommendations for other sectors/ actors.

The recommendations should be elaborated, specific and based on the main arguments of the paper. Conclusions should not introduce new findings, not addressed in the paper. A clear link between the subject, aim, the main body of the paper and the recommendations should be evident. Recommendations should be expressed precisely, avoiding overly general statements. Whenever appropriate, a distinction between short-, medium- and long-term approaches should be followed.

Additional information

Before writing…

- Have a look at our website and read similar research already published by the Youth Partnership e.g. studies, analytical papers, briefings, Perspectives on Youth series, Youth Knowledge Book chapters, Coyote articles, Insights or reports, and connected thematic activities in the workplan.
- Learn more about your audience! What are their needs in relation to your topic?

Style: DOs and DON'Ts for effective writing

DO:

- Keep it simple. Clearly state who does what. Use simple and active voice sentence construction: subject-verb-object.
- Include only one thought/argument in each sentence.
- Omit excess words (e.g. use 'to' instead of 'in order to'; 'because' instead of 'as a result of').
- Connect the arguments between sentences and paragraphs (the flow of your paper). But use linking words at the very start of the sentence (e.g 'but', 'as well', 'likewise', 'however', 'notwithstanding') *only when* they actually link arguments or refer to something previously stated.
- Explain the abbreviations when used the first time.
- Define the terms when they are part of professional language. Consult the Glossary on youth on the Youth Partnership website to see if has already been defined in the sector.
- Start with what the Youth Partnership has written about the topic before.
- Fact-check and peer review the work of other researchers in your team.
- Analyse the information from the perspective of your readers. What does the paper actually tell them and what can they conclude from it? What are the main findings relevant for policy/research/practice?

DO NOT:

- Use personal pronouns (I, we, you, in our research, in our study…).
- Use informal language, including shorter versions (e.g. 'don't').
- Use 'etc'. Instead, use 'including' at the front of examples or 'among others' at the end.
- Go beyond 15 words in a phrase.
- Repeat the same thoughts/words/arguments.
- Be overly descriptive or overly theoretical.
- Introduce new terms without explaining them.
- Start sentences with 'when it comes to'.
- Mix tenses (past, present, future): in general, apply simple past and the respective sequence of tenses in your writing.
- Introduce new ideas in the conclusion.

- Use the term 'evidence-based' research/ policy or '(systematic) literature review' unless you did perform the methodology that is very rigorous and specific to these. Instead, you may use 'evidence-informed', 'research-based', 'knowledge-based' policy making/ findings or 'a review of literature'.
- Ignore feedback: Be open to feedback and constructive criticism! You are supported by persons with experience and knowledge of the standards required for the publications of the Youth Partnership. Ignoring feedback may hinder your growth as a researcher.

Names of institutions

- Use the official name of the Partnership: either 'Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth' OR 'Youth Partnership' (the only exception to this rule is the disclaimer)
- For the partner institutions, please use 'European Commission' (EC) and the 'Council of Europe'.

Language and grammar

- Your papers should be in British English and follow the style guide of the Council of Europe.
- Often, your texts undergo light editing only. Please edit and proofread the document thoroughly before sending a draft. Make every effort to ensure that the drafts you submit are properly spell checked, with correct grammar and follow the style guide.

Gender, diversity and inclusion

- Use non-discriminatory language.
- When relevant for communication, make gender visible (e.g. refer to young women and young men and/or non-binary youth).
- Replace gendered-nouns such as 'chairman', 'mankind' with gender-neutral nouns such as 'chair', 'humanity'.
- Use 'young people' (e.g. from rural areas) instead of 'youngsters' or 'youth'.
- Use 'young people in NEET situations' instead of 'NEETs'.
- Use 'young people with disabilities' instead of 'disabled youth'.
- Use 'research participants' and 'persons' (which are more inclusive) instead of 'individuals' or 'subjects'.

The use of artificial intelligence (AI)

The Youth Partnership recognises the utility of artificial intelligence (AI) applications as tools for research, translation and drafting, and at the same time strives to respect intellectual property rights. In the interest of transparency, and in accordance with publishing industry standards, the use of these tools must be clearly stated by authors, and any passages drafted or translated by generative AI must be indicated, with the name of the tool used.

The experts are therefore requested to indicate the use of AI in the work for which they have been contracted, by submitting the AI checklist.

Please note that The Council of Europe uses software to detect plagiarism and the use of AI on manuscripts submitted for publication.

Citation and referencing

- Include a Bibliography/ References at the end of the paper, as described in the Council of Europe style guide.
- If using tables or images from other sources, please include full reference.
- Use in-text referencing (except for *Perspectives on Youth* articles) - refer again to the style guide.
- All in-text references should have a corresponding entry in the references list, and vice-versa. In text 'Author date' references should be used rather than footnotes or endnotes (see page 10 in the style guide).
- Please use or reference only active links.

Formatting the text

- Apply the correct font/style and the template for cover page, as indicated in the example at the end of this document.
- Use the cover, disclaimer and font guidelines of the Youth Partnership (see template at the end of this document).
- Insert page numbers (bottom middle or right corner).
- Insert Contents table (automatic, not manual, for easier editing), abbreviations, list of tables and images, if relevant.

Review process

- The PEYR Advisory Group will provide a first round of feedback (blind review) based on quality guidance and criteria.
- Please allocate within the designated timeframe, at least a three-week period for feedback and any required revisions.

Obligations related to submission

- Always submit final versions of your papers in a word format (not in pdf). Google documents are acceptable in draft versions of the text, for easier collaboration.
- Submit also the completed PowerPoint template with the main findings/arguments of the paper. This will be the basis for further dissemination and support integration of your research results in the institutional policy debates and processes.
- Deadline: you must adhere to the agreed deadlines, typically outlined in a contract. Keep in mind that your work is part of a collaborative effort, which involves proofreading, editing, design and layout (for publications) as well as further communication products based on it. Partner institutions may require your work to inform policy processes that follow a specific timeline. Delays and poor-quality deliverables pose a risk to the implementation of the workplan.

Punctual delivery and high-quality work reflect good professionalism and contribute to a smooth workflow.

- The Youth Partnership's workplan and budget does not permit the transfer of any work to the following calendar year. Any work not submitted by the specified deadline, particularly for end-of-year contracts, cannot be paid.
- Include the AI checklist with your submission, indicating if you have used any AI tools.

After submission

- Promote and disseminate your work!
- Communicate about the Youth Partnership.
- Mention the Youth Partnership and PEYR when presenting research results at meetings, conferences, symposia, to ensure the visibility of the two partner institutions.
- For presentations that include written texts, the following statement should be included: 'This work was commissioned by the Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth.'

Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission
and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

EUROPEAN UNION   CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Title
Subtitle

Name of authors and connection to PEYR or EKCYP

Month/Year

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this work, commissioned by the European Union–Council of Europe Youth Partnership, are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of either of the partner institutions, their member states or the organisations co-operating with them.

Insert:
- Contents section (automatic, not manual, for easier editing),
- Abbreviations,
- List of tables and images, if relevant
- About the author: 5 lines bio of the authors and editors.

Background

Example Technological developments and digitalisation affect in many different ways the lives of young people today, whether they are or aren't digitally active. In many fields, technological developments and digitalisation have brought many advantages, for example in relation to communication, access to information, education, leisure and fun, activism, economic development, time management and working, etc. At the same time, technological developments and digitalisation came also with risks, related to working conditions and environments, the digital divide, security and data protection, health and well-being, media literacy and so on.

The European Commission and the Council of Europe have agreed to include in the 2018 work plan of their partnership in the youth field a Symposium on young people and technological developments, connecting the dots. Both the European Commission and the Council of Europe have developed, in recent years, programmes and initiatives that testify of their growing interest in relation to how technology affects young people and how the youth sector can play a role in relation to the opportunities and risks that technological developments present.