EEA briefing guidelines

# About online briefings

Online briefings provide decision-makers with a summary of the main points concerning a topic. They consist of a short introduction, up to five key messages and a main body text. They must also include at least one visual and come with a convert-to-PDF function.

We apply strict character counts for briefings, so that they fit the online format:

* Introduction — no more than 250 characters without spaces;
* Key messages — maximum of five bullet points, for a total of approximately 750 characters without spaces;
* Main text — no more than 8,000 characters without spaces.
* Altogether 9,000 characters without spaces, which amounts to 6 pages, excluding the bibliographic references.

Please see the [Publishing Guide](https://eea1.sharepoint.com/sites/Publishing/SitePages/Publishing-guide.aspx) for an overview of the briefing workflow.

## About writing for the web

Online briefings are designed to be read on the screen. Readers expect different things from online text than pdf reports, particularly in terms of ease of reading and user experience. Please keep the following advice in mind when writing your text:

* Include a clear title.
* Make it easier for search engines to find your page by using short, meaningful [keywords](https://backlinko.com/hub/seo/seo-keywords), preferably in the introduction and key messages.
* Keep paragraphs short. Three or four lines is a good length. Your paragraphs should each contain one well-formed idea.
* Use short, functional prose and simple, accessible language. Avoid run-on sentences.
* Use words the general public understand and avoid EU terminology and jargon where possible.
* Use plenty of meaningful subheadings to break up the text.
* Use bullet lists or tables when listing three or more items.
* Offer readers next steps to help them on their way, e.g. links to other reports or articles, data visualisations, background data.

For more information about writing for the web, please see Section 12 of the [EEA Writing manual](https://eea1.sharepoint.com/sites/Publishing/SiteAssets/SitePages/Writing%2C-editing-and-storytelling/EEA-Writing-manual-May-2024.pdf?web=1)***.***

## References

There are three types of sources in online briefings and we treat them as follows:

* Links to EEA products.

It is good practice to put as many links as possible to other EEA products in the text. This helps readers dig deeper and highlights the reliability of the content. It also increases the content’s ranking by search engines.

Links should be made directly to the relevant text. For example:

‘*A qualitative overview of the measures reported by Member States is available in an* [*online data viewer*](https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/dashboards/overview-of-compliant-air-pollution-policies).’

* References to external sources for information purposes:

When another institution, convention or body is mentioned for information purposes only, a link to its website should be provided directly in the text. For example:

*‘Consistent with a similar procedure agreed by Parties under the* [*Gothenburg Protocol*](http://www.unece.org/env/lrtap/multi_h1.html) *of the* [*LRTAP Convention*](http://www.unece.org/env/lrtap/30anniversary.html)*…’*

* References to external sources upon which your work is based:

When referencing published content that you have used as the basis for your work, the EEA style guide applies. Source material should be cited in the text and a full bibliographic reference should be provided at the end of the briefing.

For more information on referencing, please see Section 3.4 of the [EEA Writing manual.](https://eea1.sharepoint.com/sites/Publishing/SiteAssets/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2FPublishing%2FSiteAssets%2FSitePages%2FWriting%2C%2Dediting%2Dand%2Dstorytelling%2FEEA%2DWriting%2Dmanual%2D%2D%2Dupdated%2DMarch%2D2024%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2FPublishing%2FSiteAssets%2FSitePages%2FWriting%2C%2Dediting%2Dand%2Dstorytelling)

## Picture

Each briefing is illustrated by a picture, which is displayed between the introduction and the body text. It also appears in listings elsewhere on the website, along with the briefing title.

COM2 will select a picture with the appropriate copyright. If there is a picture you would like to use, you are welcome to propose it. It should be in landscape orientation, at least 1,200 pixels wide and free to use for non-commercial purposes.

# How to use the EEA briefing template

Before starting to work in the template, ensure you have the latest version of Microsoft Word installed. If you don’t, update Word.

Once you’re sure you’re working in the latest version of Word, save the file using the following naming convention: PUBL\_202X\_XXX\_Name of briefing.docx

## Styles and numbering

Predefined Word styles are used in the template for all headings, body text, feature (figures/maps/tables/boxes/photos) captions, notes and sources. These styles set fonts and font sizes. When writing your report, simply replace the existing text with your own text (e.g. chapter titles, headings, subheadings) without altering the predefined styles.

The following styles are used in EEA briefings:

Title

The briefing title takes the ‘Title’ style.

Headings are styled as follows:

## Heading 2 (Calibri (Body), 14. Bold)

This is used to number sections.

### Heading 3 (Calibri (Body), 12. Bold, italic)

This is used to number sub-sections. As a rule, briefings do not have sub-sections, but in exceptional cases, Heading 3 should be used for sub-sections.

Figure heading (h4, create new style)

Headings are not numbered in briefings.

The Quickstyle gallery, found under the ‘Home’ tab, displays all the styles used in this template:



You should not need to use this as the styles are pre-set in the template, but to apply a style, just click on it in the Quickstyle gallery. To view a style without applying it, just hover your cursor over that style in the gallery.

## Features

Features are boxes, figures, maps, photographs and tables. These can appear in any section of the briefing except the key messages. Features should be numbered sequentially and should include a caption. It is recommended to have no less than three and no more than five features in a briefing. The ‘cover photograph’ is separate and does not need to include a caption.

This briefing will be laid out in one column of approximately 90 characters. Therefore, very wide tables with many columns, as well as big, very detailed visuals, will be difficult to read. You should keep tables and visuals to a limited size.

To number features and add a caption, you should follow these instructions:

* Select the object (box, figure, map, photograph, table) that you want to add a caption to.
* On the **References** tab, in the **Captions** group, click **Insert Caption**.



* In the **Label** list, select the label that best describes the object, e.g. figure or map. If the list doesn't provide the label you want, click**New Label**, type the new label in the **Label** box, and then click **OK**.



* Type your caption text after the label.



* Click **OK**.

Note that the labels and captions are styled as using the ‘Caption’ style. For photographs, the caption will appear below rather than above the feature.

* Notes should appear immediately after the feature. Notes use the ‘Graphic source/notes’ style:

Note: Note text

* Sources appear after the notes and also use the ‘Graphic source/notes’ style:

Source: Source name (Surname, initial., (Year)).

## Metadata

Please provide the following:

* **Geographical coverage:** (for example: EEA-33, EU-28 + Switzerland, etc.);
* **Time coverage:** which period does the briefing cover? (for example, 2000-2019);
* **Keywords:** please suggest at least three keywords relevant to this briefing (preferably not topic names or words that are already present in the title);
* **Code:** management plan system level 3 code (for example: 1.2.3)