

POSITION PAPERS

Key Principles, Process and AI-Assisted Drafting

An overview for Advocacy Strategy's Position Paper & Assets process

What a Position Paper Is — and Isn't



It Is

- A credible, persuasive position you are ready to make public, on time
- Evidence-rich — objective studies, data, even anecdotal evidence
- Solutions-focused — your reader wants a workable answer, not just a complaint
- Clear thinking, put on paper: it forces your organisation to agree what it believes



It Is Not

- An exercise in internal validation — that's useful, but it isn't a position paper
- A recitation of statements of belief, focused on what you need, not the reader
- An evidence-free zone — objective, credible evidence is non-negotiable
- Written by committee — one drafter holds the pen for consistency

A lot of time goes into a position paper. Done well, it moves the needle — done poorly, it's pointless.

Why Position Papers Matter



External

- Makes a strong, written case — most decisions are made by written procedure
- Puts your position on the record and feeds public consultations
- Gets your evidence in front of the regulator or scrutiny board
- A near-ready product to hand to the rapporteur, shadows and Member States



Internal

- Brings clarity of thought — forces ideas out of people's heads and onto paper
- Surfaces and resolves differences of opinion within the organisation
- Identifies gaps in the case, and whether it's strong enough — technically and politically

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Format Rules That Actually Matter

A

Font 12, black on white

Many readers will strain at anything smaller.



2–4 pages

About 400–500 words per page. Detail goes in an annex.

1 —
2 —
3 —

Miller's Law: 5–9 points

People retain 7 ± 2 items — fewer, stronger arguments beat a long list.



Plain English

Short sentences. One point per paragraph. Define jargon on first use.



Visuals over paragraphs

A chart or timeline is often more persuasive than another page of text.



Constructive, not one-sided

Acknowledge weak points; bring a workable solution, not just a complaint.

Three Roles, Clearly Split



Issue Lead

Steers the position paper through the organisation's adoption process. Prepares the summary note, sets the timetable, and keeps records of meetings and feedback.



The Drafter

One person holds the pen. Writes plain English, understands the audience, and converts the team's material into a clear, persuasive paper — not a committee edit.



Issue Experts

Provide the organisation's evidence and technical grounding. Sign off on accuracy and factual claims — but stay out of the wordsmithing.

Set roles at the very start, including who has decision-making rights at each stage.

THE PROCESS

Five Steps, From Blank Page to Published Position

1. Identify

2. Prepare

3. Draft

4. Review

5. Sign Off

Estimate how long a paper has taken before — then double it.

Identify Your Position, Then Prepare the Case

STEP 1 — IDENTIFY

- Is the organisation's position on this issue already on paper?
- If not, put it down — don't rely on telepathy.
- If it exists, does it need updating, or are you starting fresh?

STEP 2 — PREPARE

- List every point the team wants to raise publicly.
- For each: do you have evidence? Do you have a solution?
- Points with no evidence go to an annex — or get dropped.

Keep only the points that have both evidence and a workable solution behind them. The more unsubstantiated points in a paper, the weaker the overall case — a shorter list of strong arguments beats a long list of weak ones.

One Writer, Not a Committee



The handover

- The Issue Lead hands the material to the Drafter, and sits down together to walk through the issue and the draft text.
- The drafter sets aside focused time (often 2–3 days) to turn the material into a clear, persuasive paper for the intended reader.



First review, together

- Which arguments are weak or unpersuasive — and which are strong?
- Is the ask politically credible, or is it aimed at a group without the votes?
- Does the ask match what the organisation is actually mandated to request?

Issue experts check facts and evidence afterwards — they don't edit prose. Few technical experts are also good editors.

Review, Sign Off, Then Make It Visible



Review

- Clear for the intended reader?
- Free of unnecessary jargon?
- Evidence and solutions both present?
- Any point that would embarrass the organisation?



Sign Off

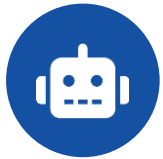
- Follow the internal sign-off procedure
- Record where colleagues' input was — or wasn't — taken on board
- A written procedure or short call keeps it fast



Publish & Track

- Send it to the people you want to read it
- Meet the key decision-makers — do they buy in?
- Monitor mentions and coverage of the position

Where AI Fits Into the Process



Draft

- Loads material into NotebookLM for a closed, source-grounded workspace
- Extracts and maps the evidence to each section
- Drafts section by section — citing every fact, or flagging “[Evidence needed]”



Polish

- Moves to Gemini or Claude for a section-by-section edit
- Follows a short briefing memo on tone and structure
- Preserves every fact, figure and citation — no new information added



Finalize

- Checks word count and jargon (Gunning Fog Index)
- Confirms key statistics are still current
- Routes to the reviewer for sign-off before publication

The Ten-Point Quality Check

TEMPLATE QUALITY CHECK

1 Clarity

3 Evidence

5 Style

7 Editing

9 Presentation

2 Structure

4 Persuasiveness

6 Audience fit

8 Currency

10 Adaptability

The Three Documents That Go Together



Presentation

Key principles, roles and overall process — this deck. An overview, not a step-by-step writing guide.



Template

Structure for the actual position paper — available as a full guided version, or a fill-in-the-brackets version for a drafter who knows the method.



AI Drafting Instructions

Practical workflow and prompt for AI-assisted drafting — which tool to use for which task, and how to draft into the template with one.

The two Word documents live in: AS Website Resources / Position Paper Template / 02_Working Templates

NEXT STEPS

Structured PA, One Position Paper at a Time

- Agree the Issue Lead, Drafter and Issue Experts before the clock starts
- Draft with the template and the AI instructions, then run the quality check
- Log what worked at the end — feed it back into this process