

# Policy Brief Guide

Simple, step-by-step guide for writing, citing and reviewing your policy briefs. Working Paper Series: Comparative Jurisdictional & SDG Track.

**2,050 - 2,500**  
words per brief  
(without references)

**4 projects**  
one brief each,  
same format

**6 weeks**  
outline to  
final sign-off

**Under 10%**  
similarity score  
(Turnitin / DupliChecker)

## 1 Brief structure and word limits

| Section                     | Words              | What to write                                                                                        |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Header                      | -                  | Title, authors, affiliation, main SDG + target, 4-6 keywords, date, funding / conflict note, AI note |
| Executive summary           | 200-250            | Problem in 2 lines, one key number, 2-3 recommendations, one ask to a named decision-maker           |
| Introduction                | 250-300            | Why the problem matters globally, link to SDG targets and rights, scope of the brief                 |
| Methodology and limits      | 100-150            | Why these 2 countries, how they are comparable, data gaps                                            |
| Problem and governance gaps | 300-350            | Root causes, current laws and where they fail, cost of doing nothing, who is hit hardest             |
| Comparative case study      | 500-600            | Country A (law vs reality) and Country B (different approach), with a comparison table               |
| Policy options              | 250-300            | 2-3 options scored on cost, speed, politics, equity, legal effort                                    |
| Recommendations             | 350-400            | Short-term and long-term actions, each with agency, timeline, cost and KPI                           |
| Conclusion                  | 100-150            | Main finding, who acts first and by when. No new data                                                |
| Total                       | <b>2,050-2,500</b> | Maximums add up to exactly 2,500, so you cannot overshoot by following the ranges                    |

## 2 Three rules that make your brief strong

- **One Global North and one Global South country** (or explain in the Methodology why not). Compare the same indicators for both.
- **Every number has a year and a primary source**, for example: 68% (2023), World Bank.
- **Every recommendation comes from a gap you showed** in the comparison, and names who will do it, by when, at what cost, and how success is measured.

## 3 Allowed sources (no blogs, no Wikipedia, no opinion columns)

| Source                          | Use it for                                        |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| UN SDG Global Database          | Official SDG indicators and country reports       |
| World Bank Open Data / DataBank | Economy, labour, poverty, health, schooling       |
| UNDP                            | Human Development Index, multidimensional poverty |

| Source                                     | Use it for                                                                   |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| UNICEF Innocenti / Data Portal             | Child protection, learning, literacy, technology                             |
| WHO Global Health Observatory              | Health data                                                                  |
| ILO (ILOSTAT)                              | Informal economy, wages, youth employment                                    |
| WTO and OECD statistics                    | Trade, energy tax, environmental rules                                       |
| National statistics bureaus and ministries | Original laws, acts, policy papers, census (use the original, not a summary) |

Use data from the last 3-5 years. If national and international numbers differ, show both and say why. If data is missing, say so in the Methodology box instead of guessing.

## 4 Citation rules (APA 7th edition)

| Situation                  | How to write it in the text                                   |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| One author or organization | (Surname, Year) e.g. (UNDP, 2024)                             |
| Two authors                | (Author1 & Author2, Year)                                     |
| Three or more authors      | (FirstAuthor et al., Year)                                    |
| Several sources together   | Oldest first, with semicolons: (World Bank, 2020; UNDP, 2024) |
| Direct quote               | Use quotation marks and add the page: (UNICEF, 2026, p. 14)   |

**Reference list: alphabetical, and each entry needs a DOI or a working link.**

| Type                | Format (replace the words with your real source)                                                   |
|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Report              | Organization. (Year). <i>Title of report</i> (Report type). Publisher. URL                         |
| Journal article     | Author, A., & Author, B. (Year). Title of article. <i>Journal Name</i> , volume(issue), pages. DOI |
| Law or act          | <i>Name of Act</i> , Act No. X of Year (Country). URL                                              |
| Dataset             | Organization. (Year). <i>Dataset title</i> [Data set]. Publisher. URL                              |
| Government document | Ministry. (Year). <i>Title</i> (Document no.). Government of Country. URL                          |
| Web page            | Organization. (Year, Month Day). <i>Page title</i> . Site name. URL                                |

**Check every reference yourself.** Open each source and confirm the number is really there. A fake or unchecked citation is the most serious mistake in this project.

## 5 AI use and plagiarism

| Allowed                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Not allowed                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grammar and flow checks (Grammarly, LanguageTool)</li> <li>Finding papers (Semantic Scholar, Elicit)</li> <li>Reading long reports to find data points (ChatPDF, ChatDOC). You must verify each number in the original and write the sentence yourself.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pasting AI-written arguments or summaries</li> <li>Fake or unverified citations</li> <li>Using any text, case study or data without naming the original source</li> </ul> |

- Add this line in your header:** AI tools used: [tool] for [purpose]. All analysis and conclusions are the authors' own. (If none used: No AI tools were used.)

- **Similarity must be under 10%**, checked with the reference list and quoted text excluded. Attach the report.

## 6 Peer review checklist (4 areas, score each 1-5)

### A. Data and sources

- ☐ Every number has a primary source and a year
- ☐ Data is recent (last 3-5 years)
- ☐ Both countries compared on the same indicators
- ☐ Reviewer opens 5 random citations and confirms the number

### B. Policy logic

- ☐ Summary matches the full brief
- ☐ Recommendations come from the gaps found
- ☐ Actions are realistic, not only ideals
- ☐ Options are scored on the same criteria

### C. Originality

- ☐ Similarity under 10%
- ☐ Real human analysis, no generic AI tone
- ☐ AI note matches the tools actually used
- ☐ Every citation has a full reference with link / DOI

### D. Clarity and equity

- ☐ Plain language a non-expert can follow
- ☐ Equity covered: gender, disability, rural / urban, marginalized groups
- ☐ Each recommendation has agency, timeline, cost, KPI
- ☐ Tables and figures have a source line

| Total score (out of 20)        | Result                |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 16-20, and no area below 3     | <b>Accept</b>         |
| 12-15, and no area below 2     | <b>Minor revision</b> |
| Below 12, or any area scored 1 | <b>Major revision</b> |

Reviewers only use Suggesting mode and comments in Google Docs. Authors reply to each comment with Accepted, Partly accepted or Not accepted, plus one line of reason. If they still disagree after one round, the editor decides.

## 7 6-week plan (same for all 4 projects)

| Week | What happens                                                    | Who                      |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1    | Outline, choose 2 countries, pick SDG target, list sources      | Lead author              |
| 2-3  | Write the first draft within the word limits, add all citations | Authors                  |
| 4    | Peer review with scores and comments                            | Reviewers                |
| 5    | Revise and reply to every comment                               | Authors                  |
| 6    | Similarity check, final check, sign-off, export PDF             | Lead author, then editor |

## 8 Tracker for your 4 projects (fill in)

| Project   | Lead author | SDG and target | Country A | Country B | Week now | Status |
|-----------|-------------|----------------|-----------|-----------|----------|--------|
| Project 1 |             |                |           |           |          |        |
| Project 2 |             |                |           |           |          |        |
| Project 3 |             |                |           |           |          |        |
| Project 4 |             |                |           |           |          |        |

## 9 Copy-paste template for each brief

Copy this block into a new Google Doc for each project and replace the words in [brackets].

Title: [Policy challenge] in [Country A] and [Country B]: [what the brief proposes]  
 Authors: [Lead author], [Co-authors]. Reviewer/Editor: [Name]  
 Affiliation: [University / Organization], [City, Country]. Contact: [email]  
 Target SDG: [SDG number / Target number]. Also touches: [SDG numbers]  
 Keywords: [4-6 words]. Version: [v1.0, date]  
 Funding: [source or none]. Conflicts of interest: [none or details]  
 AI note: AI tools used: [tool] for [purpose]. All analysis and conclusions are the authors' own.

1. Executive Summary (200-250 words)
  2. Introduction and Context (250-300 words)
  3. Methodology and Limitations (100-150 words)
  4. Problem Analysis and Governance Gaps (300-350 words)
  5. Comparative Case Study and Findings (500-600 words) + comparison table
  6. Policy Options and Trade-offs (250-300 words) + scoring table
  7. Policy Recommendations (350-400 words) + action table
  8. Conclusion and Call to Action (100-150 words)
- References (APA 7th)

### Comparison table (Section 5)

| Item                          | Country A | Country B |
|-------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Legal framework               |           |           |
| Budget (with year)            |           |           |
| Coverage                      |           |           |
| Enforcement                   |           |           |
| Outcome indicator (with year) |           |           |

### Recommendations table (Section 7)

| Action | Agency | Timeline | Cost / resource | KPI + SDG indicator |
|--------|--------|----------|-----------------|---------------------|
|        |        |          |                 |                     |
|        |        |          |                 |                     |
|        |        |          |                 |                     |

## 10 Final checklist before you submit

- ☐ Word count is 2,050-2,500 (without references)
- ☐ Header is complete, with funding, conflict note and AI note
- ☐ Every number has a year and a primary source
- ☐ Comparison table, options table and recommendations table are filled
- ☐ Similarity report is under 10% and attached
- ☐ Every in-text citation is in the reference list with a link or DOI
- ☐ Reviewer scores and editor verdict are saved