

Writing Policy Brief Seminar Report

Introduction

The aim of this report is to briefly outline the objectives and contents of a Seminar titled 'Writing Policy Briefs.' This seminar was conducted on the 31st of May, in Brussels at the La Tricoterie, for the European Project Meeting of JPI Urban Europe.

Background

JPI Urban Europe is a joint programming initiative (JPI) which is an instrument of the European Commission. Its purpose is to encourage the implementation of the European Research Area. Specifically, JPI Urban Europe focuses on promoting strategic cooperation between EU Member States on urban research issues. This meeting was an opportunity for projects to share their findings and for partners to engage in strategic decisions so as to find partners for future cooperation.

Preparation

To prepare for this seminar research was conducted on how to approach and write policy briefs. Firstly, the facilitator drew upon information provided by JPI Urban Europe: the Biodiversa document Annex 1 (2014) Practical methods note 4, was used. This note gave a concise outline of the basics of policy briefs. However, this was not sufficient information to build the content of the seminar. Therefore, the facilitator examined documents provided by the United Nations. Specifically, 'Writing Effective Reports' produced by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.¹ The facilitator conducted some further research to adequately prepare himself for the seminar. However, he primarily used a mixture of knowledge from the two documents mentioned above combined with his existing knowledge of communication to deliver the seminar.

Seminar Participants

The seminar attracted approximately ten to fifteen participants. The participants, for the most part, did not have any experience of writing policy briefs for government minister's or large external agencies. Most of the participants were from academic backgrounds with no experience of writing policy briefs. However, this was not the case for all the participants: one participant from the Dutch NWO and another from the board of JPI Urban Europe had experience with writing policy briefs.

Seminar Performance

The facilitator approached the seminar with a guided discovery approach to learning, as opposed to a typical didactic approach. This approach was taken due to the facilitator's understanding that many in the seminar had useful experiences which the other participants could benefit from. This strategy was well received and led to a co-learning process. The facilitator went through the basics of writing policy briefs and tackled some frequently asked questions.

Conclusion

The seminar was largely successful and participants gave verbal praise regarding its conduct. In future, a more detailed and longer seminar on the specifics of writing language could be pursued to build upon the success of this one.

¹ FAO, "Writing Effective Reports," <http://www.fao.org/docrep/014/i2195e/i2195e03.pdf> accessed 24/05/2017