WRITING GUIDELINES &

EVALUATION CRITERIA

CONTENTS

I. Getting started

For all participants, your task is to write and submit a policy brief of 1500 – 2000 words before the submission deadline 10 May 2018. It should not be written from a government perspective but from a partisan perspective (i.e. the private sector, NGO, think-tank, civil society), which you will need to specify targeting policymakers such as government officials or parliamentarians, the policy brief must advocate for a solution for the problem(s) raised by a chosen scenario.

Step 1: Choose a scenario

Choose only one of three scenarios. These are a customs union, environmental measures, and educational mobility. Please check the details on: http://www.balkandebates.net/task-overview/

Step 2: Choose a government to address

Your policy brief must be addressed to a real government/country. You may choose to address the country you live in, the three governments of Macedonia, Kosovo and Serbia, or the governments of the whole Western Balkan region. We encourage you to discuss specific features of your chosen country or region in your policy brief.

Step 3: Plan and write your policy brief (see section II. Writing Guidelines)

A policy brief has certain characteristics. First, it is written from a partisan perspective (eg. private sector, civil-society, think tank). Your aim is to influence the decisions of policymakers by (1) alerting them of a problem from an outsider's perspective and (2) advocating for a specific course of action in response to the problem. Second, it is not an internal "government-only" document but a public advocacy document. Third, the policy brief is longer and requires more in-depth analysis.

Step 4: Check that your policy brief follows the submission guidelines

Please check that your policy brief fulfils the following requirements before you submit it:

- **Word limit**: Between 1500 and 2000 words, excluding the bibliography.
- **Citation**: Cite all your sources using the APA embedded citation format. Poor citation puts you at risk of being accused of plagiarism, which results in disqualification. Including a bibliography is *not enough*. You must also cite all sources used *directly in the body* of your text. Please see the next section for how to use the APA in-text citation format.

- **Your details**: Put your name, the government(s) you are addressing, the issuing organization, scenario, date and word count on the top-left corner of your first page.
- **Spelling and grammar check**: Check that there are no spelling and grammar mistakes in your paper.
- **Format**: Save your policy brief as a Word or PDF document in Times New Roman, font size 12, with a spacing between the lines of 1.5.

Step 5: Submit your policy brief

The Policy Briefs should be submitted to their respective country organization, in English.
- For Kosovo applicants to The Balkan Forum's e-mail address info@thebalkanforum.org no later than May 10th, 2019.
- For Macedonia applicant to IDEA SEE's email address info@idebate.mk no later than May 10th, 2019.
- For Serbia applicant to Južne Vesti's email address redakcija@juznevesti.com no later than May 10th, 2019.

II. Writing Guidelines

These guidelines are aimed to help you design a persuasive and coherent response to the challenge posed. Judges will evaluate your papers based on the qualities outlined in this section. Carefully following them will increase your chances of making it to the final forum in Skopje.

1. What is a policy brief?

A policy brief is a commonly used advocacy and policymaking tool. As a publicly available document, a policy brief communicates information to policy makers and advocates for a certain course of action. The more persuasive, evidence-based, and structured your paper is, the more likely it will contribute to policy debates and influence the policy-making process. A wide range of stakeholders issues policy briefs. Non-governmental actors such as think tanks, NGOs, philanthropic organizations and even private sector organizations produce such documents to convince policymakers that a certain course of action is in the interest of society as well as of the government. The table below highlights the main characteristics of a policy brief:

Author	Non-governmental stakeholder: think tank, private sector organization, NGO, etc.
Availability	Public document
Audience	• Government Officials • Parliamentarians • General Public
Word Limit	1500-2000
Content	• Provides in-depth analysis of problem • Advocates for a specific approach from a partisan perspective • Recommends specific policies that are in the interest of the author • Persuades the government to take action

2. The elements of a policy brief

Your policy brief must strike a balance between describing the scope and urgency of a problem and arguing for specific recommendations. The recommended solution(s) must come from a partisan perspective (i.e. the private sector, NGO, think-tank, civil society) while taking into account the current government perspective in the country – or region – you

choose to address. An effective policy brief will consider the following questions within the context of your chosen country or international actor:

- What is the issue/problem? Why is it urgent?
- What is your recommended course of action?
    - How can the policy recommendations be implemented?
    - Why is it in the best interest of the government?
    - Who will be impacted be these policies? How?
    - What are the limitations/counterarguments/alternatives to your recommendations?

A successful policy brief will have the following attributes:

1. Problem- and policy-oriented: A policy brief is practical and action-oriented. It must focus on the problem, take into account the political dimensions of the issue, and offer practical solutions from a specific perspective.

2. Policy recommendations: The goal of your policy brief is to persuade a policymaker to address a specific issue and implement the policy that you have devised. You have to promote your ideas from your chosen point of view (e.g. think tank, NGO, private sector, civil society). Given the complex nature of this topic, you cannot assume readers will share your opinion or automatically agree with your proposed solution. Your recommendations should take centre stage but you should also show your readers why those recommendations are *in the best interest of policy makers*.

3. Analysis-driven: Building on facts and evidence, a policy brief demonstrates analytical thinking on a range of possible solutions for the given problem. The arguments put forward for and against different options should be the result of a measured and balanced consideration of the possible solutions. They should take into account the *impact* and *feasibility* of the policies and look at the potential *costs and benefits* of your suggested policies for different stakeholder groups. Your arguments should always be substantiated.

4. Evidence-based: To convince policy makers, it is important to demonstrate that your ideas are well- founded. For this, you need to provide and cite convincing evidence such as data, surveys and other studies on the effects of inaction or certain policies taken in other countries on this issue. You should draw on evidence from reliable and relevant sources and cite these sources properly. For GDPPC, we ask participants to use the APA citation format. Please refer to the citation section on page 6 to learn how to cite in your policy brief.

3. Structure

A convincing policy brief requires a specific structure and you are advised to follow this structure. The more you guide your target audience through the paper, the more likely your message will get across. The contents of your policy brief should be organized using the following structural elements:

1. **Title**: The title of your policy brief may seem like a minor point, but this is the first thing your reader will see. A good title is meaningful, catchy and memorable. It tells the reader what to expect. Make your title memorable by choosing a provocative or surprising title, so that it sticks in the reader's mind. The best titles communicate the key message and a sense of urgency.

2. **Introduction**: The introduction of your policy brief must briefly outline your key message.

    a. Describe the scope and urgency of the problem raised by your chosen scenario within the context of your chosen country from your chosen vantage point (e.g. private sector, civil- society, think-tank),
    b. Outline your key recommendations briefly at the very beginning,

3. **Body**: This is the main section of your policy brief. It should reinforce your partisan point of view by providing persuasive in-depth analysis aimed at identifying why your proposed policy is the most viable one and by defending your arguments against contradictory evidence. An excellent policy brief analyses the impact of its recommendations on different stakeholders and always uses evidence to support its arguments.
    a. Analyse the problems raised by your chosen scenario in your chosen country, taking into account different views that may exist on this issue,
    b. Advocates for the adoption of the most appropriate approach to the problem from the perspective of your chosen partisan actor,
    c. Propose specific and feasible recommendations required to address the most pressing issues,
    d. Explain why the proposed course of action is also in the best interest of the government you are addressing,
    e. Acknowledge and rebut any limitations, counterarguments and alternatives to your recommendations and analysis,

4. **Conclusion**: End your paper by reinforcing your key points. This is your final chance to persuade the reader to adopt your point of view.

4. **Layout**

Since you are writing about a complicated and nuanced issue, it is important that you keep your policy brief attractive and easy for any reader (remember: it is a public document). A professional layout helps to make a favourable impression on your target audience. It shows that your ideas and recommendations should be taken seriously. Using the following tips will not only make your policy brief appear more professional, it will help you clearly organise your thoughts.

1. **Opening page**: Please include the following information on the top-left corner of your first page.
   > Name: *<your name>*
   > To: *<government / country >*
   > From: *<your organisation / company / institute>*
   > Scenario: *<your scenario>*
   > Date: *<date>*
   > Word count: *<word count>*

   For the "From" field, you can either use a real organisation's name or give a short description of the hypothetical organisation that will issue your policy brief. E.g. "Human Rights Watch", "local human rights organisation" or "international harm reduction association." Do not use your real name.

2. **Font**: Use Times New Roman in a 12 point size with 1,5 spacing distance.

3. **Section headers and sub-headers**: Paragraphs and sub-headings help to make the structure clearly visible at first glance.

4. **Formatting tools**: Highlighting the most important parts of your arguments using **bold**, *italics* or underline emphasises what you want to say and catches the reader's attention.

5. **Bullet points and numbering**: Your policy recommendations or examples can be presented as a numbered list or in bullet points.

6. **Graphs and tables**: The use of graphics can help to illustrate the major argument or trend. Subtle use of relevant images might also be considered.

7. **Page numbers**: Paginate your paper by adding the page number on each page.

Keep in mind that a well-designed layout should reinforce the substance of your message, *not* distract the reader from your arguments. Using too many fancy formatting tools may

actually make your paper harder to read below is an example of a well-formatted policy paper that makes use of many of the layout tips above.

MEMORANDUM

SANCTIONS OF THE 21ST CENTURY

ID: KG10240
To: DEPARTMENT OF STATE, U.S.
From: PUBLIC POLICY CONSULTING
Scenario: D
Date: NOVEMBER 30, 2012
Wordcount: 1179

1. INTRODUCTION

In October 2011 the Wall Street Journal published an article describing how the oppressive Syrian government bought censorship systems of US-based company Blue Coat Systems Inc. (2011) We now face another company, Saur-N, trying to sell its surveillance mechanisms to a well-known authoritative regime (henceforth referred to as "WKAR").

The problem of reselling censorship systems affects everyone: both liberal and illiberal governments, people thereof and international organizations – in the Arab Spring we saw them all get involved. (See Figure 1.1) Since declaration on the Internet can now lead to serious harm or possibly death of many, as it has in the case of Abdul Ghani Al Kharjar, this is an issue of utmost importance. (Silver & Elgin, 2011)

Figure 1.1 Structure of relationships

2. GENERAL DISCUSSION

Impact of internet censorship is hard to estimate, but an analogy with the defense industry seems to be appropriate, as one Member of the European Parliament said: "We have to acknowledge that certain software products now are actually as effective as weapons." (RWB, 2012, p. 1) Size-wise, US arms exports industry, amounted to $85.3 billion in 2011, while the whole project of China's censorship cost $800 million until 2002—which we can use a rough guide to the size of the censorship

should be regulated in some fashion, as the bigger already is – in 2007 alone, the US government investigated 37 defense deals, many including expensive equipment like jet-fighters. (Department of Justice, 2007)

However, there is a number of European companies—e.g. French Télécom—that export censorship technology to Asia and Africa and thus we must weight possible disadvantage to the American industry & Saur-N, if we block this sale. (Wagner, 2012)

Any policy should ideally:

- Limit trade as little as possible
- Do as little damage to mutual relations
- Protect Human Rights like the right to assembly and freedom of speech

US foreign policy stresses human rights and *jus cogens*—norms that are legally binding and cannot be changed by treaties—as embodied by many documents, *inter alia* the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (Department of State, 2012) (Trindade, 2008) We do not have any legally binding obligation to prevent the sale of "dual use" products—products that can be used for both civilian and military/oppressive purposes. (Brown & Korff, 2012) **Nevertheless, letting the trade go through without any restrictions is too great of a risk to human rights, to our binding obligations to them, image of the United States and the current administration.** So far, this problem has been rather peripheral, due to low public awareness; however issues pertaining to surveillance can irritate the public, as reaction to ACTA testifies. (Arthur, 2012)

Some transactions are done via intermediaries, which is the only reason why the Blue Coat sale to Syria was not a direct violation of the 2004 US export ban. (Carbone, 2012) Thus we need policy to allow us to prevent such trade. For instance, the aforementioned Blue Coat sale to Syria, had a proportion going to Burma, which was legal even though, at that time, there were many other trade restrictions placed on Burma. (Department of State, 2012) (Carbone, 2012) The sale to Syria *was illegal,* just because this specific ban is defined negatively, by listing trade articles which are non-restricted—food and medicine. (US Embassy, 2012) **To be effective, any proposal must therefore cover possible re-sale of censorship systems via intermediaries** to states more oppressive than WKAR.

3. POLICY OPTIONS

BLOCK	
+ No possibility of loopholes	- Worsened bilateral relations
+ Positive image of US – selfless act	- Significantly harms Saur-N and the whole US industry
+ Simple future regulation	- Saur-N might simply be replaced by a competitor company
+ Quick implementation	- Does not set up future guidelines

This policy is bold and is not yet matched by Europe, which only passed a non-binding resolution on April 18, 2012 against any oppressive regime trying to purchase censorship systems. (Brown & Korff, 2012) The impact on bilateral relations is hard to estimate, as we cannot know how important this trade is for WKAR. Allegedly, WKAR will be able to conduct its business more efficiently; however, given the nature of the regime and what other countries have done with censorship systems, there are some serious reasons to doubt this. (Wagner, 2012) (OpenNet Initative, 2012) US already restricted

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(above) Using formatting tools to visually organize your paper can help the reader to follow your arguments

5. Plagiarism and citation

What is plagiarism?

According to The Central European University's Guidelines for the Implementation of Academic Dishonesty, Plagiarism and Other Offences (G-1009-1), "plagiarism occurs both when the words of another are *reproduced without acknowledgment* or when the ideas or arguments of another are *paraphrased in such a way as to lead the reader to believe that they originated with the writer*." In other words, plagiarism is when you use another person's thoughts or words and make others believe they are your own. This is a form of cheating and all papers that have been plagiarised, in whole or in part, will be disqualified

automatically. To avoid this, you must explicitly acknowledge the references you use in your policy brief.

How do I cite my references?

Whenever you quote or paraphrase from a source, you must let the reader know what these sources are. This could be a book, an academic journal, a news article you found online, etc. While there are various citation formats, at GDPPC, we ask all participants to use the APA citation format. The APA (American Psychological Association) format is most commonly used to cite sources within the social sciences. Detailed and comprehensive information on the APA format can be found in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, (6th ed., 2nd printing). This section will introduce you to the basics of using the APA format to write and format your papers.

In-text citation: It is not enough to just provide a bibliography at the end of your paper. Whenever you use a source within the text of your paper, you must acknowledge it there too. This is called in-text citation. You can do this in several ways. Below are some examples are taken from the Purdue Online Writing Lab (retrieved at: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/02/, accessed: 12 Dec 2013), with the in-text citation highlighted in **bold**.

1. **Summary or paraphrase**: Summarising or paraphrasing means using your own words to describe the ideas of another person. If you are paraphrasing an idea from another work, you only have to make reference to the author and year of publication in your in-text reference.
   a. **Example 1**: According to **Jones (1998)**, APA style is a difficult citation format for first-time learners.
   b. **Example 2**: APA style is a difficult citation format for first-time learners **(Jones, 1998)**.

2. **Direct quotation**: If you are directly quoting from a work, you will need to include the author, year of publication, and the page number for the reference (preceded by "p.", for page number). Introduce the quotation with the author's last name followed by the date of publication in parentheses. Use quotation marks (" ") for the sentence you are quoting from another author. You can cite your sources in three different ways, depending on your sentence:
   a. **Example 1**: According to **Jones (1998)**, "Students often had difficulty using APA style, especially when it was their first time" **(p. 199)**.
   b. **Example 2**: **Jones (1998)** found "students often had difficulty using APA style" **(p. 199)**; what implications does this have for teachers?
   c. **Example 3**: She stated, "Students often had difficulty using APA style" **(Jones, 1998, p. 199)**, but she did not offer an explanation as to why.

Bibliography: At the end of your paper, provide a list of all the references you used in the research for your paper. Because a newspaper is not formatted the same way as a book and so on, the way you cite each source depends very much on the nature of the source. In all cases, you have to cite the author's name by his or her last name first, followed by the first letter of his or her first name. Below are examples for the most common sources you will use:

- *Books:* Mueller, M. (2010). *Networks and States: The Global Politics of Internet Governance.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

- *Academic journals:* Weinberg, J. (2010). ICANN and the Problem of Legitimacy. *Duke Law Journal,* 50 (1), pp. 187-260.

- *Reports:* Fontaine, R. and Rogers, W. (2010). *Internet Freedom: A Foreign Policy Imperative in the Digital Age.* [report] Washington D.C.: Centre for a New American Security.

- *Electronic sources:* BBC News (2012). *Russia backtracks on internet governance proposals.* [online] Retrieved from: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/20676293 [Accessed: 10 Mar 2013].

- *Articles in newspaper:* Schultz, S. (2005, December 28). Calls made to strengthen state energy policies. The Country Today, pp. 1A, 2A.

This section only provides you with the basics of the APA format. It does not cover all possibilities that may arise when you are writing your paper. For a more comprehensive understanding of how to use the APA format, you can consult the following sources:

- Purdue Online Writing Lab: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/10/

- Cornell University Library Citation Management: http://www.library.cornell.edu/resrch/citmanage/ap

III. Evaluation Criteria

The GDPPC evaluation criteria focus on the participant's ability to develop analysis and use evidence to support arguments. Participants will not be penalized for language ability. Papers disqualified for plagiarism or for not respecting the word count will not be scored. The table below explains the four criteria that papers are graded on and the maximum scores possible for each criterion.

1. Understanding the evaluation criteria:

Evidence-based analysis and argumentation	This section evaluates the participant's ability to critically analyse the problem(s) raised by the scenario they have chosen, based on the following: • The participant should demonstrate an understanding of the issues from the perspective of the different stakeholders involved by responding to one specific scenario by taking on and credibly representing a partisan perspective; • The participant should provide clear and persuasive statements of the ideas being asserted in a logical and coherent order that builds to the final conclusion without internal contradictions; • Each statement should be accompanied by sufficient and reasonable evidence (case studies, data, etc.) to support it; • Papers earning a high score in this section will have discussed the impact of suggested policies on all relevant stakeholders.	30 points
Policy recommendations	This section evaluates the participant's ability to make feasible and action- oriented policy recommendations that address the problem raised by the scenario they have chosen, based on the following criteria: • The participant must demonstrate an understanding of public policy mechanisms by (1) making feasible and action-oriented recommendations that respond to the problem(s) raised by the chosen scenario within the context of the chosen country, and (2) by suggesting a mechanism for implementation; • The participant must demonstrate that he or she has considered the limitations of his or her suggestions by acknowledging the counterarguments and alternative policies; • The policy recommendations of the participant demonstrate innovation, originality and boldness.	30 points

Structure	This section evaluates the participant's ability to structure the content of his or her paper and layout presentation skills: • Key structural elements such as the title, problem definition, policy analysis, discussion of impact, recommendations, and concluding remarks are well-developed, well-balanced in length, and organised; • The participant ensures that the paper is visually well-organized, making effective use of headers, sub-headers, and formatting tools.	20 points
Citation	This section evaluates the participant's use of citation following the APA in-text citation format as well as the number and accuracy of relevant sources used throughout the text.	20 points
Total		100 points

2. Understanding the grading rubric:

	0-5 points	6-15 points	16-25 points	26-30 points
Evidence-based analysis & argumentation	0 points: The work does not reach any described standards Does not clearly respond to one scenario Does not define a relevant problem Does not represent a partisan perspective Does not provide evidence to support its claims Relies on opinion	Defines a relevant problem raised by chosen scenario, but it is not explained or explanations are incorrect Represents a partisan perspective, but not consistently Provides some evidence to support its claims, but evidence used is not reliable/accurate The argumentation shows partial understanding	Defines a relevant problem raised by chosen scenario and represents a partisan perspective Provides adequate evidence to support its claims Coherent argumentation indicates overall understanding Attempts to analyse the impact of its policies	Clearly defines a relevant problem raised by chosen scenario Clearly represents a partisan perspective Provides strong evidence to support its claims Coherent and persuasive argumentation demonstrates excellent understanding Analyses the impact of policies on all stakeholders
Policy recommendations	0 points: The work does not reach any described standards Provides insufficient Policy recommendations Policy recommendations do not adequately address the problem or the scenario Policy recommendations are not situated in an existing country	Provides generic policy recommendations, but they are not: explained/feasible/action-oriented/suitable for the country Policy recommendations address the problem, but lack of coherence shows partial understanding Does not suggest how to implement the policies Does not acknowledge limitations of policy Recommendations Does not bring up counterarguments or alternative policies	Provides and explains policy recommendations, but not all are feasible/action-oriented/suitable for chosen country Policy recommendations address the problem but they are not new or innovative Attempts to suggest how to implement the policies Acknowledges limitations of policy recommendations Brings up counterarguments and alternative policies but is not successful in rebutting them	Provides and explains relevant policy recommendations that are feasible, action-oriented and suitable for the chosen country Policy recommendations demonstrate innovative thinking Clearly suggests mechanism for implementing the policies Acknowledges limitations of policy recommendations Brings up counterarguments or alternative policies and successfully rebuts them

	0-5 points	6-10 points	11-15 points	16-20 points
Structure	0 points: The work does not reach any described standards Lacks most structural elements: title, problem definition, recommendations, discussion of impact, counterarguments, conclusion	Has some structural elements, but they are not well balanced or presented in a logical order The paper is not visually organized using formatting tools	Has all structural elements but they are not well-balanced or not in a logical order The paper attempts visual organization using formatting tools, but not to a high quality	Has all structural elements arranged in a coherent order and the different elements are well balanced. The paper is visually well-organized with excellent use of formatting tools
Citation	0 points: The work does not cite any sources Does not consistently use one citation format Sources used are insufficient, not relevant and unreliable	Consistently uses one citation format, but not APA citation format and without in-text citation Some sources are used and not all are relevant or accurate	Sticks to APA citation format with in-text citation, but with a few errors There are an appropriate number of sources, but not all relevant or accurate	Consistently and accurately uses APA citation format throughout the paper, with in-text citation There are an appropriate number of reliable and relevant sources