

EURIM Briefings
May 1996

The EURIM Briefing

Guidelines for their content, style and production

Introduction

This document sets out the Purpose, Content, Layout and Process involved in producing a EURIM Briefing. It is issued for the Guidance of Working Parties and others involved in the writing and production of Briefings.

Briefings are short documents designed to state the EURIM view on a particular issue of current importance. They are normally prepared by a Working Party, which may have been specifically formed to produce the Briefing.

Summary of Key Objectives

To state arguments rigorously, with fact and opinion clearly distinguished, and agreement to differ explicitly stated.

To provide sufficient background information for the Briefing to be independently useful.

To use good clear English and to define any necessary technical or legal terms.

To use the standard Briefings layout, which should result in a document that is easy on the eye and where the key points are well signposted with sub-headings, etc.

To use INTERNET facilities wherever possible in the drafting and amendment of Briefings, thus minimising re-typing and errors and keeping lead-times short.

Summary of the Production process

Working Party liaises with the Editorial Executive at early stage of drafting and prepares production timetable.

Draft Briefing is prepared by the Working Party for a EURIM Presentation Meeting.

Immediately after Presentation Meeting Working Party and Editorial Executive prepare revised draft.

This is reviewed by Directors for political balance and the final version cleared for publication.

An electronic version for posting on the World Wide Web is prepared and submitted for approval

Briefing is produced in hardcopy and Internet versions.

1. Purpose

The EURIM Briefing is intended to provide busy people with an easily assimilated review of Informatics and Telematics (I&T) related topics of current importance at the European level.

Note that I&T (Informatics, i.e. information technology and associated products, services and or applications, and Telematics, i.e. electronic communications by whatever means and /or the products, services and content carried) is used in preference to IT or ICT. I&T emphasises the political concern with usage (from business transactions to consumer entertainment) and not just the enabling technologies.

Briefings are widely distributed amongst parliamentarians, officials and other concerned people and organisations in both the EU and the UK. They are one of the chief means by which EURIM's image and credibility are judged, both by its members and by outsiders. It follows from this that a consistent house style and a well structured presentation of the issues and recommendations are most important.

The views expressed in the briefing are those of EURIM as a whole, not merely those of the members contributing to a particular working party. This is reflected in the process for producing a briefing.

2. Content

The Briefing will probably go through several versions before the content is finally passed for publication. The working party concerned is responsible for producing a draft briefing to place before a presentation meeting and this draft should be consistent with these guidelines.

The wording needs to be clear and concise without awkward sentence structures. (A significant number of people to whom the briefing is addressed will not have English as their first language.) Any technical or legal terms must be explained, either in the text or in a short glossary box. Abbreviations and acronyms must also be defined.

We recommend that the overall structure and provisional sub-headings are agreed at the earliest stage of drafting.

The content needs to include background information to put the paper in context; it should indicate which aspects of the topic were considered and the issues which were considered important. The briefing should include specific recommendations and these must be clearly distinguished as such in the text. There is a requirement to demonstrate political balance. When a consensus exists that should be stated. Where it is relevant to record more than one view that must be explicitly indicated in the text.

3. Process

The following groups and individuals are involved in the life-cycle of a Briefing:

1. The Working Party (WP), principally the Chairman, Secretary/Rapporteur and any other member with a specific drafting brief.
2. The Chairman, Ian Bruce MP (IB) and Vice-Chairman, Andrew Miller MP (AM) of the Editorial Sub-Committee. They are the Directors of EURIM responsible to Council for the content and appropriateness of the Briefing.

3. The Editorial Executive Kate Norman (KN), who works with and on behalf of these Directors to ensure that Briefings are produced on time, in the house style and to quality.
4. All EURIM members. They are invited to comment on the draft Briefing at the presentation meeting.
5. EURIM executives, Emma Fryer (EF) and Val Beech (VB) who respectively, in liaison with Kate Norman, produce and distribute the hard copy and electronic versions of the Briefing.

Liaison between the individuals involved should be over the INTERNET to meet the time constraints and to minimise re-typing.

The sequence of events is:

1. The WP informs Council via the members of Council appointed to monitor progress, copied to the Finance and Planning Executive, Philip Virgo (PV), of the broad content of the Briefing, and planned timetable for the presentation meeting and publication.
2. The WP liaises with KN to work out the detailed production timetable and to discuss and resolve any difficulties with preparation or content.
3. The Briefing is drafted by the WP and an advance copy sent electronically to KN to discuss with IB and AM and to flag any potential content problems to Council and the WP.
4. The draft is prepared by the WP and sent electronically to EF for circulation to all EURIM members prior to the presentation meeting.
5. At the same time, the WP submits to IB and AM an action plan for selling EURIM's views as expressed in the briefing to decision makers in Brussels and elsewhere. This should include views on the type of press cover needed. The WP should also provide mailing list details for recipients outside the normal EURIM circulation to whom the Briefing should be sent.
6. At the presentation meeting, KN and others note all comments and recommendations. The meeting might call for a follow-on period (not to exceed one week) during which further comments and suggestions can be submitted.
7. Immediately after the meeting, the WP chairman (or nominee) and KN work together on preparation of the final draft. The objective is that within 10 days of the presentation meeting, a version that meets all the requirements is presented to IB and AM for final amendments and approval on behalf of Council.
8. Within 48 hours of receiving this version, IB and AM will discuss together and agree any further amendments.
9. KN will send the final version electronically to EF for printing and distribution.
10. KN will work with VB to prepare the version for posting on the Web, which will be submitted to IB, AM and the Chairman, Lord Renwick, for approval prior to posting.

Tight version control is required. This will be the responsibility of the WP until the presentation meeting and of KN from then until publication. To assist comment and subsequent re-writing, paragraphs should be numbered in the draft version prepared for the presentation meeting.

4. Size and Layout

These Guidelines are produced in the Briefings house style as an illustration of the layout.

The first page is a self contained summary of the background to the briefing, the critical issues to consider and EURIM's recommendations. The substance of the briefing should be produced on 1, 2 or 3 further pages, the ideal being a single double-sided A3 sheet. There is an element of writing to size involved, but choosing 10, 11 or 12 point type offers a certain amount of flexibility.

Where a substantial amount of extra material is relevant then this should be made into an Annex.

The font for the main text is Arial (or Universe) with section headings in Times New Roman boldface, a size larger than the main text. We have chosen these fonts as they are common to all widely used wordprocessing systems. Where a small typefont is used, text may be printed in two columns. It will normally be justified. If glossaries, references, etc are to be included these can be placed in a box within or after the main text.

A single space should be inserted between paragraphs and a double space between sections. Sub headings are recommended to provide "signposting" and to produce pages that are easy on the eye.

When working on early drafts a different format may be more appropriate, and text will frequently be sent over the Internet in ASCII. The version prepared for the presentation meeting should, however, be prepared in accordance with these guidelines and in addition should have every paragraph numbered, to help with discussion and redrafting.

The final formatting and addition of EURIM copyright etc information will be done by the Secretariat after the Briefing has been approved for publication.

5. Contacts

All queries relating to the preparation and publication of Briefings should be referred in the first instance to the Editorial Executive, Kate Norman, who can be contacted as follows:

Telephone: 01984 618613
Fax: 01984 618383
E-mail: 101462.2556@compuserve.com

For advice regarding use of the INTERNET and to discuss the electronic version of the Briefing, reference can be made to Val Beech:

Telephone: 0161 792 7831
Fax:
E-mail: val.beech@geo2.poptel.org.uk

General enquiries regarding EURIM and its Workshops should be referred to the Administrative Secretary:

Telephone and fax: 0181 309 5724
