

CIVITAS

Sustainable and smart mobility for all

2030



Editorial Guidelines

CIVITAS Initiative

How to use these guidelines

The sections that follow go into detail about quality, tone and style when writing about CIVITAS news and events, including instructions for how CIVITAS formats dates, currencies, bullet points, and more.

In broad strokes, when writing news or events there are a few things to keep in mind. First, ask yourself “why is this newsworthy? why would someone be interested enough to read this?” The answer to those questions is your “hook” – i.e. what “hooks” a potential reader, leading them to click through and to read on – and should be clearly laid out in your title and first paragraph. For example, instead of writing an event recap that simply states the speakers and sessions, reframe this information to centre what is *newsworthy* about the fact that you convened an event, as was done [here](#).

Second, keep in mind that CIVITAS writes with an educated but non-expert reader in mind. Write assuming that your reader has general knowledge of what is meant by common terms like “sustainability” and “mobility”, but that they are not mobility experts. Spell out every acronym the first time you use it, avoid project jargon (e.g. “work package”, “deliverable”) and do not include highly academic or scientific language.

When in doubt, visit the [news](#) and [events](#) that have been previously published on the CIVITAS website for inspiration and guidance.

Introduction

Sometimes it can be difficult for material produced in a research context to reach a broader audience. To maximise the chances of it doing so, it is essential for content to be well-written, grammatically correct, attractively presented, and produced with the specific recipient in mind (whomever that may be). This guide has been produced to support these objectives. It begins with a brief description of the main CIVITAS target audiences, and goes on to elaborate on how the writing process should be approached.

As the saying goes, the key to good writing is good editing: this should take up about half of the production time for any article. In this document, editors and copy editors are provided with guidelines on how to approach their task.

The following guidelines are for authors, editors, copyeditors and proofreaders who are preparing text for print publication under the auspices of the CIVITAS Initiative. In general, CIVITAS publications are directed at a general but educated audience, regardless of their content. In other words: be sure that your writing is accessible, even for people who have never worked in this field.

1.1 Guide to content and language

1.1.1 Quality of content

News & events: All content should fulfil the following criteria, which correspond with principles outlined within the European Commission's Information Providers Guide¹:

- Relevance of the info in the context of mobility
- Non-commercial and not interest-based
- Reliability of sources: the information is well researched and documented
- Objectivity: there is no or an acceptable level of bias
- Scope: the information is of interest to a European audience
- Accuracy: the information is accurate
- Originality: the information is fresh, engaging and provokes new thoughts
- Validity: the information is durable in nature
- Textual elements are as far as possible supplemented by images and audiovisual materials, contact information and links to further information

This should be applied to all submissions to the news and events content. A good starting point is to ask yourself: "is this accurate? would a general audience take time to read it?"

Tools: The CIVITAS tool inventory can be used only to publish tools developed by:

- a CIVITAS project,
- another H2020 project,
- a research org, or
- a reputable private company if the tool is not primarily developed for profit.

1.1.2 Style and tone

A journalistic reporting style and tone should be taken: The text should provide a serious and accessible high-quality account, be concise and to the point, as well as enriched by background information, facts and quotes. Content will primarily be published online. The following guidelines therefore take into account considerations that should be adopted when writing for the web:

- Have the audience in mind and write for them
- Use accessible language, which means:
 - easy to understand for non-native speakers
 - no jargon
 - don't use acronyms without defining them (e.g. UVARs, ICT)
 - short sentences
 - prefer active verbs over passive, prefer positive statements over negative ones, e.g. "at least" instead of "not less than", or "infringe" rather than "does not comply with"
 - avoid nominalisation (turning verbs into nouns), e.g. "bicyclize" to mean make more bicycle-friendly
 - avoid vague terms – try to use simple words that convey concrete and specific meaning
- Easy to screen-read and scan
 - short paragraphs (ideally 2-3 lines)
 - clear and meaningful headings and sub-headings

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/jpg/quality_control/workflow/content/index_en.htm

- avoid long pages (prefer to link to additional information)
 - short headings of no more than 60 characters (including spaces) or about 8 words
- Attention-grabbing
 - lead with the key idea
 - have a hook – ask yourself “why would someone read this?” and be sure that the answer to that question is in the title and opening paragraph
 - summarise what your readers will be interested in at the very beginning
- Clarity
 - the key message clearly emerges from the text (first paragraph)
 - use lists where appropriate
 - stick to one idea per paragraph
 - avoid ambiguity (use commas and hyphens where appropriate)
 - use as few words as possible to express an idea, for example “EU initiatives aimed at protecting human health from risks that may be caused by air pollution” can be shortened to “EU initiatives to protect people from air pollution”. If you need to read a sentence twice to understand its meaning, it is too complicated
- Make use of your medium (online)
 - Include non-textual elements (images, infographics, audio-visual material)
 - Include links to further information

1.1.3 Writing conventions

Please consult the CIVITAS Style Guide (see section below) when writing to see what particulars should be respected vis-à-vis the CIVITAS style.

1.1.4 Guidelines for editing

It is essential that authors review and edit content to check for inconsistencies, make the text flow, and ensure the overall quality of content to deliver a coherent, consistent whole. The editor should ensure that the content is relevant and accurate and that it is presented in a logical way. It is also the editor’s task to ensure that illustrations, figures and graphs are appropriate and make sense, that they are properly referenced in the text and that the source is acknowledged and no copyright is infringed.

The editor should only pass on the material to the copy editor when it is final and complete, with the full set of illustrations and figures, including titles and sources.

4.5 Copy-editing

After the text is complete and edited, the copy-editing phase starts. Consider the following points:

- Check whether the target audience and the key messages of the publication have been taken into account
- Check whether the text follows the given structure
- Check whether each section meets the given word count
- Correct language use/ grammar/ spelling
- Ensure good style and ease of reading
- Eliminate redundancy
- Ensure consistency (in the use of names, abbreviations, number style etc.)
- Check that figures are relevant and logical
- Ensure accuracy/ pertinence
- Ensure text conforms to language style guide

1.1.5 Proof-reading

All content must be proof-read before publication, be it online or in print format². Proofreading should take place after layout and seek to rectify errors in text, captions, headings and design elements. If possible, a person removed from the writing process should do this to ensure there is no “blindness” on the part of the author or writing team and that the majority of errors and typos get picked up.

1.2 Style Guide

1.2.1 Abbreviations

All abbreviations need to be spelled out on first reference, including common usages such as UN, EU and km. Avoid the overuse of abbreviations, especially those that unfamiliar to an average reader. When an accepted abbreviation is formed by foreign words, explain the organisation rather than writing out the foreign words.

Some common abbreviations are:

CIVITAS – City-VITALity-Sustainability
COP – Conference of the Parties
DG – Directorate General
EC – European Commission
EEV – Enhanced Environmentally Friendly Vehicle (European Union standard)
EU – European Union
EV – electric vehicle
GHGs – greenhouse gases
HGV – heavy goods vehicle
ITP – intermodal trip planner
ICT – information and communication technologies
ITS – information technology services
LEZ – low emission zone
LTZ – limited traffic zone
MaaS – Mobility as a Service
PAC – (CIVITAS) Political Advisory Committee
PT – public transport
SULP – sustainable urban logistics plan
SUMP – sustainable urban mobility plan
UAM – urban air mobility
UTC – urban traffic control
UVAR – urban vehicle access regulation

1.2.2 Accented characters

Remove all accents from texts without transliterating. For example, Düsseldorf becomes Dusseldorf (not Duesseldorf).

² With the exception of social media content.

1.2.3 Bullet points

There should be an immediately recognisable style to any list. Bullet points should either be components of a complete sentence, or each a complete sentence in itself.

Components of a complete sentence – CIVITAS’ bullet-point style employs:

- semicolons;
- a conjunction before the final point to conclude the list, like “and” or “or”; and
- round bullets.

Complete sentences in themselves – CIVITAS offers the following bullet-point guidelines:

- Keep individual points short.
- Ensure style consistency.
- Avoid excessive use.

1.2.4 Capitalisation

As the European Commission’s style guide so succinctly puts it, “Baker is a smith. Smith is a baker.” One is a name; the other is a job. It has nothing to do with how important you are. Whether you are the minister of environment, chief financial officer or a chestnut roaster, your job is your job and your name is your name.

Capitalise the title of a person only if it immediately precedes the name. If it is an occupational description, rather than a title, it is lower-cased. Examples: the European Commissioner for Transport, Violeta Bulc, announced a new phase of the CIVITAS Initiative to the press. Violeta has been transport commissioner of the European Commission since the beginning of the year. Bulc was greeted on Sunday by astronaut John Glen and Margrethe Vestager, EU competition commissioner.

Also, note the difference between a ministry of environment and the Ministry of Environment of Albania. Other cases where lower case letters are used are: country office, head office, national/local government, accession country, member state, directive, sustainable development, polluter pays principle, etc.

Capitalise common nouns such as party, river and street when they are an integral part of the full name for a person, place or thing (Democratic Party, Mississippi River, Aarhus Convention). Lowercase these common nouns when they stand alone in subsequent references (the party, the river, the convention).

Capitalise parts of a publication if followed by a number (Chapter 1, Section 3, Table 1, Box 2 etc.). Otherwise, use lower case “This section...”, “The following chapter”.

Always capitalise when referring collectively to the Member States of the European Union.

1.2.5 Compound Words

Observe the following example for these types of compound words:

- Decision maker (person), decision making (concept), decision-making process (adjective)
- Policy maker, policy making, policy-making procedure
- Consensus building, consensus-building process
- An adverb ending in “ly” followed by a participle or adjective is always open (e.g. highly developed).
- Adjectival compounds are usually hyphenated before the noun and open after the noun (for example, user-friendly website / the website is user friendly).

- Adjectives in the form of noun plus noun compounds do not need to be hyphenated (compare energy efficiency measures, and energy-efficient lighting).

1.2.6 Contact Information

- Use the following formats for telephone and fax numbers: (country code followed by area code followed by telephone number) +123 456, 123 4567, or 123 4 5678
- Do not group more than four digits together.
- Do not include “0” to assist national calling.
- Use these abbreviations for lists:
Tel: +36 26 504 000
Fax: +36 26 311 294
Tel/fax: +36 26 555 1234
E-mail: secretariat@civitas.eu
Web: www.civitas.eu

1.2.7 Countries

The names of most countries are uniformly accepted. The list below reflects special circumstances that need to be followed strictly.

Czech Republic – refer to *the* Czech Republic in flowing text. In mailing addresses and lists (e.g. on graphs, in tables, etc.) the direct article “the” may be dropped.

Kosovo³ – every time Kosovo is *first* mentioned in writing, you must include the following disclaimer: “this designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.”

Netherlands – refer to *the* Netherlands in flowing text. In mailing addresses and lists (e.g. on graphs, in tables, etc.) the direct article “the” may be dropped. Do not refer to Holland as the name of the country, as it is merely a region in the Netherlands.

Romania, not Rumania

Slovakia – do not use “the Slovak Republic.” *adj.* Slovak or Slovakian, choose one and apply consistently.

Ukraine – do not use “the Ukraine”. The spelling of its capital is Kyiv.

The former Yugoslavia – the country no longer exists, if referred to in historical context, reference can be made to the former Yugoslavia.

1.2.8 Dates

- 9 August 2002
- 9-10 August 2002
- 9 August – 2 September 2002
- 9 August 2002 – 2 January 2003
- August 2002

³ this designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

- 1990s (no apostrophe)

Avoid replacing months with digits only, even in footnotes, as “1.4.91” can mean 1 April 1991 to some, and 4 January 1991 to others.

For abbreviations of days of the week in tables use Sun, Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat (three letters, no full stops).

For abbreviations of months for use in tables, use Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, May, Jun, Jul, Aug, Sep, Oct, Nov, Dec (three letters, no full stops).

1.2.9 Formatting

Bold — be conservative with your use of bold – it can help emphasise a key point, but will make your text hard to read if used a lot

Italics — italicise the name of a publication.

Underline — do not underline text.

1.2.10 Headings

Use no more than four heading styles. The text should be broken down no further than that.

1.2.11 Money

When listing amounts of money, denote currency with three-letter capitalised abbreviations. Examples include EUR for euros, GBP for British pounds, USD for American dollars, HUF for Hungarian forints. The number comes first, followed by the abbreviation, e.g. 1,000 USD or 5 million EUR. CIVITAS does not use currency symbols (e.g. write 200 EUR instead of €200).

1.2.12 Names

Use the accepted English version of a city's name, if one exists. For example:

- Munich (not Munchen);
- Ghent (not Gent);
- Naples (not Napoli);
- Vienna (not Wien); and
- Malmo (not Malmö).

1.2.13 Numbers

Spell out whole numbers one through nine, but express numbers 10 and higher in numerals, or when decimals are involved (3.4).

Spell out first to ninth. Starting with 10th use figures.

Spell out a number if it is the first word in a sentence (or reword the sentence to avoid starting with a numeral). One exception is the numeral for a calendar year (“1990 was a very good year.”)

Always use commas to denote thousands (3,000), millions (7,000,000), etc. On the other hand, use a decimal point rather than a comma for fractions, and always add a zero before the decimal point (e.g. write out 0.3).

1.2.14 Percentages

Spell out the word “percent” in text: “The subsidies would start at 25 percent of those provided to current members.” Use % in tables and charts.

1.2.15 Punctuation

Colons — Capitalise the first word after a colon only if it is a proper noun or the start of a complete sentence: He promised this: The company would make good the losses. But: There were three considerations: expense, time and feasibility.

Commas — In a series, do not put a comma before the conjunction unless it is needed to avoid confusion. *Examples:* Surface water includes rivers, lakes and glaciers. Effective pairs are shoes and socks, and hats and scarves.

Dashes — Use the em dash — with one space on each side. When working in Microsoft Word, the em dash can be inserted with the key-command strokes ctrl+Alt+- or through the “insert” “symbol” function.

Exclamation marks — This is not required in English after a command and should otherwise be used sparingly.

Hyphenation — The following adjectives should be written with a hyphen (see Compound Words above):

- decision-making;
- non-governmental;
- policy-making;
- short-term/long-term;
- socio-economic

The following words should be written without a hyphen:

- cooperation;
- coordination;
- redistribute; and
- transboundary.

If a prefix ends in a vowel and the word that follows begins with the same vowel, a hyphen is used (re-elect, re-establish, re-examine etc.). A hyphen is also used to change the sense of a word with a prefix (e.g. resign, re-sign; recover, re-cover; reform, re-form).

When a prefix is added to an open compound, the hyphen becomes an en dash (e.g. pre–Civil War).

Use hyphens to avoid ambiguity:

Best known example / best-known example.

1.2.16 Quotation marks

Use double quotation marks and, in general, place commas and full stops outside the quotation marks (even if a single word is quoted). *Example:* German writer John Bama quotes activists and scientists who think the summit will be nothing but “a big show for the global rulers”, and “pseudo democracy”.

Dashes, semicolons, question marks and exclamation marks go inside the quotation marks when they apply to the quoted matter only. If they apply to the whole sentence, they go outside the quotation marks. Quotation marks are not necessary after “so-called.”

1.2.17 References

For CIVITAS publications, we follow the [Chicago Manual of Style](#) for references. Referenced text should be marked with a superscripted numeral at the end of the relevant passage. All bibliographic notes to which the numerals refer should be collected at the end of the document under the chapter heading, “Endnotes.” Details on the formatting of references are given in the Chicago Manual of Style, which offers an online service that can be used free-of-charge on a 30-day trial basis. See a quick citation guide from the Chicago Manual of Style [here](#).

1.2.18 Regions

Capitalise parts of recognised geographical names: North Pole, Northern Ireland, but northern England. Do not use capitals for compass points (no capitals for north, north-west/northwest/north west etc. unless part of an administrative unit such as East Midlands.)

Capitalise “county” when an integral part of a proper name (Suffolk County).

For Central and Eastern Europe, we use the abbreviation CEE. However, it is unwise to expect an average reader to know which countries are included in this region. Always list the specific countries, either in the text or in a footnote. The term “former Communist countries” is probably more easily understandable and more accurate, but this term is losing relevance as Communism fades into history. A map may help the reader visualise the region in question.

The abbreviations NIS (for newly independent states) and CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) are no longer in use.

Avoid the term Balkan. Use South Eastern Europe (SEE), and list the specific countries in question.

1.2.19 Times

Time should be expressed in the style of the 24-hour clock with hours and minutes separated with a colon. The day begins at 0:00 and ends at 24:00.

1.2.20 Titles

Titles of publications, chapters and figures should be title cased, which means capitalising all words except for prepositions, conjunctions and articles that are not the first or last word. Use italics for publication titles, and capitalise projects, programmes, etc. without italics or quotation marks.

1.2.21 World Wide Web

When a web address appears within flowing text, the “http” information should be removed. For example, CIVITAS address is civitas.eu.

Do not include web addresses that consist of a long list of numbers and letters, e.g. <http://www.google.de/search?q=bus+conference&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&aq=t&rls=org.mozilla:en->

[US:official&client=firefox-a](#). If this is the case, restrict the link to the main part of the address, e.g. <http://www.google.de> or create a bitly⁴ for the link.

Use the phrase website, webpage and homepage. Internet should be capitalised.

1.2.22 Years

Always use numerals for a year. Use an “s” with no apostrophe for decades.

- 1999-2002
- 1994-96
- 1990s

⁴ <http://bitly.com/>