General Principles and Guidelines CEPS Task Forces

This document offers guidance to Task Force members and other interested parties in understanding the functioning of a CEPS Task Force and the process of drafting a Task Force report.

Task Forces are processes of structured dialogue among industry representatives, policy-makers, consumers and NGOs, who are brought together over several meetings. Task Force reports are the final output of the research carried out by CEPS in the context of the Task Force.

Participants in a Task Force

- **Members** are any for-profit entities, consumer groups or NGOs which participate in a Task Force and contribute to its expenses by paying a fee.
- **Rapporteurs** are CEPS researchers who organise the Task Force, conduct the research and draft the final report.
- **Chair** is an expert appointed by CEPS to steer the dialogue during the meetings and advise as to the general conduct of the activities of the Task Force.
- **Observers** are any regulators or supervisors who are invited to attend the Task Force meetings and provide oral and written input.

Objectives of a Task Force report

- Task Force reports are meant to contribute to policy debates by presenting a balanced set of arguments, based on the members’ views, available data and literature.
- Task Force reports seek to provide readers with a constructive basis for discussion. Conversely, they do not seek to advance a single position or misrepresent the complexity of any subject matter.
- Task Force reports also fulfill an educational purpose, and are therefore drafted in a manner that is easy to understand, with any technical terminology fully defined.
The role of the Task Force members

- Member contributions may take the form of participation in informal debate or a formal presentation in the course of the meetings, or a written submission.
- Input from members is encouraged and will be made available to all members, if it is to be used for the final report.
- Members are expected to consider the market as a whole when providing input, in order for it to be meaningful to policy-makers.
- Members represent their institutions but are asked to provide input as experts.
- Members are given ample opportunity to review the Task Force report before it is published, as detailed below.

Drafting of conclusions and recommendations

- Task Force reports feature a set of conclusions. To draft these conclusions, rapporteurs will summarise members’ views. Wherever members’ views do not lead to clear conclusions, general phrasing will be employed.
- Task Force reports feature a set of policy recommendations. These recommendations are meant to reflect strictly members’ views.
  - For a recommendation to be featured in the report, there needs to be ‘consensus’ or ‘broad agreement’ among Task Force members. Consensus does not however mean unanimity nor full agreement as to every aspect of a given recommendation.
  - Where ‘consensus’ co-exists with a significant minority view, the report will feature this minority view next to the relevant recommendation.
  - Where there is no ‘consensus’ but several contradictory views, the report will feature all these views and either refrain from making any recommendation or simply advise policy-makers to clarify the given subject matter.
  - In all cases, the report will seek to identify the points where there is some form of agreement, for instance a common understanding of facts or opinions.
- Both conclusions and policy recommendations will be summarised at the beginning of the report in the form of an ‘executive summary’.
- Members will be given ample opportunity to review the text of both conclusions and recommendations.
Drafting of the main text

- The main text will reflect members’ views, available data and literature. In this part of the report, rapporteurs detail the results of the research carried out in the framework of the Task Force.
- Members’ views are not simply presented as such but are also put into context. Wherever there is fundamental disagreement, the rapporteurs will ensure that all views are presented in a clear and fair manner.
- Scientific literature may be cited in this part of the report. Members are not purported to endorse any reference to this literature. A general disclaimer is inserted to clarify this aspect.
- The conclusions for each section will be clearly presented – and highlighted if appropriate. For the drafting of these conclusions please refer to the section above.

Use of data

- Task Force reports feature data that are considered both relevant and accurate by the rapporteurs.
- Task Force members are encouraged to contribute with any data or propose any sources they may consider relevant.
- Members may question either the relevance or accuracy of any given data. After consultation with other Task Force members, rapporteurs may decide either to exclude this data or to mention these concerns in the main body of the text.

Sample structure of a Task Force report

1. Editorial information
2. Disclaimer
3. Executive summary
4. Outline
5. Main text
6. Summary of conclusions
7. References
8. Annexes, if any
9. List of participants
Sample disclaimer
“The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions of all Task Force members. A sound and clear set of principles has guided the drafting process, in order to preserve a neutral approach to divergent views. All members were given ample opportunity to voice their reservations. Every well-grounded reservation is reflected in this report. Wherever there is fundamental disagreement among members, this report explains all views in a clear and fair manner.

- Members do not necessarily agree with all positions put forward in this report.
- Members do not endorse any reference made to academic studies.
- Members agree that the data featured in this report are relevant and accurate, unless otherwise stated.
- The content of this report may be only attributed to the rapporteurs.”