The background of the slide features a photograph of several people sitting on a balcony or terrace. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent grid pattern. The left side of the image is tinted blue, and the right side is tinted yellow. The text is overlaid on the blue section.

Cedefop text input: tips on drafting

Thessaloniki

June 7, 2018



CEDEFOP

European Centre for the Development
of Vocational Training

The Cedefop editing team

- Working on text drafts before publication
- Matching author output to audience needs
- Feeding back to authors what they can do to ensure audience needs are met early in the process
- In-house training (executive summaries, web writing, briefing notes and press releases) and for Cedefop partners

Tips on input drafting

June 2018

To begin ...



Successful packing – and drafting in four steps

1. Check your baggage allowance
 - *Cedefop texts usually have target page or word count*
2. Select only what you need for the ‘trip’ you have planned
 - *is there any point in duplicating or having non-essential materials?*
3. Select small items where possible, rather than bulky ones
 - *don’t use lengthy constructions where smaller and simpler will do*
4. ‘Pack’ your things in a logical and considered fashion
 - *keeping everything in order makes text shorter and more easily read*

Step 1 in successful drafting (and packing): check your baggage allowance

Cedefop 'baggage allowance' – why a word limit?

- Different specifications for different outputs
e.g. briefing note, research paper, flyer, booklet, magazine
- Finite resources: time, staff, budget
 - too many words/pages = too much time = risk of cancellations

Step 2 in successful drafting (and packing): select only what is needed

Good news and bad news ...

- Good news – template suggests information to enter
- Bad news – templates can encourage repetition, leading to producing too much material, exceeding limits and needing cutting back

Template entry: example of repetition

Legislation/regulation:

AVETAE: At the end of 2015 a draft of the VET Development Programme 2016 -20 was prepared, based on output of work carried out by a committee comprised of all major stakeholders The programme was foreseen in 2014 Strategy of science, education and sports. The programme is to be adopted by Government in the second half of 2016.

Template entry: example of repetition - continued

Funding arrangements:

AVETAE: Under the VET Development Programme ...

Cooperation/partnerships and social partner involvement:

AVETAE: In the course of development of the VET Development Programme ..

Implementation/roll-out:

AVETAE: Ongoing is the comprehensive curricular reform for early and pre-school, primary and secondary ...

Non-template example of repetition

The case of the Netherlands, where defining attainment targets was a national policy orientation in the school sector as early as the early 1990s, might be a good illustration. In the Dutch educational system, in primary and secondary education, schools use pupil-monitoring systems, which register the progress of the pupil's development. ... In most Dutch schools regular assessment of pupil learning outcomes ... the one characterising the Dutch education system, might give the impression ...

Unnecessary duplication – tautologies and pleonasms

- ... the crisis has had a lasting impact that continues to be felt today.
- ... it is expected to continue decreasing in the future.
- ... an investigation is currently under way to establish what happened.
- ... we begin with a short summary
- ... it is seen as a necessary requirement ...

Presidential tautologies

- ‘With malice toward none, with charity for all.’

Abraham Lincoln

- ‘It’s no exaggeration to say the undecideds could go one way or another.’

George H. W. Bush

- ‘If we do not succeed, we run the risk of failure.’

Vice-President Dan Quayle

Step 3 in successful drafting (and packing): keep it light

- The VET system is cognisant of the implications for participation levels stemming from demographic developments ...
 - *The VET system understands how demographic developments will affect participation ...*
- It is not uncommon to encounter sentences which, though they contain a great number of words and are constructed in a highly complex way, turn out on inspection to convey very little meaning of any kind.
 - *Some long and complicated sentences mean very little.*

Unnecessary words and phrases

- As a matter of fact ...
- It is obvious that ...
- It can be seen that ...
- It is arguable that ...
- It is of note that ...
- For example, it is observed that ...
- In other words ...

Keep to a minimum, if used at all.

Structure

Manuel Garcia climbed the stairs to Don Miguel Retana's office. He set down his suitcase and knocked on the door.

There was no answer. Manuel, standing in the hallway, felt there was someone in the room. He felt it through the door.

- five sentences, 42 words

Structure

Productivity crisis, automation, skills mismatches and digitisation of workplaces on the one hand, and an aging population, immigration and waning social cohesion on the other have been shaping perceptions, expectations and fears of radical changes in working and learning patterns in Europe.

- one sentence, 42 words

Keep it short ...

- Short words
 - why 'facilitate' when you can help or aid?
- Short sentences
 - deliver what you want to say in small, bite-size pieces
- Short headings
 - signpost what is coming, don't summarise the section in the heading
- Short paragraphs or sections
 - give your reader the chance to understand the arguments you make

'I apologise for writing such a long letter - I didn't have time to write a short one.'

Mark Twain

'If you care about being thought credible and intelligent, do not use complex language where simpler language will do.'

Nobel prize-winning psychologist Daniel Kahneman

Step 4 in successful drafting (and packing): be methodical

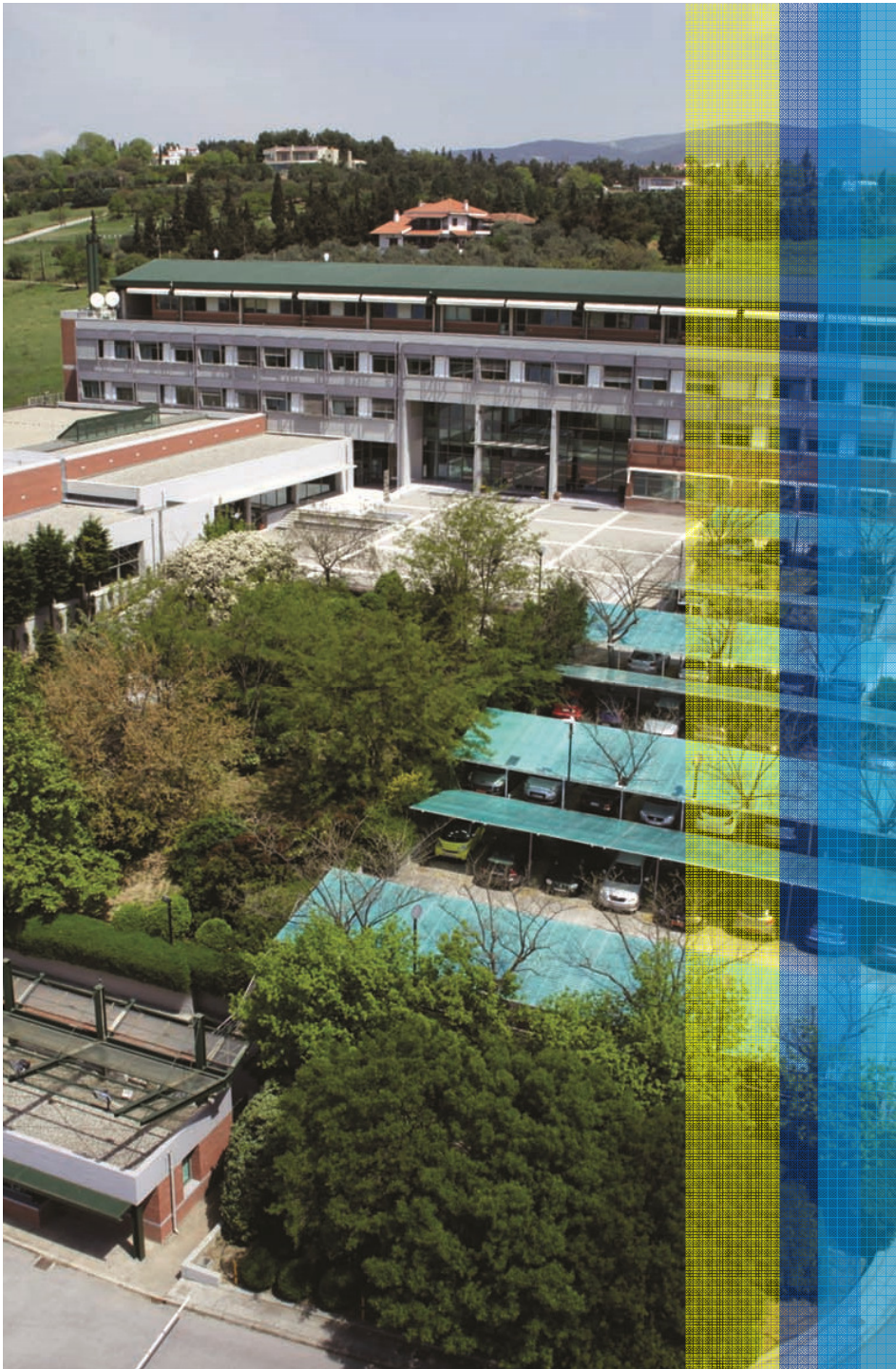
- Aided by the template: will drive the logic
- Avoid backward or forward references where possible:
‘as described earlier’, ‘as seen above’, ‘which will be discussed later’
- Make sure abbreviations/acronyms used are spelled out
*Guidance in the **ESS** is coordinated centrally by the **NVICC**.*
- Structure the text with the reader in mind – use lists to present information where appropriate

Prose is architecture, not interior
decoration.

Ernest Hemingway

In summary

- Stick with your allocated number of words or pages
 - Select only the input material you need
 - Work with short and simple words, phrases and sentences
 - Be sure that you follow the logic of the template, and are clear in your information and your argument
- And you'll keep everyone at Cedefop happy!



Thank you

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