



How to write a Topic Overview

What is a Topic Overview?

A topic overview should give the reader an idea of the topic. You will clarify key terms and actors, identify the problem, outline existing measures and formulate your own solutions to the question.

Topic Overview Structure

Under each sub-heading, you should include your self-written text and links to your sources. Include only relevant information you can prove: Make sure you use valid sources, before you add things you think you know always double check, and do not write empty phrases. Get both sides of the story: Whenever you find an argument for one side, look for a source that might explain another perspective or take. Be critical with your sources and neutral in your writing. Use bullet points only for the list of key terms, all other parts should be written in text. Your topic overview should not be longer than 1.400 words.

1. Maximum TWO video links, graph or other visual

Although your main body will be all text, there are many visual presentations already online or you can make your own graphic. Pick a video, graph or other visual which demonstrates why the topic is relevant, gives some insight into understanding it, or is thought-provoking in relation to the topic. If possible, build up on these visuals in your text.

2. Key Terms

This is simply a list of keywords which you deem necessary for readers to understand the topic and the remaining overview. Explain each key word. Remember to keep your explanations as simple and straight to the point as possible (this is rarely the case for definitions from an online dictionary, so do consider re-phrasing.) Make absolutely sure your definitions are correct!

3. Relevance and explanation of the problem

In this part of the overview, you explain which questions the solutions should solve and contextualise the topic. Explain why this topic is relevant: Talk about recent events connected with it, why they pose a problem and why it affects European citizens.

4. Key conflicts

In this part, you lie out what the big questions you will have to discuss are, be they ethical or practical. This requires you to think of possible solutions and possible discussions and disagreements which might arise at this point already. To do this, try to actively look for inherent conflicts in the topic. One good way to do this is thinking about “vs.” points in the topic, meaning two extreme answers you could go for which exclude or limit the other (e.g.: freedom vs. security; solidarity vs. individualism). To give this part substance, point to the differing existing views and opinions there are and give arguments for each. Remember to keep this neutral.



5. Key actors

This is about explaining the most important stakeholders to the topic. These can be private persons, companies, organisations, institutions, or countries. Who has an interest at stake here and why? Which position do they hold and how high is the possibility for them to actually make a difference? If necessary, you can also explain what these actors have done and proposed so far and how successful they have been with it, as well as which role they might play in the future.

6. Measures in place

This part of the overview ensures that your solutions later on are new and you don't discuss about implementing something which has long been done and building your solution on facts. This is a place for you to list relevant (national and European) legislation, existing programmes and funds as well as established procedures.

7. Solutions

This part is all yours! Up to this point, you have compiled a list of problems and you know the status quo which you both need to come up with solutions according to the question in the topic.

8. Conclusion

Draw a conclusion from the most important points mentioned and end your work on a positive note!