

# STORYTELLING FOR THE EYD2015

*Guidelines for  
contributing stories  
for the **European Year  
for Development**  
(EYD2015)*

**EuropeAid**

Communication and  
Transparency

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The European Year for Development 2015 (EYD2015) will be a year of stories! Stories will be the main feature on the EYD2015 website and social media accounts and drive the year's narrative. Find out how to contribute to the movement!

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# Why is storytelling so powerful?

The best way to reach out to people is by telling the real stories of how the action of the European Union in the world changes lives. There are three main reasons to this, summarised by three key concepts: identity, memory and action - as presented by Eric Schnure, former White House speechwriter, at the first EYD2015 stakeholder meeting in June 2014.



## IDENTITY

**Stories help build our identity.** As human beings, we are a collection of stories. Stories are part of our lives from our earliest years; they help us attribute meaning to what we experience. **Stories unite us around our fundamental human feelings and values, putting the spotlight on what we share as human beings.** A perfect way of bringing the EYD2015 motto "Our world, our dignity, our future" to life.



## MEMORY

**Stories help us remember.** Studies show that information delivered in the form of a story is more likely to "stick" than statistics or abstract and conceptual statements. This is because in addition to the "language" part of the brain which deciphers words, **we activate the "sensory" part of our brains which works as if we were experiencing ourselves the events of the story.** Can you think of a better way to get your message across?



## ACTION

**Stories lead to action.** A good story always presents a problem, obstacles to overcome. The audience follows the main character in his/her quest to solve the problem and, out of curiosity, sticks with him to the end. **The audience gets involved in the story: a dialogue has been opened and the story can be carried further.** Stories breed stories and can initiate a virtuous cycle of participation and engagement. This is one of the EYD2015's main objectives.

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# Storytelling for the EYD2015 (1/2)

Storytelling as a means of fostering identity, memory and action, is a key tool to achieve the EYD2015 objectives (see Decision No 472/2014/EU of 16 April 2014) and fulfil the motto "Our world, our dignity, our future". Keep these objectives in mind when drafting a story!

## OBJECTIVE 1

*To inform Union citizens about the Union's and the Member States' development cooperation, highlighting the results that the Union, acting together with the Member States, has achieved as a global actor and that it will continue to do so in line with the latest discussions on the overarching post-2015 framework.*

**Storytelling approach** Stories help to make the information stick! Stories are based on people, with beneficiaries, project staff and policymakers explaining, from their unique perspective, what development cooperation has achieved. Other facts and figures on the results of EU cooperation can be included in boxes to not weigh down the text.

## OBJECTIVE 2

*To foster direct involvement, critical thinking and active interest of Union citizens and stakeholders in development cooperation including in policy formulation and implementation.*

**Storytelling approach** Stories intrinsically call for action. Stories can be researched and written to be thought-provoking with the aim to encourage debate (e.g. on social media). **The aim is for them to stimulate curiosity and encourage critical thinking among citizens and stakeholders, possibly leading to active interest and participation.** They can also illustrate people's active involvement, what drives them in their actions, thus calling the reader to get involved too.

## OBJECTIVE 3

*To raise awareness of the benefits of the Union's development cooperation not only for beneficiaries of the Union's development assistance but also for Union citizens; to achieve a broader understanding of policy coherence for development; to foster among citizens in Europe and developing countries a sense of joint responsibility, solidarity and opportunity in a changing and increasingly interdependent world.*

**Storytelling approach** Stories can show how EU cooperation benefits EU citizens, by building a safer, cleaner, more prosperous world and the importance of policy coherence. **By focusing on shared human values and the challenges people in partner countries face, stories can foster the sense of shared future** which underlies the EYD2015 motto. | 4

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# Storytelling for the EYD2015 (2/2)

*To reach out to people, we want to find the stories that show what EU development cooperation means to people and how it changes their lives.*

In line with the motto of the EYD2015 "Our world, our dignity, our future", the aim is to develop **a narrative based on shared human values such as dignity, honesty, fairness, justice, and resourcefulness.**

EYD2015 stories should provide concrete examples illustrating the three EYD2015 key messages:

1. The EU is a global player which tackles today's challenges.
2. Think global, act local. A single person can make a difference.
3. In an increasingly interdependent world, EU development cooperation benefits people both in the EU and in our partner countries.

**The themes addressed throughout the EYD2015 (see p. 6) will be illustrated by real stories of beneficiaries and people working in development.**

Below is a list of the main practical requirements for EYD2015 stories based on the templates developed for the EYD2015 website.

- In order to fit the EYD2015 web template, **all stories must be accompanied by a fact box and a quote** (see p. 12).
- Stories should be **between 1,500 and 4,500 characters** (with spaces).
- Fact boxes should be no longer than **1,500 characters** (with spaces).
- Each story should be accompanied by **one or more pictures** with captions.
- Writing tips are detailed on p. 12, model stories on pages 7-11 and a final checklist is available on p. 15.

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***"The purpose of a story is to teach and to please at once."***

Umberto Eco, novelist (in *The Island of the Day Before*)

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# EYD2015 thematic months

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*"Storytelling reveals meaning without committing the error of defining it."*

Hannah Arendt, philosopher

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*Twelve themes have been chosen to create the framework for a common EYD2015 narrative.*

The thematic months have been defined by EuropeAid based on flagship events and international days throughout the year. This framework should help all partners and stakeholders coordinate their communication efforts and also allow them to promote and use the EYD2015 stories on their own platforms.

**When thinking about the story/ies you would like to tell, look at this calendar and make sure you choose an angle that illustrates one of the themes.**

If you have a good story but it doesn't seem to fit in one of the themes, consider the more "open" months of January and September, or find an angle which can fit with a horizontal theme (e.g. Children and Youth or Women and Girls).

**Stories will be published on the EYD2015 website and social media accounts according to this editorial calendar.**

January – Europe in the World

February – Education

March – Women and Girls

April - Health

May – Peace and Security

June – Sustainable Growth, Decent Jobs and Businesses

July – Children and Youth

August - Humanitarian Aid

September – Demography and Migration

October – Food Security

November – Sustainable Development

December – Human Rights

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# Two models for EYD2015 stories

Two story models are proposed to allow for a flexible approach to storytelling. This is to take into account the difficulty some may face when gathering information on the ground or using existing material from previous field visits.

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## MODEL A (EXAMPLE P. 8-9)

**Narrative approach** This approach is based on a classical storytelling template. There is a main character (the "hero") who has an objective, a dream (the "quest"). The narrative follows the hero who, in his/her quest, faces challenges and obstacles (the "conflict") and arrives at a turning point (the "climax") which finally leads to the outcome of the quest: the ending.

The story is told a way that builds suspense: the magic of storytelling is exactly to keep the audience waiting for the outcome. This is what stimulates curiosity, identification, emotions and engagement.

**Reminder: all stories (models A and B) need to be accompanied by: a fact box, a quote and one or more photos. For brevity, in the following examples, only model A has a fact box and only model B has a photo with caption.**

## MODEL B (EXAMPLE P. 10-11)

**Journalistic approach** This approach is based on a narrative that moves from human stories to illustrate the broader picture of the project and the EU intervention in a particular sector or country. It provides a snapshot at a particular moment in time with references to the situation before the intervention which are not presented chronologically.

The human perspective is privileged by making sure that the actual voices of the people involved are heard throughout the text (quotes). There is room for personal details which allow to gauge how the project has contributed to transforming lives.

*Stories must be true! It is very important to make sure details are accurate and double check all information before publishing. Don't forget to provide the date when the information was gathered in order to make this clearly visible to the reader.*

**The examples that follow for model A and model B (pages 8-11) demonstrate two ways of telling the same story. Be aware that they have been drafted for training purposes only with elements from examples available in existing material.**

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## Model A - example

### Narrative approach (1/2)

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*"That day (...) they told me that there was a centre in Yangon where we could get help. (...) It was a day that changed my life and Myat Ko Ko's forever."*

Aye Aye Moe

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## Myanmar: changing the lives of disabled children and their families

Aye Aye Moe knew from the start something wasn't quite right with her new-born son Myat Ko Ko. She knew it deep down inside, as only a mum does. And she was alone, as one can be in a rural community where having a child with a disability is regarded as a bad omen.

As he grew up, the signs of his disability were unmistakable. "My son could not move. He was bedridden. He could not sit up or stand properly, he drooled constantly," recalls Aye Aye Moe. Every day, she would set of for work, leaving him on his mattress embroidered with white elephants for good luck, a carved peacock hanging above him - a symbol of "compassionate watchfulness" in Buddhist mythology.

Aye Aye Moe and her family had no financial support from the state to help them care for Myat Ko Ko.

"My husband's a carpenter. We struggled because we don't have family living nearby to help us, though our neighbours helped out whenever they could."

One day, Aye Aye Moe took her then six year old boy to a health worker who was visiting their village. She was resigned to thinking that there would be nothing to do for his disability but wanted to make sure that she was at least caring for him to her best capacity.

The health worker recognised the signs of cerebral palsy, a movement disorder that causes physical disability. Cerebral palsy is caused by damage to the motor control centres of the developing brain and can occur during pregnancy, during childbirth, or even after birth up to about age three.

(continues p.9)



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# Model A - example

## Narrative approach (2/2)

"That day I understood what was wrong with my baby and they told me that there was a centre in Yangon where we could get help. He could not be cured, but he could get better; a lot better. It was a day that changed my life and Myat Ko Ko's forever", says Aye Aye Moe.

The medical team at the Eden Centre for Disabled Children in Yangon saw Myat Ko Ko the following week and admitted him to one of the centre's tailor-made therapy programmes.

Since then, every morning, Aye Aye Moe gets on the busy bus with her now nine-year-old son to make the ten-stop journey to the Eden Centre where he is looked after during the day, while she works.

Myat Ko Ko has benefitted enormously from the expertise and care of the Eden Centre's staff. Kalayar Khin Mg Aye, his teacher, has focused on exercises that help him improve his every-day life: "For example, I show him how to suck, chew and bite. Repetition is very important. I also assist him with physical exercises that help improve his general movement control."

Twice a week, Myat Ko Ko spends time in the centre's swimming pool with hydrotherapy aimed at training his senses and movements. "What I'd really like for my son to learn at the Centre is to walk properly," says Aye Aye Moe.

Myat Ko Ko has come a long way over the past three years: he can now play and interact with other children. He can move with the help of a bouncy ball or a walker and feed himself. He can even laugh.

He loves the music therapy groups where the children play maracas and

tambourines together and the therapists sing to him while stroking his painted face. The Centre indeed lives up to its name, offering a haven of freedom and security to the children.

"When I look at Myat Ko Ko, I can see joy in his eyes even though he can't say it", says Aye Aye Moe: "His smile fills my heart with love and gratitude: we are no longer alone".

(END)

### Fact box About the Eden Centre

- The EU financed Eden Centre for Disabled Children promotes the inclusion and improves the care of disabled people living in two townships: Hmawbi, near Yangon, and Kale Myo, in the north-west of Myanmar. Each year, the centre caters for 130-180 children.
- Until this charitable organisation was established in 2000, there had only been one specialised school in the country. Today, the Eden Centre remains one of only a handful of schools for disabled children.
- There is hope that the situation could improve in the near future: NGOs are trying to convince the government to pass what would be the country's first ever law on disability.
- Today, there are 1.3 million people in Myanmar living with a disability.

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## Model B - example

### Journalistic approach (1/2)

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## Myanmar: changing the lives of disabled children and their families

Every morning Aye Aye Moe gets on the bus with her nine-year-old son Myat Ko Ko to make the ten-stop journey to the Eden Centre for Disabled Children in Myanmar's capital Yangon. "What I'd really like for my son to learn at the Centre is to be able to walk properly."

Myat Ko Ko is one of 1.3 million people in Myanmar who live with a disability – he has cerebral palsy. "Before we started coming here", says Aye Aye Moe, "my son could not move. He was bedridden. He could not sit up or stand properly, he drooled."

Today Myat Ko Ko will be spending time in the centre's pool with hydro-therapy – training his senses and movements. Since he started therapy sessions at the Eden Centre, he has come a long way.

Kalayar Khin Mg Aye, his teacher, uses training techniques with him

that help him to improve his everyday life. "For example, I show him how to suck, chew and bite. Repetition is very important. I also assist him with other physical exercises that help improve his general movement control."

Kalayar Khin Mg Aye is one of several teachers at the EU financed Eden Centre which promotes the inclusion and improves the care of disabled people living in two townships: Hmawbi, near Yangon, and Kale Myo, in the north-west of Myanmar. Each year, the centre caters for 130-180 children.

Until the charitable organisation "the Eden Centre for Disabled Children" was established in 2000, there had only been one specialised school in the country. Even today, the Eden Centre remains one of only a handful of schools for disabled children.

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## Model B - example

### Journalistic approach (2/2)



**Music therapy helps Myat Ko Ko develop social and physical skills that will help him become more autonomous in his everyday life.**

Aye Aye Moe who returns to pick up her son from the day-care this evening, is glad that things are changing for the better for people with disabilities in Myanmar. For a long time disability was a subject that was hidden in society. Having a child with a disability was regarded as something of a bad omen for the community. In addition, there is no financial support for families from the state.

“My husband’s a carpenter. We struggle because we don’t have family living nearby to help us, though our neighbours help out when they can.”

There is hope that the situation could improve in the near future: NGOs are currently trying to convince the government to pass what would be the country’s first ever law on disability: “This would be a huge improvement for disabled people in Myanmar,” says U Hta Uke, co-founder and Director of the Eden Centre.

As his mum comes up to him in a room full of toys and tools after this busy day in the Eden Centre, Myat Ko Ko smiles at her, gently hopping up and down on a bouncy ball in the corner. He will be back tomorrow.

(END)

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***“What I’d really like for my son to learn at the Centre is to be able to walk properly.”***

Aye Aye Moe

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# Nine tips for writing EYD2015 stories

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*"No, no! The adventures  
first, explanations take such  
a dreadful time."*

Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures  
in Wonderland*

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**1.** A story is always centred around a **person** (a beneficiary, a project worker, a civil servant in the national government, a doctor in a health project, etc.) – **give it a personal angle by focusing on shared human values.**

**2.** Detail, detail and more detail! **People are brought to life by details.** Be curious and ask questions about their job, life, problems, hopes... observe their surroundings, bring in colours and sounds. **EYD2015 stories have to be true: there is no room for fiction.**

**3.** Use a dynamic plot: **a good story shows how obstacles and challenges arise and are overcome.** What was life like before the project? How has it changed as a result?

**4.** Engage your reader! **Think of the reader when you are writing.** What do you want the him/her to remember? What is the key message your story illustrates? How can you tell the story in a memorable, thought-provoking way?

**5. Use clear language:** write in active voice; keep it short and simple (no jargon, please!); test it on colleagues and friends (ask them to tell you the story again the next day and see what they remember).

**6.** Don't forget to **include one or more photos.** The stories will be shared on social media and may even be interesting for journalists, company in-house publications, etc., so they need a good quality illustration.

**7.** Always showcase concrete results! First the results as experienced by the person featured. Then inform the reader about **how many people have benefitted from a project or our work in a certain area** either in the text (model B below) or in a fact box including project/background info, data etc. (model A).

**8.** Always make the link to EU development cooperation and **illustrate the EYD 2015 key messages** – even if you only do this indirectly in the text or directly in the fact box.

**9.** Always have at least one good quote – **ideally not a quote which is directly about EU aid but more about their own life and story** and how they have benefitted from the project. | 12

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# Illustrating EYD2015 stories

*Every story needs a picture (or more)! It brings the person and the project to life.*

**When taking or choosing the photos to illustrate your story, remember that the focus is on the person that is featured and his/her life.**

The reader wants to put a face on the name. Through pictures, we bring strangers into the lives of our readers: this makes photography a powerful tool to convey the deep human values we share and maybe contribute to objective 3 of the EYD2015 to foster "a sense of joint responsibility, solidarity and opportunity in a changing and increasingly interdependent world".

If you can, get a professional photographer to illustrate your story. If you can't, take a look at the rule of thirds (opposite) and at the three tips on the next page.

Technical specifications	
For print	For web
Formats: png, gif, jpg, jpeg.	Formats: png, gif, jpg, jpeg.
Resolution: minimum 300 dpi	File size: < 8 MB Image size between 640x480 and 4096x3072 pixels

## The rule of thirds

The reference rule to get your composition right is to divide your shot into nine equal sections with two vertical and two horizontal lines. With this imaginary grid in mind, try to place the (most important) element(s) in your shot on one of the lines or where the lines meet.



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*"Photography records the gamut of feelings written on the human face, the beauty of the earth and skies that man has inherited, and the wealth and confusion man has created. It is a major force in explaining man to man."*

Edward Steichen, photographer

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# EYD2015 photos: tips to inspire you



## Play with eye contact

The direction of your subject's eyes can make a huge impact on your shot. When the subject looks **straight at the camera** you create a direct connection with the viewer. But you can also try shooting with the subject **looking off camera** or **looking within the frame** (as in the picture above). Whenever you can, switch off the flash, as using a flash often leads to overly lit pictures and unnatural looks.



## Consider the background

Unattractive objects, bright areas and blocks of bright colour can distract the viewer, so **take a good look at your background** before you take your shot and try to find a background that's not obtrusive (as in the picture above). If you think your shot might lose impact because the background is too crowded or inappropriate, you can **crop in tight around the subject** eliminating the background altogether.



## Take a different perspective

Portraits are often taken with the camera at the eye level of the subject. This can work well and is somewhat a natural reflex, however completely **changing the angle of your shot** can make it more impactful. You may also find that some people look awkward when they pose. To get a better shot, you can try **photographing the subject at work**, with family or doing something that he/she enjoys and is more at ease with.

# Have a go at telling a story

*"Sometimes reality is too complex. Stories give it form."*

Jean Luc Godard, film director

EYD2015 storytelling checklist		
1	I have identified an interesting topic for the story (a project, a policy, a person) and it has a link with EU development cooperation.	
2	I have gathered background information on the project, the national context and the results of EU development aid to feed into the story or a fact box.	
3	I have identified a person who will be the "hero" or "main character" of the story.	
4	I have the "main character's" name, age, family situation, where he/she lives and have gathered other information that can help describe his/her situation.	
5	I have the location of the story, the name of the village/town or region (this will allow to situate the story on a map on the EYD2015 website).	
6	I have gathered quotes from the "main character" (make sure you ask the right questions to get personal, unique words and expressions) and (where possible) quotes regarding the "main character" from other people involved.	
7	I have drafted a story about the "main character", NOT about the project or the bigger picture of EU cooperation in a specific field or in the country.	
8	My story contributes to the EYD2015 objectives (see p. 4). My story gets one of the EYD2015 messages across (see p. 5). Which one?	
9	My text is between 1,500 and 4,500 characters long.	
10	I have selected one key quote of the "main character" and this quote is not directly about EU cooperation.	
11	I have summarised the project information and the bigger picture of EU cooperation in a specific field/country in a box (no longer than 1,500 characters).	
12	I told the story to a friend and it grabbed his/her attention – if not start back at point 2 and find what you are missing.	
13	I have one or more photos illustrating the story – ideally the photo(s) should portray the "main character".	
14	I have drafted a caption for the photo.	
15	I have asked the people featured in the story/interview and the photos for their authorisation (see model provided).	