FROM NOISE TO CLARITY

WHY WE NEED VISUAL STANDARDS – AN INTRODUCTION TO IBCS

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Data Grillen 2026



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BI Consulting

- Hungary
- Power BI frontend development
- IBCS

Agenda

01 Why visual standards matter

02 Introduction to IBCS

03 Examples

04 Summary

WHY VISUAL STANDARDS MATTER

Section 1

Problem

- More data than ever
- More powerful BI tools than ever
- More reports, dashboards, and KPIs than ever
- Every report looks different
  - Slicers on one report vertical vs horizontal
  - Different page sizes
  - Overcrowded visuals
  - Colors mean different things (green = performance vs forecast)
  - Visual clutter: mixed scales, everything highlighted

Impact



Slow comprehension

- Too much information and too many design options
- Slower decision making



More errors

- Same KPI appears as a card, gauge, or trend chart across report



Loss of trust

- Users must re-learn each dashboard
- Inconsistent presentation reduces confidence

From Noise to Clarity



Adopt visual standards

Make reports consistent



Power BI does not define one



IBCS is one proven approach

International Business Communication Standards


39,760
11.4%
2:37
214
27.18%
20,720
72%



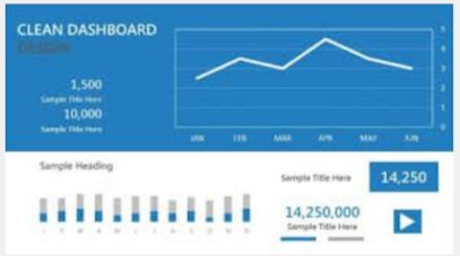
Corporate - Sprint 2
Jun 27
26.7
3.17
3.81

94 ms




Yellowfin




CLEAN DASHBOARD
1,500
10,000
Sample Heading
14,250
14,250,000

Regional Sales States - Y...
Ratios
2.54 Quick Ratio
3.77 Current Ratio
0.63 Debt to Equity
5.66 AR Turnover
Month

10:18AM
Up
0.11
0.79
0.82
22,850
past 30 days
17m 41s

54.5K
62%
CLEARANCE
17.3K VIEWS
FROM 23 COUNTRIES
HIKING

6 911
155
85

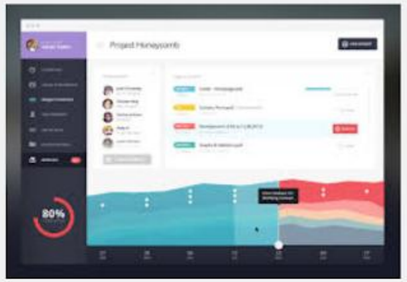



× 500 - webdesigndev.com

540.2K
4.5%

6,448

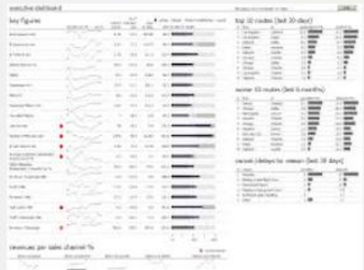
21%
79%

Klipfolio Dashboard
$32.2M
16 / 20

80%

CAMPAIGNS

80%
45%
60%

-10%
-18%
-16%
-31%

OVERVIEW
WORLD in 2010
6 911
31 368
3 455
40 239

Year: 2010

Regions	Actual 2009	Budget	Actual	% realisation of budget	Absolute realization of budget	% deviation from previous year	Absolute deviation from previous year
	1	**2**	**3**	**4=3/2**	**5=3-2**	**6=3/1**	**7=3-1**
	EUR	**EUR**	**EUR**		**EUR**		**EUR**
Western Europe total	**382.314.360**	**567.975.475**	**442.018.259**	**-22,18%**	**-125.957.217**	**15,62%**	**59.703.899**
Austria	81.107.460	123.443.090	94.537.369	-23,42%	-28.905.721	16,56%	13.429.909
Greece	71.746.928	112.365.925	122.055.255	8,62%	9.689.330	70,12%	50.308.327
Italy	13.423.680	15.273.926	16.579.669	8,55%	1.305.743	23,51%	3.155.989
Germany	113.872.453	140.233.923	82.467.862	-41,19%	-57.766.061	-27,58%	-31.404.590
Netherlands	102.163.840	176.658.611	126.378.104	-28,46%	-50.280.508	23,70%	24.214.264
Eastern Europe total	**2.231.841.795**	**2.654.995.377**	**2.653.737.543**	**-0,05%**	**-1.257.834**	**18,90%**	**421.895.748**
Bulgary	499.520.954	315.929.994	392.925.185	24,37%	76.995.191	-21,34%	-106.595.769
Czech Republic	929.042.052	1.023.918.223	1.068.996.299	4,40%	45.078.076	15,06%	139.954.247
Hungary	204.607.989	427.823.655	281.444.314	-34,21%	-146.379.341	37,55%	76.836.326
Poland	475.481.408	583.056.665	636.808.100	9,22%	53.751.435	33,93%	161.326.692
Russia	123.189.392	304.266.839	273.563.644	-10,09%	-30.703.195	122,07%	150.374.252
North America total	**21.200.161**	**60.565.421**	**53.383.926**	**-11,86%**	**-7.181.494**	**151,81%**	**32.183.765**
Canada	15.143.926	10.633.844	11.015.344	3,59%	381.500	-27,26%	-4.128.582
USA	6.056.236	49.931.577	42.368.582	-15,15%	-7.562.994	599,59%	36.312.347
South America total	**635.996.519**	**560.956.806**	**586.881.928**	**4,62%**	**25.925.122**	**-7,72%**	**-49.114.591**
Argentina	146.746.589	134.636.336	101.339.195	-24,73%	-33.297.141	-30,94%	-45.407.394
Brasil	489.249.930	426.320.470	485.542.733	13,89%	59.222.263	-0,76%	-3.707.197
Asia total	**592.046.129**	**676.260.516**	**664.049.643**	**-1,81%**	**-12.210.873**	**12,16%**	**72.003.514**
India	21.784.619	19.959.167	29.088.654	45,74%	9.129.487	33,53%	7.304.035
Japan	278.352.860	482.347.469	463.768.396	-3,85%	-18.579.074	66,61%	185.415.535

Profit&Loss Statement

zebra bi

2018 | Mar | MTD | YTD | P&L | Balance Sheet | Cash Flow

	PY	AC	ΔPY	ΔPY%
Product revenue	14.4M	13.9M	-535.2K (1)	-3.7
Service and other revenue	7.3M	8.8M	(2) +1.5M	+20.3
= Revenue	**21.8M**	**22.7M**	**+955.1K**	**+4.4**
- Product cost	3.2M	2.9M	-268.3K	-8.5
- Service and other costs	4.2M	5.3M	+1.2M	+27.9
- COGS	**7.3M**	**8.2M**	**+896.7K**	**+12.2**
= Gross margin	**14.4M**	**14.5M**	**+58.5K**	**+0.4**
Gross margin %	***66.3%***	***63.8%***	***-2.5pp***	***-3.8***
- Research and development	2.8M	3.4M	+620.6K (3)	+22.1
- Sales and marketing	2.9M	3.9M	+976.5K (4)	+33.5
- General and administrative	949.5K	1.1M	+155.0K	+16.3
- Operating expenses	**6.7M**	**8.4M**	**+1.8M**	**+26.3**
= Operating income	**7.8M**	**6.1M**	**-1.7M**	**-21.8**
Operating income %	***35.7%***	***26.8%***	***-8.9pp***	***-25.1***
Other income, net	109.6K	243.5K	+133.9K	+122.1
= Income before income taxes	**7.9M**	**6.3M**	**-1.6M**	**-19.8**
- Provision for income taxes	1.0M	1.3M	+277.9K	+26.6
= Net income	**6.8M**	**5.0M**	**-1.8M**	**-26.8**
Net income %	***31.4%***	***22.0%***	***-9.4pp***	***-29.9***

(1) Product revenue -535K

Product revenue below plan due to slower sales of desktop software in OS business unit.

(2) Service and other revenue +2,100K

Service revenue up +2.1M (+29.7% growth) vs plan driven by excellent sales of new consulting services launched this year.

(3) Research and development +621K

Development costs higher than planned because we had to change the outsourced partner to Xcutive Development Ltd which has 25% prices

(4) Sales and marketing +977K

Marketing costs higher that budgeted mostly due to unplanned advertising expenses in the US market.

INTRODUCTION TO IBCS

Section 2

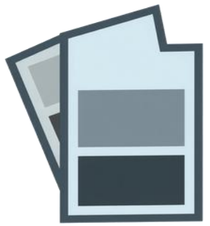
Introduction to IBCS



Rolf Hichert
Jürgen Faisst



International
Business
Communication
Standard



Semantic
color system

The SUCCESS Formula



Practical Rules, Not Design Opinions



Works from Single Charts to Full Dashboards



Reduces Cognitive Load

S: Say

Know your audience and introduce your message clearly

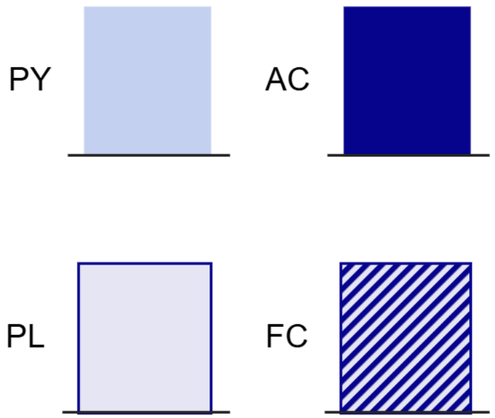
Detect, Explain, Suggest:

- Detection: "Sales are mEUR 5 below..."
- Explain: "...because of a 10% decrease..."
- Suggest: "...therefore we should change..."

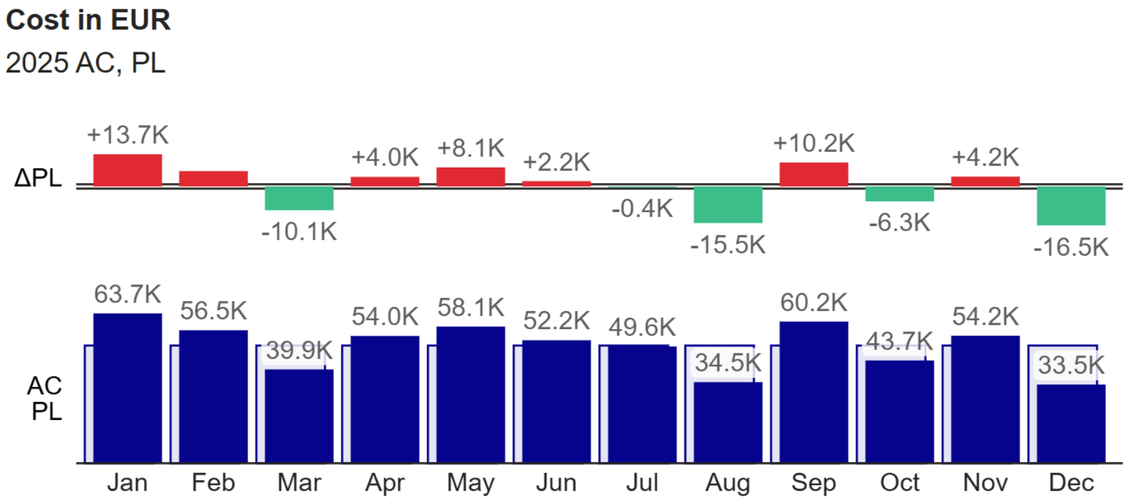
U: Unify

Same visual logic across all reports

- Scenarios
  - Actual Year: Darker shade
  - Previous Year: Lighter shade
  - Plan: Outlined bars
  - Forecast: Hatched pattern



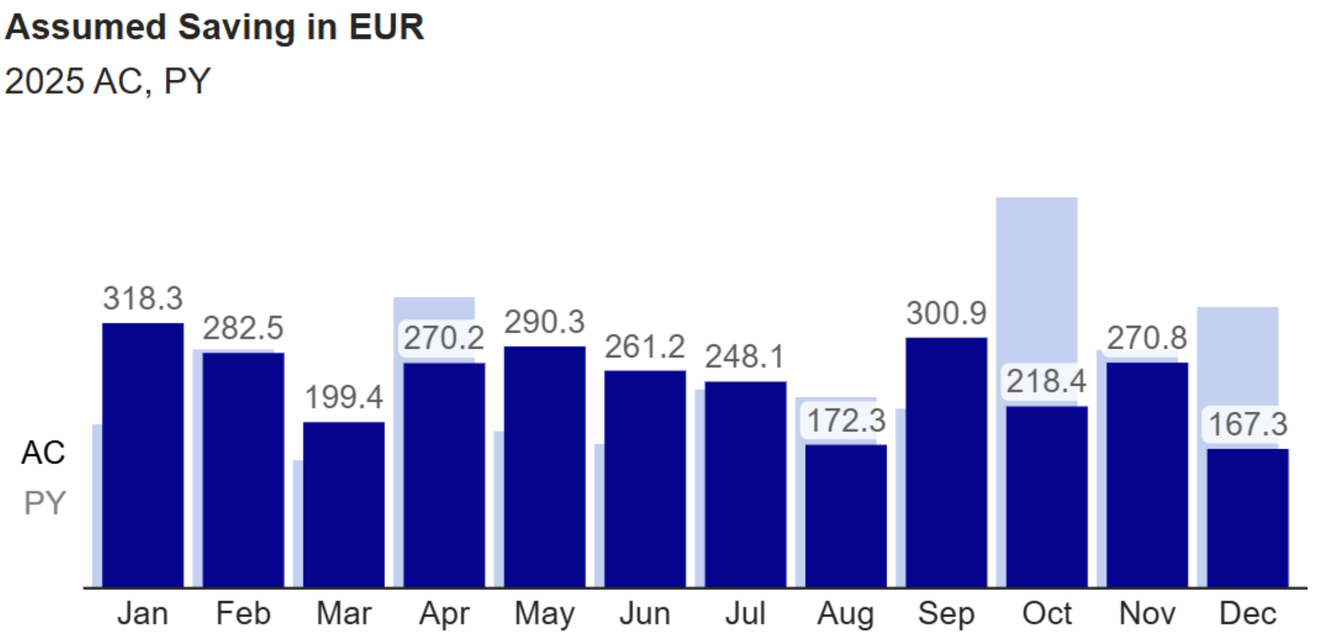
- Variances
  - Red: negative impact
  - Green: positive impact



U: Unify

Things that mean the same should look the same

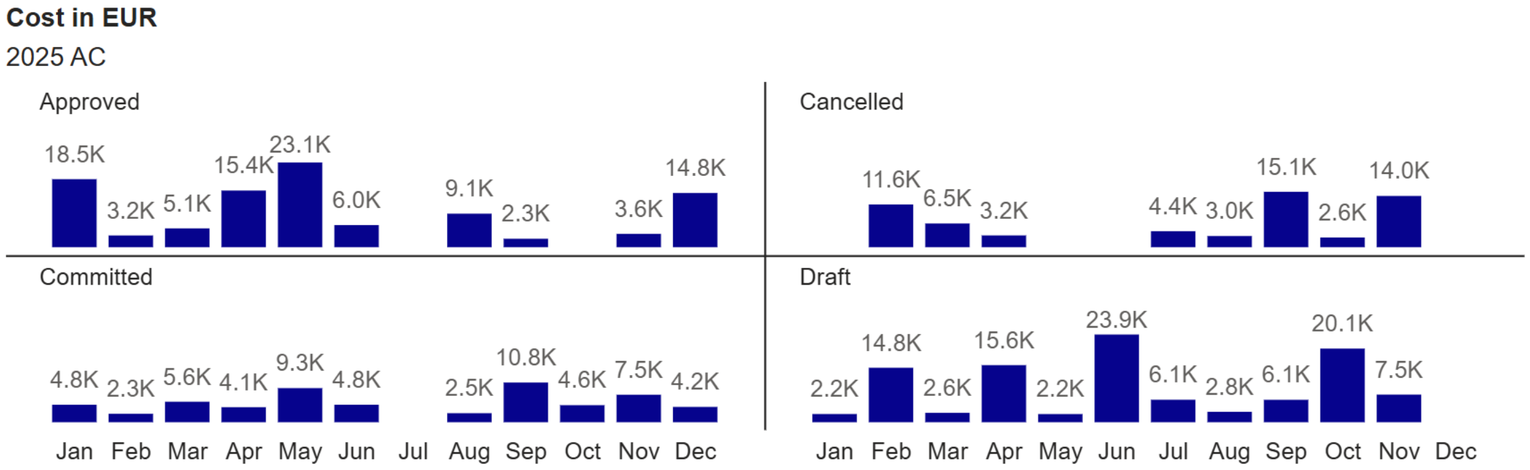
- Titles and subtitles
- Legends and data labels
  - Actual: AC
  - Previous Year: PY
  - Plan: PL
  - Forecast: FC



C: Condense

Maximize use of space without overcrowding

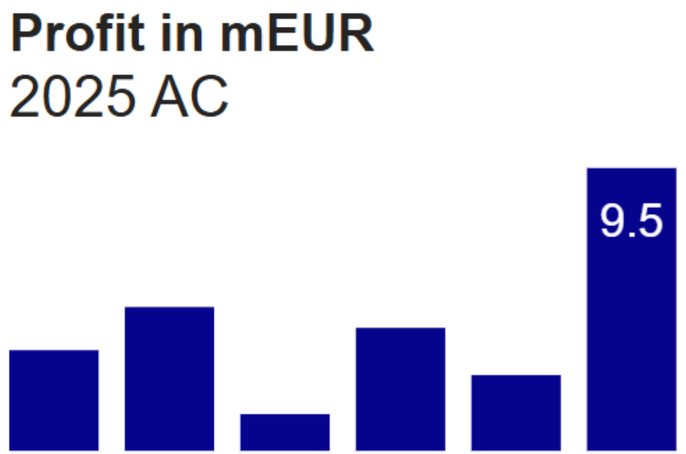
- Small components
- Use small multiples
- Add data
- Add dimensions



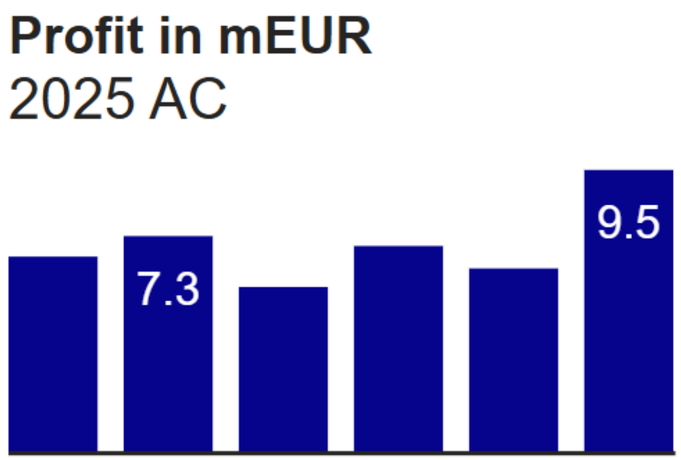
C: Check

Visual integrity

- Avoid manipulated axes
- Avoid misleading visuals
- Use same scale



Y-axes starts at 5



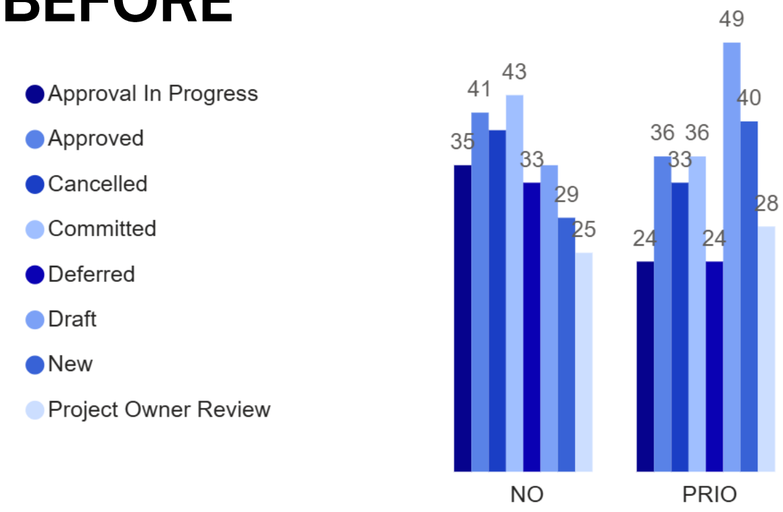
Y-axes starts at 0

E: Express

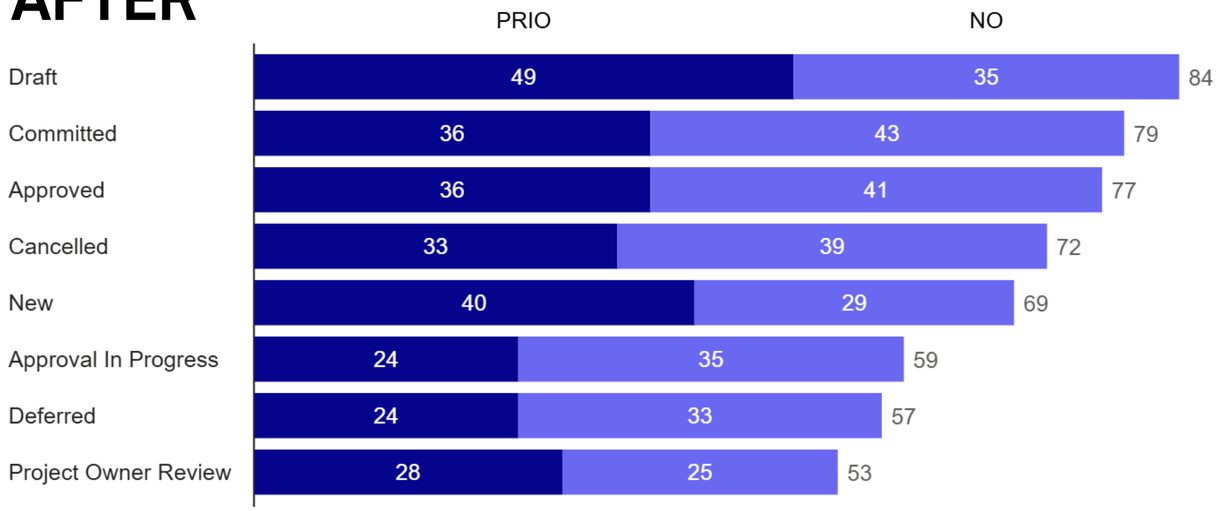
Proper visualization

- Choose appropriate chart type
- Structural comparison – bars, time series - columns
- Be as intuitive as possible

BEFORE



AFTER

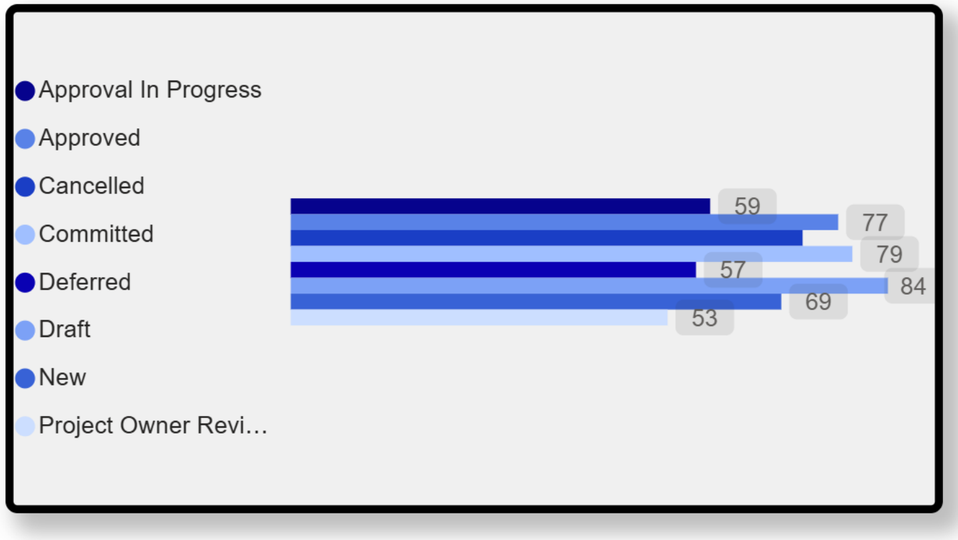


S: Simplify

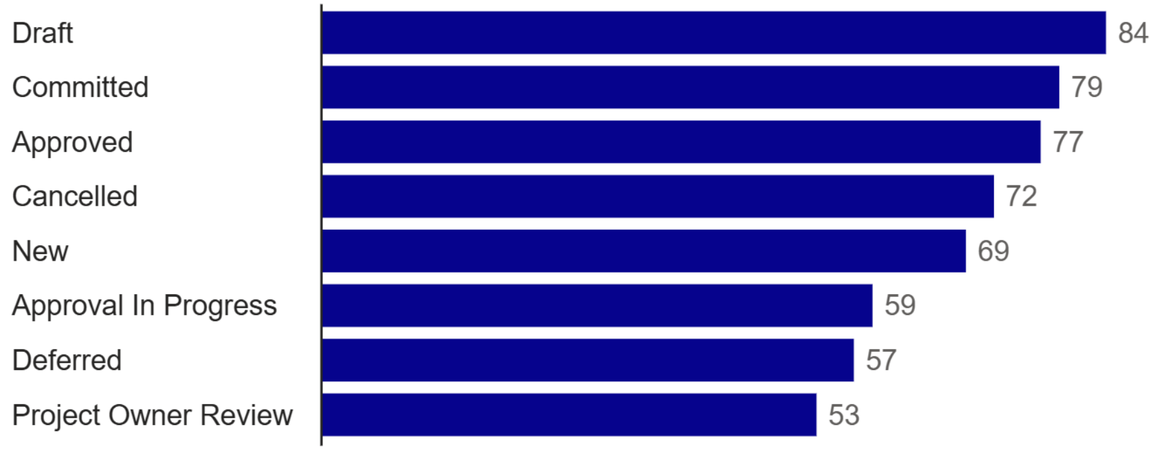
Avoid clutter

- Avoid decorative styles and redundancies
- Remove elements that don’t add meaning

BEFORE



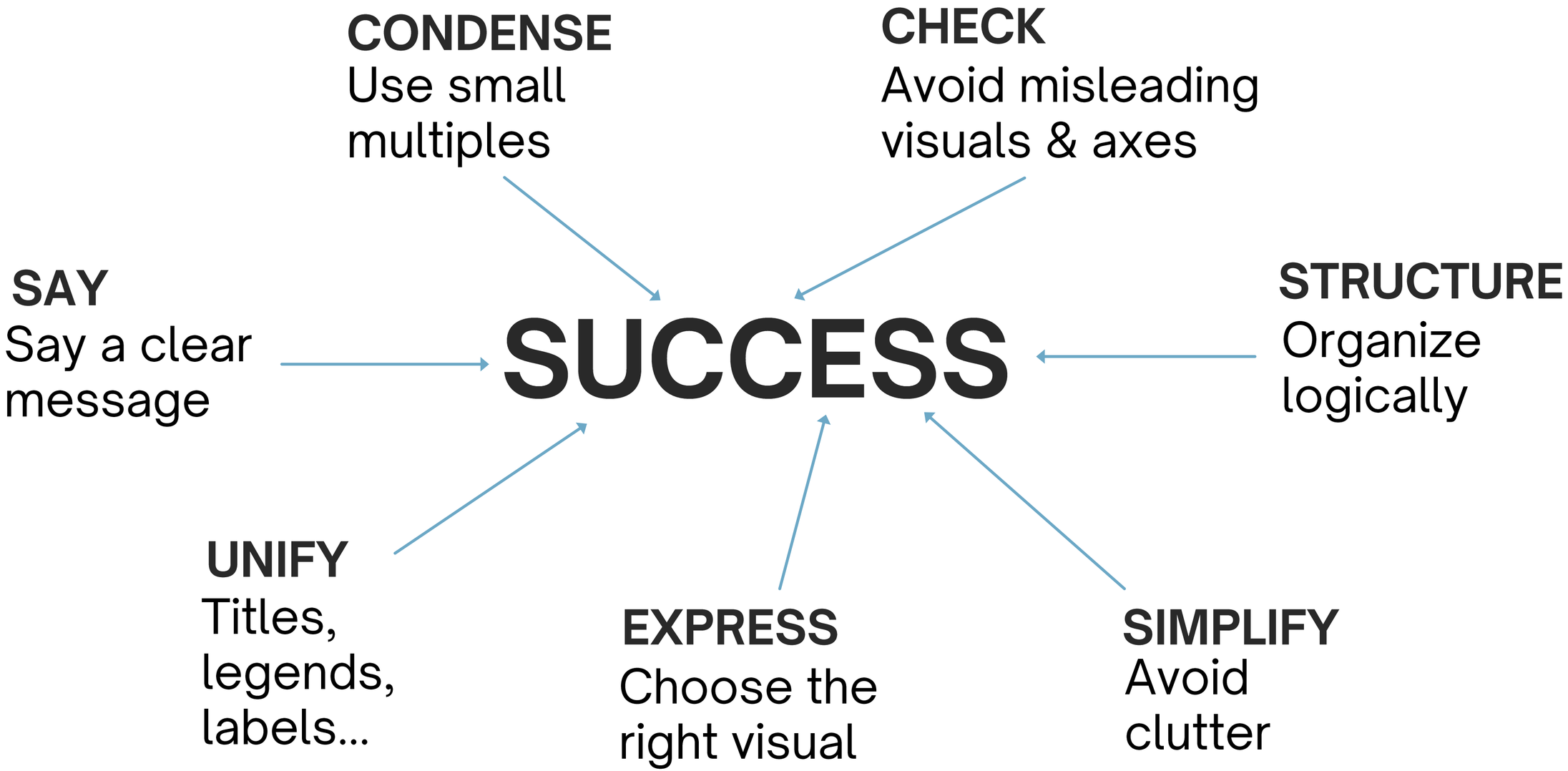
AFTER



S: Structure

Organize content

- Organize the content to follow a logical structure
- Use consistent wording and abbreviations

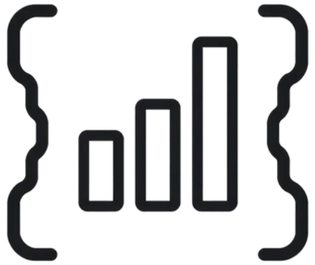

CONDENSE
Use small multiples
CHECK
Avoid misleading visuals & axes
SAY
Say a clear message
SUCCESS
STRUCTURE
Organize logically
UNIFY
Titles, legends, labels...
EXPRESS
Choose the right visual
SIMPLIFY
Avoid clutter

How to implement IBCS



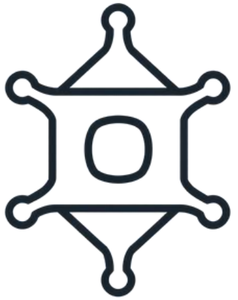
Native visuals

Style standard Power BI visuals according to IBCS principles



SVG-based visuals

Embed custom SVG graphics in tables and cards using DAX User-Defined Functions



Deneb visuals

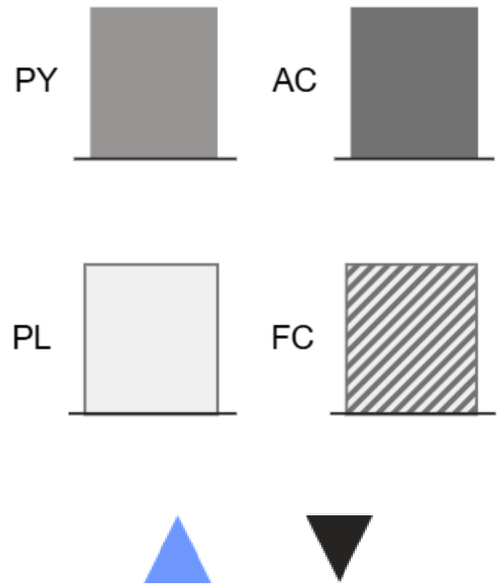
Community-built custom visuals using Deneb with Vega-Lite

IBCS Certified Visuals

- Zebra BI for Power BI & Excel
- Inforiver Matrix & Charts
- XLBuddy
- other certified software offerings listed by the IBCS Association

Accessibility

- Ensures that reports are usable by everyone, including people with vision, motor, or cognitive disabilities
- IBCS
  - Uses patterns for scenarios
- Zebra BI
  - Adds automatically arrows and other visual cues
  - Colorblind-friendly palettes available



EXAMPLES

Section 3

Cards

BEFORE

600K

Sum of TotalProfit

AFTER - NATIVE

Profit

in EUR

600K

ΔPY -4% ▼

AFTER - ZEBRA BI

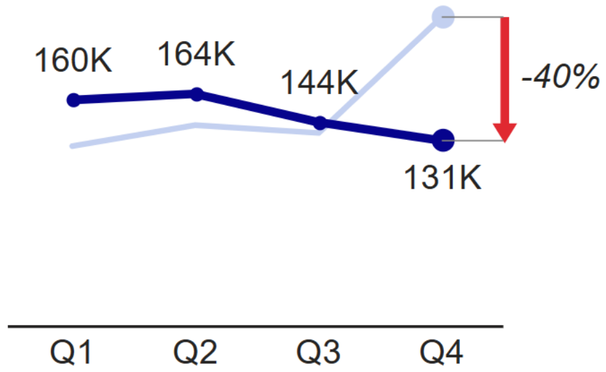
Profit

600K €

ΔPY **-4%** | **-25K** ↓

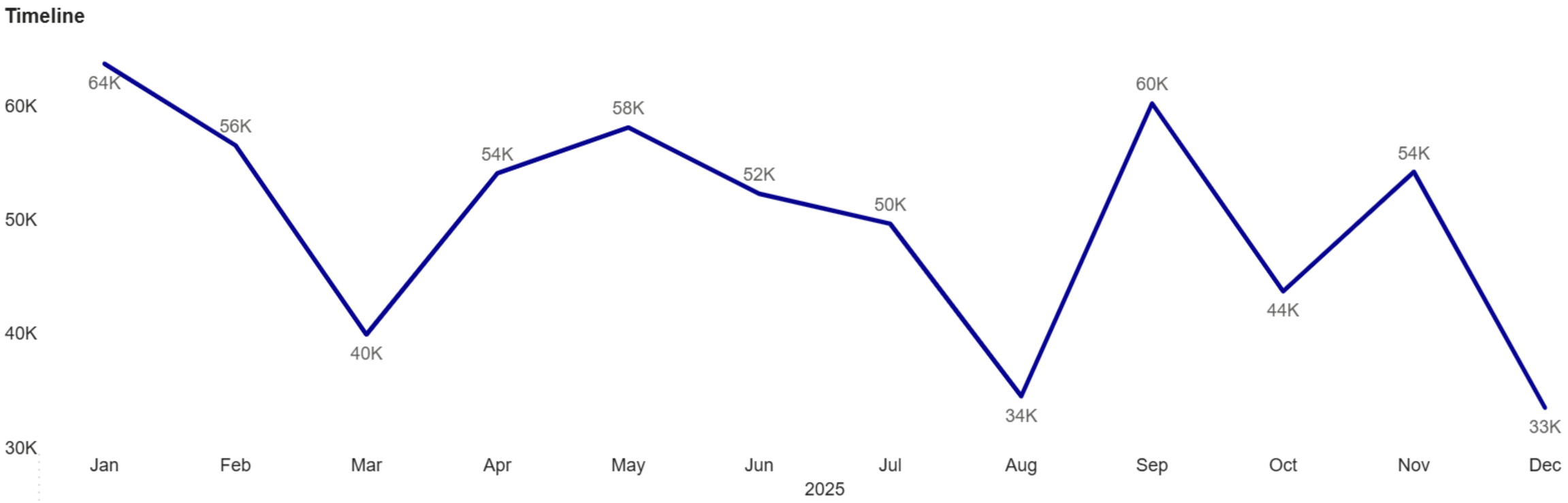
Profit

600K €



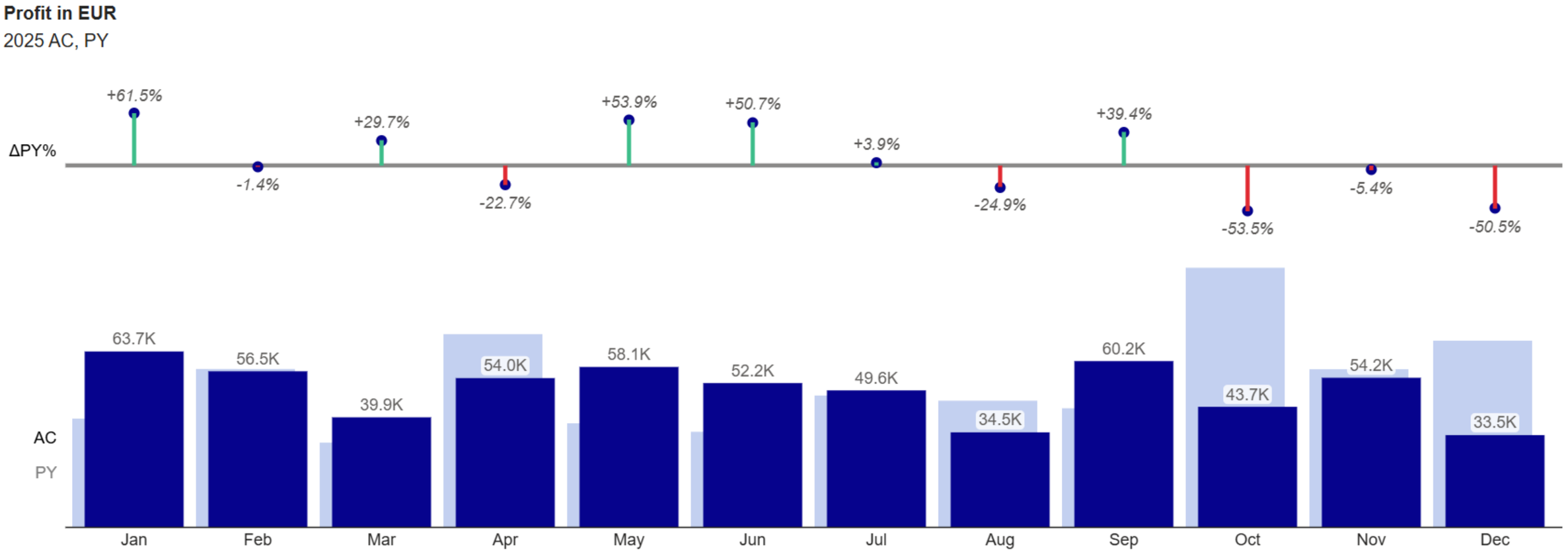
Line Chart

BEFORE



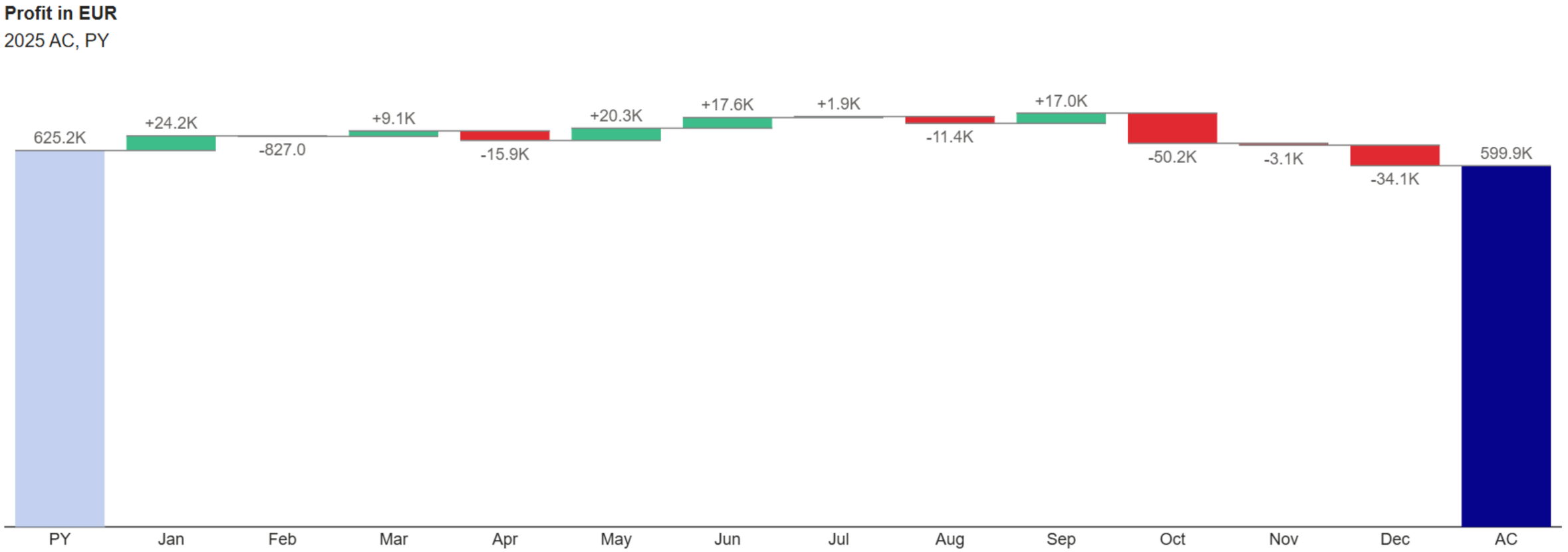
Column Chart

AFTER



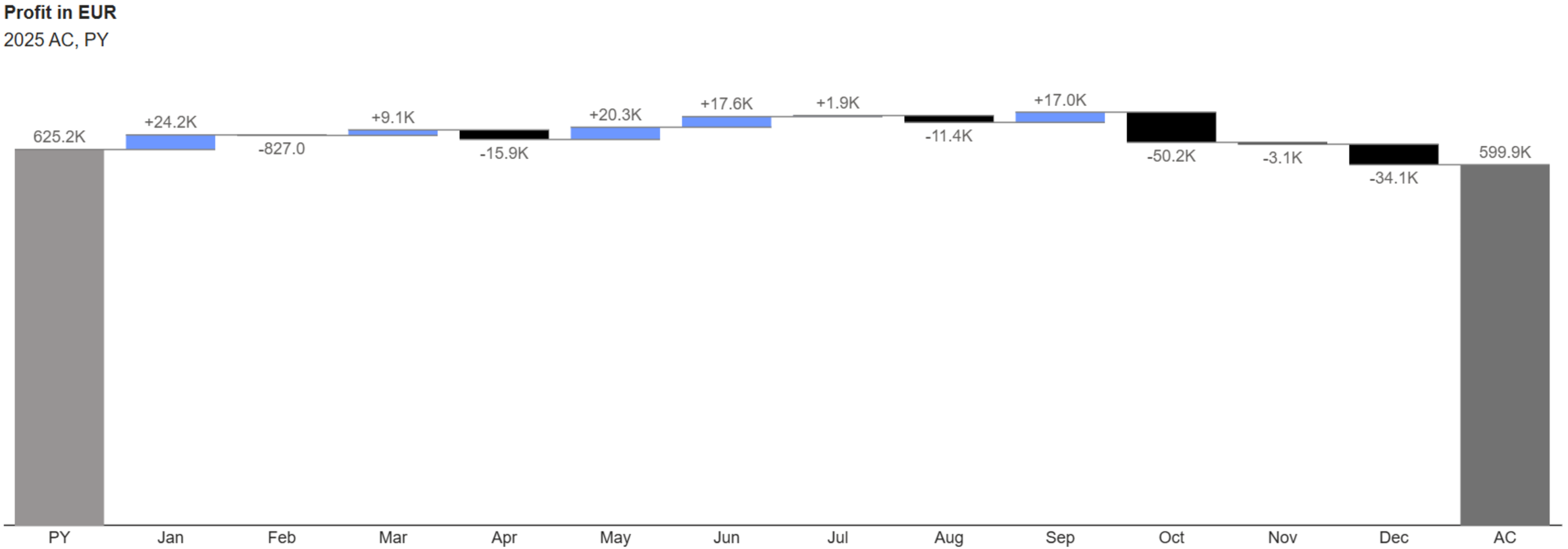
Waterfall Chart

AFTER



Waterfall Chart (Accessible)

AFTER



Table

BEFORE

Status	Complexity	Priority	Profit	Profit PY
Approval In Progress	COMPLEX	NO	26,593	12,042
Approved	MODERATE	NO	26,412	7,252
New	ROUTINE	NO	25,974	7,321
New	ROUTINE	PRIO	25,435	15,321
Draft	ROUTINE	PRIO	23,190	24,077
Approved	ROUTINE	NO	23,094	11,835
Deferred	COMPLEX	NO	22,558	5,884
Draft	MODERATE	NO	22,543	12,365
Approval In Progress	COMPLEX	PRIO	21,082	8,617
Approved	MODERATE	PRIO	18,694	9,032
Draft	COMPLEX	PRIO	18,496	27,256
Draft	COMPLEX	NO	18,419	14,683
Cancelled	ROUTINE	NO	18,394	13,301
Project Owner Review	MODERATE	PRIO	17,242	6,285
Cancelled	MODERATE	PRIO	16,510	18,458
Committed	COMPLEX	NO	16,373	18,803
Approved	COMPLEX	NO	14,224	10,798
Committed	COMPLEX	PRIO	14,055	14,049
Total			**599,940**	**625,228**

AFTER

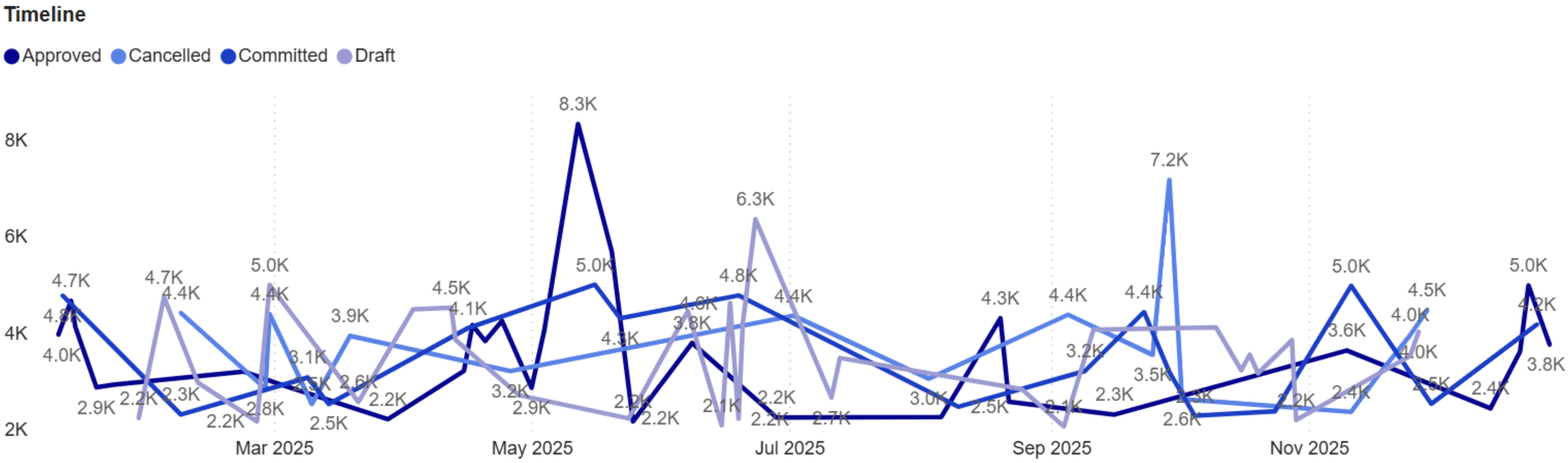
Profit in EUR by Priority, Complexity, Status

2025 AC, PY

	NO			PRIO		
	PY	AC	ΔPY	PY	AC	ΔPY
COMPLEX	**92.0K**	**113.4K**	**+21.4K**	**118.2K**	**100.2K**	**-18.0K**
Approval In Progress	12.0K	26.6K	+14.6K	8.6K	21.1K	+12.5K
Draft	14.7K	18.4K	+3.7K	27.3K	18.5K	-8.8K
Deferred	5.9K	22.6K	+16.7K	16.0K	13.3K	-2.6K
Committed	18.8K	16.4K	-2.4K	14.0K	14.1K	+6.0
Approved	10.8K	14.2K	+3.4K	4.5K	12.1K	+7.6K
Project Owner Review	19.3K	12.7K	-6.7K	6.6K	6.8K	+216.0
Cancelled	6.9K	2.6K	-4.3K	17.1K	9.9K	-7.1K
New	3.6K		-3.6K	24.2K	4.4K	-19.8K
ROUTINE	**98.6K**	**105.0K**	**+6.4K**	**100.5K**	**92.9K**	**-7.6K**
New	7.3K	26.0K	+18.7K	15.3K	25.4K	+10.1K
Draft	6.6K	8.7K	+2.0K	24.1K	23.2K	-887.0
Approved	11.8K	23.1K	+11.3K	9.5K	6.6K	-2.9K
Cancelled	13.3K	18.4K	+5.1K	14.1K	8.5K	-5.5K
Approval In Progress	17.9K	10.1K	-7.8K	7.3K	5.5K	-1.8K
Deferred	16.9K	7.1K	-9.8K	10.3K	8.2K	-2.1K
Committed	20.2K	9.3K	-10.9K	9.2K	4.4K	-4.8K
Project Owner Review	4.6K	2.4K	-2.2K	10.7K	11.0K	+251.0
MODERATE	**113.6K**	**97.3K**	**-16.3K**	**102.3K**	**91.1K**	**-11.2K**
Approved	7.3K	26.4K	+19.2K	9.0K	18.7K	+9.7K
Draft	12.4K	22.5K	+10.2K	22.7K	12.7K	-10.0K
Project Owner Review	3.3K	5.9K	+2.6K	6.3K	17.2K	+11.0K

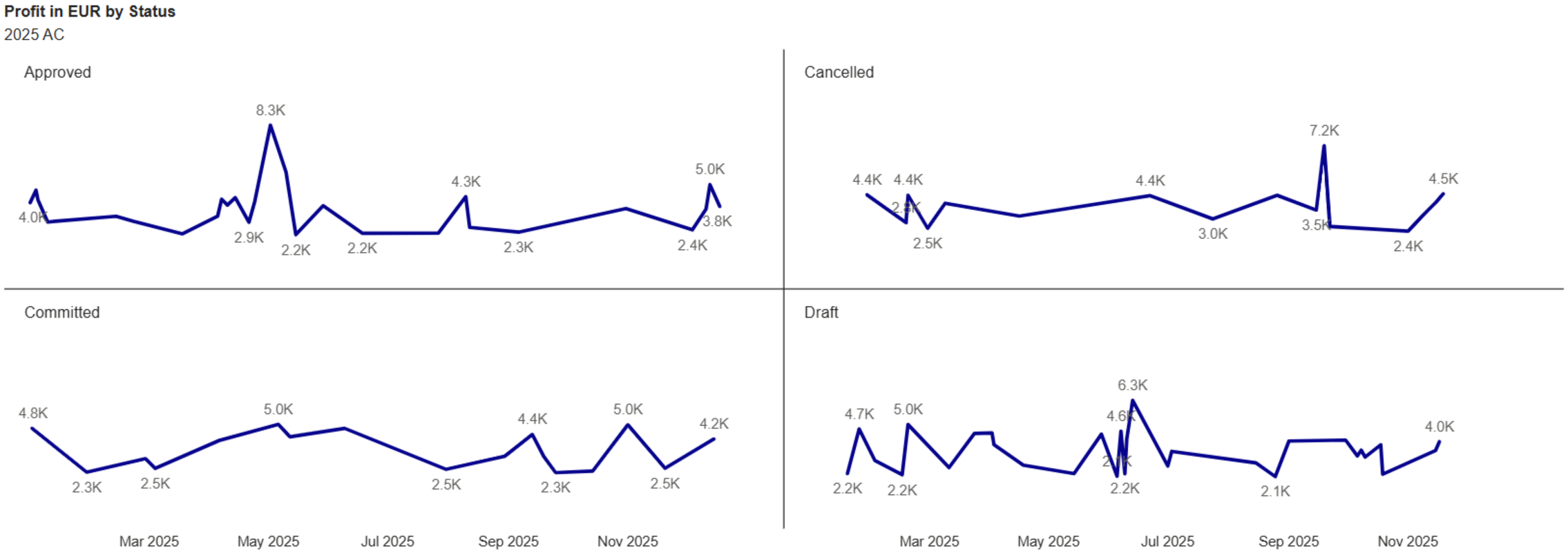
Line Chart

BEFORE



Line Chart

AFTER



SUMMARY

Section 4

How to Get Started

01 Audit Reports

Review current dashboards

02 Define Standards

Organizational themes

03 Train Teams

Developers and business users as well - critical success factor

04 Start & Scale

Begin with before & after examples, then iterate and scale

Key Benefits

- Visual standards like IBCS create consistency and comparability
  - Reduce cognitive load
  - Faster and more confident decision-making
- Optimized performance
  - Clean visuals
  - Fewer unnecessary calculations
- Scalable and maintainable reports
- Builds trust

THANK YOU!

Feedback form

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