

# Research Guidelines for the NISPAcee Working Group on Public Sector Quality

## Theme: Quality of Implementation

### 1. Introduction

NISPAcee working group on Public Sector Quality has since 11<sup>th</sup> annual meeting in Bucharest, Romania shifted its focus from the quality of service delivery to assessing the policy making processes. The working group organizers as well as participants on the 12th annual meeting in Vilnius, Lithuania recognize that particularly the stage of implementation is in practice extremely weak though implementation is a crucial step following policy decision; otherwise policy-making loses its purpose and mission.

### 2. Research Focus

The focus of the working group will be twofold:

a) to seek evaluations / analyses / empirical research of the quality of preparation for the policy implementation process (e.g. the use of impact assessment tools, implementation strategies, etc. prior to actual implementation)

Papers in this focus will follow **a strict research methodology for one particular aspect – the institutionalization and practice in the usage of impact assessment tools** as an instrument in anticipating implementation benefits and costs. The research methodology will be finalized by the end of 2004 and pilot cases of the research will be presented on 13th annual conference in Moscow and published in a book. The research will be conducted by a network of researchers established in the past session. Those, who are interested in this particular topic are welcome to contact working group coordinators with the expression of interest and the coordinators will manage further direct communication of the research methodology and process.

b) to seek evaluations, analysis, empirical research and case studies that assess the performance or demonstrate progress in actual implementation of certain policies.

Papers in this focus should study various aspects of the implementation process and outcome, from the perspective of either institutions or client or other stakeholders. The implementation process and outcome can be studied either from sectoral perspective (i.e. concrete policy focus, particularly in reform processes) or from institutional perspective (i.e. concrete institution and civil servants) or from clients perspective.

#### Topics

- analyzing and evaluating the EU acquis communautaire implementation in practice; the focus should be on the way how harmonized legislation works in practice, to what extent it solves the problems or increases well-being and trace what were the factors of success or failure.
- Evaluation of the implementation process (both anticipation of the implementation and the actual implementation); we encourage to create relevant set of indicators according to which the quality of implementation process can be measured or to take sectoral case studies upon which the process can be traced.
- Monitoring the engagement of civil servants and other stakeholders in the implementation of the policies; the focus should be on the involvement of civil

servants either in direct way (what administrative, human resources and other measures were undertaken in order to implement a certain project/program/policy) or in indirect way (involvement of other stakeholders ranging from businesses / NGOs to citizens and target groups in the implementation). We encourage case studies from concrete sectoral policies.

- Conditions that affect the quality of policy implementation;
- Decentralization, outsourcing, contracting and the quality of policy implementation on local and regional levels.

Papers should do all of the following:

- (a) describe the instruments, institutional arrangements and resources utilized by the institution for the implementation process;
- (b) identify practices, processes or channels through which such institutions are involved in the implementation;
- (c) analyze the factors leading to a successful implementation / failures and what indicators can be utilized to reveal this information.

Papers should combine conceptual and empirical analysis. They should start with a clear statement of the conceptual framework which they are using. The empirical analysis might be based on case studies, on primary data collection (e.g. questionnaire surveys, interviews), on secondary data (e.g. national or local statistics or performance indicators) or data from comparative studies. Where papers are based on case studies, the case studies should be selected on clear criteria, so that results are available for analysis and presentation.

We will give priority to papers in which the practical perspective is clearly represented. This might be, for example, through joint authorships, where authors represent academia and practical work, or through empirical research which has explored and contrasted the views of stakeholders.

*Papers should specify:*

- **which stakeholders are the focus of the research (e.g. civil servants of the central government/particular ministry, local governments, other stakeholders)**
- **what aspect of the implementation does the paper concentrate on (preparatory phase of the implementation, instruments utilized in the implementation, measuring performance in the implementation, management of the implementation process, etc.)**
- **which governance issues have been the focus of the research (e.g. transparency, accountability, partnership building, efficiency, effectiveness, coherence etc.)**
- **the conceptual framework(s) used in the paper (theoretical or analytical frameworks utilized for research / analysis)**
- **what empirical data collection and analysis has been employed (quantitative and qualitative)**
- **what results have emerged so far**
- **how much confidence can be placed in these results in their own context**
- **how far the authors believed the results might be generalized to other contexts.**

### ***Selection of participants***

All those interested in participating in the research activities of the Working Group are kindly requested to submit a paper proposal by **October 15, 2004** to the Working Group coordinators and the NISPAcee secretariat. We strongly encourage co-authorship between academics and policy advisors. The proposal should contain the following information:

- name/names of the authors,
- contact details (including email address),
- Institutional affiliation,
- Abstract of a proposed paper (topic, objectives of the paper and the way how it will be convened – research methodology/case selection/etc, max. 800 words).

The Working Group coordinators will select papers that should be fully developed and inform all participants by **mid November 2004** via the NISPAcee secretariat.

Selected participants will be asked to provide a detailed outline (2-4 pages) by **December 5, 2004** and will submit completed papers by **April 10, 2005**. The coordinators of the working groups have the right to reject even full papers if they do not fulfill NISPAcee standards of quality.

### ***Plenary meeting***

The plenary meeting of the Working Group will take place during the NISPAcee annual conference in Moscow. The working group will focus on presentation and group discussion of submitted papers. The best papers presented will be included in an edited volume