

NISPAcee Working Groups and Panels Policy (as of May 2019)

The NISPAcee Working Groups and Panels Policy describes the aims, establishment and functioning of the NISPAcee Working Groups and Panels that gather during the NISPAcee Annual Conferences and form the backbone of the NISPAcee professional activities.

I NISPAcee Working Groups

Definition

A NISPAcee Working Group (WG) is an independent group of researchers/professionals pursuing common goals under the NISPAcee umbrella. A WG focuses on an important public administration, public policy or governance issue, performs activities that span over a number of years and produces outcomes in the form of academic or policy-oriented publications. A WG provides a forum for discussion as well as exchange of views and experiences among scholars and practitioners working on/in the given field. WGs are of critical importance for the realization of the NISPAcee mission to promote democratic governance and development of public administration in the region. WGs are the primary locus of interaction between NISPAcee and its members as well as a space for collaboration and exchange of knowledge between the members themselves. Therefore, NISPAcee places an increasing emphasis on ensuring that the work of its WGs reflect this importance and that the WGs contribute to the achievement of the NISPAcee goals.

Establishment of a Working Group

The establishment of a NISPAcee WG can be initiated by any person or organization affiliated with NISPAcee. This can be done by preparing a **WG proposal and submitting it to the NISPAcee Steering Committee for approval**. In addition, the Steering Committee itself may also initiate the establishment of a WG in case a major field of interest is not covered by any one of the existing WGs.

The proposal should:

- include the title of the WG;
- clearly identify and describe the research/policy area and the targeted problem, and justify NISPAcee's involvement in it;
- demonstrate that the proposed issue does not overlap with the existing WGs or, if it does, argue why it is still justified to launch a separate WG;
- outline an activity plan for three years, including the potential publications;
- suggest WG Coordinators, describe their previous academic and/or practical experience related to the topic in the form of short biographies, and provide their full *Curriculum Vitae's*;
- identify the primary target audience(s) of the WG and explain how (through what channels and strategies) the Coordinators intend to reach out to the target group and induce participation;
- identify possible sources of funding, if any;
- describe how the results will be shared with the wider research and/or practitioner community.

Working Group Coordinators

WG activities are, as a rule, guided by two to three Working Group Coordinators who are approved by the NISPAcee Steering Committee. They have to be **from at least two different countries and two different institutions**. Coordinators should be internationally recognized researchers/experts with a record of accomplishment in the field. NISPAcee encourages the involvement of coordinators from institutions outside the NISPAcee region, particularly in collaboration with Coordinators from the NISPAcee countries.

Decision by the NISPAcee Steering Committee

The NISPAcee Steering Committee, within a reasonable period of time, considers the proposal and makes a decision whether to establish the WG, to ask for clarifications, to suggest testing the idea as a NISPAcee Conference Panel, or to reject the proposal.

When making the decision, the Steering Committee is guided by the following criteria:

- the proposal is technically compliant with the requirements listed above, well written and clearly outlines the aims and planned activities of the WG;
- the suggested topic for WG activities is academically important for the region or public administration discipline, can potentially contribute to the development and improvement of educational and training programs of the member institutions, and/or otherwise contribute to public sector advancement in the region;
- the coordinators of the working group are internationally recognized researchers/experts with a substantial track record in the field;
- the proposal fits NISPAcee mission and objectives;
- the identification of the WG target audience and the envisaged strategy to reach out to them are feasible and convincing;
- the proposed WG does not overlap (or overlaps to only a modest and justifiable extent) with the existing WGs;
- the proposed WG is based on a successful panel from a preceding conference.

A WG is established by the Steering Committee for three years. Continuation after the three years is decided by the Steering Committee based on the evaluation of the WG performance.

Functioning of the Working Groups

The WGs are independent in organizing their work. The NISPAcee Headquarters assists WGs by providing NISPAcee bank account and accounting services (if relevant), publicizing the WGs in the NISPAcee Newsletter and NISPAcee website, and by staff support.

Every year, per the date determined by the Steering Committee, a WG presents its **Call for Contributions** for the upcoming NISPAcee Annual Conference. The Call (with average length of 400-600 words) must contain sufficient information on:

- the topic and the aims of the WG;
- specific issues, research goals and expected outcomes of the WG in relation to the upcoming annual conference;
- requirements for the contributions.

NISPAcee strongly encourages turning WGs into (inter)active and cohesive professional communities. This includes, but is not limited to, joint research activities and publications, institutionalizing assigned discussants and assuring a structured high-quality discussion for each presentation. The presence of these elements greatly increases the WGs' contribution to the NISPAcee strategy and is taken into account in evaluating the WGs' work.

Quality management

The performance of WGs is subject to regular review by the NISPAcee Steering Committee. The Steering Committee evaluates the performance of the WGs based on (i) Annual Reports composed by the Headquarters in cooperation with the WG coordinators and (ii) Triennial (Final) Reports submitted by the WG Coordinators.

(i) After every Annual Conference, the Headquarters prepares a report for the Steering Committee that indicates the list of submitted paper proposals, WG Coordinators' decision on them (accepted/declined), the result (papers submitted and presented) as well as issues that came up in the process of organizing the Conference.

(ii) The Triennial (Final) Report submitted by the WG Coordinators should cover the following information and data:

- a qualitative assessment of the WG's operation, in particular with regards to the achievement of original goals; problems and changes experienced during the 3-year period; explanation and analysis of possible deviations between plans and actual results; the quantity and scientific/professional quality of papers proposed and presented; and any other information the Coordinators deem relevant for evaluating the WG's work and implementation of the NISPAcee Working Groups and Panels Policy;
- a statement on whether the WG is to be terminated or continued, together with a brief explanation and a further work plan in case of proposal to continue.

The Annual and Triennial Reports are discussed and evaluated by the Steering Committee based on the aims of the NISPAcee Working Groups and Panels Policy. In case of perceived problems, a designated member of the Committee and the WG Coordinators discuss the issues raised by the Steering Committee and the steps to be taken to address them.

Termination of a Working Group

Based on the Triennial Report, the Steering Committee decides to terminate or continue a WG.

The Steering Committee may initiate an earlier termination of a WG activities in case of major perceived problems in the WG functioning. The termination decision is preceded by discussion with the WG Coordinators.

In addition to the above circumstances, the activity of the WG is also terminated if:

- this is initiated by the Coordinators;
- if one or more Coordinators step back from the position and no qualified new Coordinator(s) are proposed within a reasonable time.

II NISPAcee Panels

In addition to the meetings of the regular NISPAcee Working Groups, the sessions of Panels take place in the NISPAcee Annual Conferences. The Panels usually gather only during the running Conference, focus on a specific topic and can have more diverse goals than the Working Groups.

Different types of Panels are:

- host country panels focusing on an issue relevant for the country where the Conference is taking place and is not covered by the NISPAcee Working Groups;
- panels arranged by the NISPAcee partner organizations on a topic of shared interest;
- one-off research panels for discussing a certain scientific topic, possibly with joint outputs foreseen; organized through an invitation or based on a call for papers or a combination thereof;

- panels for preparing a new Working Group and testing the relevance and features of the topic in the NISPAcee region;
- panels specifically oriented to practitioners and focusing on an issue relevant for them.

NISPAcee publishes the Call for Panels sufficiently ahead of the Annual Conference. Organizations or individuals interested in organizing a Panel submit a proposal via the NISPAcee online system. The proposal must contain the following information

- the title of the Panel;
- the objectives;
- the focus and the topics to be covered;
- the requirements for the contributions;
- potential or invited participants;
- possible funding and dissemination (if relevant),
- Panel coordinators, their previous academic and/or practical experience related to the topic in the form of short biographies, and their full *Curriculum Vitae's*.

All the proposals are considered by the NISPAcee Steering Committee after the final deadline of the Call. The Steering Committee decides whether to approve the Panel, to ask for clarifications or to reject the proposal. In making the decision, the Steering Committee is guided by the same general criteria as indicated for evaluating the WG proposals above.

This policy has been developed by the NISPAcee Steering Committee and adopted by WG coordinators on May 23, 2019 in Prague, Czech Republic, to be in force for the 2020 conference and onwards.