

NISPAcee Working Groups and Panels Policy

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

I NISPAcee Working Groups

Definition

A NISPAcee Working Group (WG) is an independent group of researchers/professionals pursuing a common goal 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 scholars, professionals and practitioners working on/in a given field to exchange their views and discuss their experiences. WGs are of critical importance in contributing to the realisation of the NISPAcee strategy as they are the primary locus of interaction between NISPAcee and its members as well as between members themselves. Therefore, NISPAcee places increasing emphasis on ensuring that the work of its WGs reflects this importance and that the WGs contribute to the achievement of NISPAcee's goals.

Establishment of a Working Group

The establishment of a NISPAcee WG can be initiated by any person or organisation affiliated to NISPAcee. This can be done by preparing a **WG proposal (2 pages) and submitting it to the NISPAcee Steering Committee for approval**. In addition, the Steering Committee may also initiate the establishment of a WG itself if a major field is not covered by any existing WG.

The proposal should:

- clearly identify and describe the targeted problem, and justify NISPAcee's involvement in it;
- demonstrate that the proposed issue does not overlap significantly with the existing WGs or, if it does, why it is still justified to launch the WG;
- suggest an activity plan for **three years**;
- propose Working Group Coordinators and indicate their previous credentials related to the topic;
- identify possible sources of funding, if any;
- 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 encourage participation;
- describe how the results will be shared with the research and/or professional and practitioner community.

Working Group Coordinators

WG activities are, as a rule, guided by two Working Group Coordinators who are approved by the NISPAcee Steering Committee. They have to be **from two different countries and two different institutions**. A WG may have more than two Coordinators if necessary. Coordinators should be internationally recognised researchers/experts with a record of accomplishment in the

field. NISPAcee encourages the involvement of coordinators from countries outside the NISPAcee region, in particular if their expertise and experience relating to the proposed WG topic is significant.

Decision by the NISPAcee Steering Committee

The NISPAcee Steering Committee, within a reasonable period of time, considers the proposal and makes a decision on whether to establish the WG or not, to ask for clarification, 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 suggested topic for WG activities is academically important for the region, can potentially contribute to the development and improvement of educational and training programmes of the member institutions, and/or otherwise contribute to public sector advancement in the region;
- the coordinators of the working group are internationally recognised researchers/experts with a substantial track record in the field;
- the proposal fits NISPAcee's strategy and goals;
- the identification of the target groups and the envisaged strategy to reach out to them are feasible and convincing;
- the proposed WG does not overlap (or overlaps to only a slight and justifiable extent) with the existing WGs.

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 and achievements.

Functioning of the Working Groups

The WGs are independent in organising their work. The NISPAcee Headquarters assists WGs by providing a NISPAcee bank account and accounting service (if relevant), publicising the WGs in the NISPAcee Newsletter and NISPAcee website, and through staff support.

Every year, by the date determined by the Steering Committee, a WG presents its Call for Contributions for the upcoming NISPAcee Annual Conference to the Headquarters. The Call must provide sufficient information on the aims and focus of the WG and guidelines for potential contributors.

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

The Annual Reports should cover the following information and data:

- the list of submitted paper proposals (authors and titles), the WG Coordinators' decision on each of them (accepted/declined) and the result (paper submitted or not; presented or not), preferably in the format of a single table (this part of the report will be developed by

- a responsible manager from Headquarters), Coordinators will provide a list of non-presented papers;
- a narrative description and assessment of the WG sessions covering the following elements: an evaluation of the quality of paper proposals and submitted papers, issues in the selection and submission process, reasons for drop-outs and cancellations, evaluation of WG activities in assuring high-quality discussion of the papers, number of additional participants in the sessions, possible achievements and problems encountered, and feedback to the Steering Committee on the organisation of the conference;
- plans for the next year, including a brief description of the next year's Call, planned WG activities, and their justification.

The Triennial (Final) Report should cover the following information and data:

- triennial statistics on the number of paper proposals, number of accepted papers and number of presented papers (this part of the report will be developed by a responsible manager from Headquarters) together with a narrative assessment and explanation of the figures written by coordinators;
- a qualitative assessment of the WG's operation, in particular with regard to the achievement of original objectives and goals; problems and changes experienced during the 3-year period; explanation and analysis of deviations between plans and actual results; any other information the Coordinators see as relevant to evaluate 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 the case of a proposal to continue.

The WG's 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 after two years' activity in case of perceived problems in the WG's functioning. The termination decision is preceded by a 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 down from the position and no qualified new Coordinator(s) can be identified within a reasonable time.

II NISPAcee Panels

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

Different types of Panels are:

- one-off research panels for discussing a certain scientific topic, possibly with joint outputs foreseen; organised through an invitation, with a call for papers or combination;
- host country panels focusing on an issue relevant to the country where the Conference is taking place and not covered by the NISPAcee Working Groups;
- panels for preparing a new Working Group and testing the relevance and features of the topic in the NISPAcee region;
- informative panels for providing information on a current issue or for disseminating the outcomes of projects, research activities or innovative programmes to Conference participants;
- panels arranged by NISPAcee partner organisations on a topic of shared interest;
- panels specifically oriented towards professionals or practitioners and focusing on an issue relevant to them.

NISPAcee publishes the Call for Panels sufficiently ahead of the Annual Conference. Organisations or individuals interested in organising a Panel submit a proposal via the NISPAcee online system. The proposal must contain information on the coordinators, the title, the objectives, potential or invited participants and the expected results of the Panel. All proposals are considered by the NISPAcee Steering Committee and the Conference Organising Committee after the final deadline of the Call.

This policy has been developed by the NISPAcee Steering Committee and was adopted by participants of the meeting with Conference Coordinators on May 23, 2018 in Iasi, Romania.