

EUROPEAN SOCIETY OF CLINICAL NUTRITION AND METABOLISM (ESPEN)

RULES FOR SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

INTRODUCTION

Along ESPEN history, in addition to Working Groups, Special Interest Groups (SIGs) have been organized, which bring together clinicians and scientists with special interest in specific areas of Clinical Nutrition and Metabolism.

The Executive Committee of the Society can create Working Groups on any specific topic needed to accomplish the aims of the Society. Working Groups are not the same as SIG: they will be regulated by the Executive Committee on a case by case basis.

However, there are yet no specific regulations for Special Interest Groups within ESPEN that explain how these groups should be created, organized or ruled, and how they link with the Society or its regulating bodies. This set of rules seeks to achieve a uniform, efficient, harmonious and uniform functioning of the SIGs.

DEFINITION AND AIMS

1. Special Interest Groups of ESPEN are voluntary assemblies of ESPEN members that may be created to discuss and report upon any question related to clinical practice, science, education or other matters relevant to the Society, by writing documents, developing research or carrying out projects that help to improve the ability of the Society to reach its aims.
2. SIGs shall not be the same category as Standing Committees or appointed Officers, and will be dissolved as soon as their task is completed.
3. The general aims of SIG are:
 - a. to coordinate, promote, or develop studies, projects or programmes on a specific area of knowledge related to the activity of the Society.
 - b. to develop consensus documents on topics that may be endorsed or sponsored by the Society.
 - c. to offer support and advice to the Committees of the Society or the organization committees of congresses or meetings on any aspect related to their area of work when requested, including the choice of representatives of the Society in meetings or committees, always in the SIG field of competence.
 - d. to regularly report to the other members of the Society on the SIG activity, using Congresses, the journal (Clinical Nutrition or e-SPEN), the website and other channels for this.
 - e. to closely relate with other SIGs on related areas.
4. SIGs are not created to educate Society members on a specific topic, but rather to communicate with those members who are already experts or developing their work in a specific area of Nutrition and Metabolism who want to give some part of their time and expertise in the promotion and advance of that area by networking with other experts.
5. ESPEN is a multidisciplinary Society and specialists in a particular discipline may be involved in creating a SIG where most of its members are of the same specialty, to deal with specific topics of their interest. However, this SIG will neither have the same name as a Scientific Society already existing, nor use the name of that Society in the SIG advertisement and promotion.

CREATION

6. SIGs will be created at the request of a minimum of 5 members, representing at least 3 different member countries.
7. Promoters of SIGs will present a written application to the Chairman of the Scientific Committee and to the General Secretary of ESPEN. This application shall include information about the name and precise aims of the Group, the relevance of these aims for the purposes of the Society, the expected method of work, the first expected outcome, the initial officers, and the professional background and experience of its initial and future members, rules to become a member of the group, communication among members, planning of meetings, sources of financial support (if it is needed).
8. After evaluation of this application by the Scientific Committee, the SIG may be approved by ESPEN Executive Committee. The decision will be communicated to the chair member of the proposed SIG. The Council and the General Assembly will be informed of the creation of new SIGs.
9. SIGs that are already created or operating at the time of approval of these rules will have to adapt their activities within a one year period, by the election or confirmation of officers and the formalization of their aims and functioning.

MEMBERSHIP

10. Membership shall be open to all members of ESPEN upon application, provided they are able to prove their expertise and interest in the SIG topic. As ESPEN is a Global Society, SIG will be expected to include members from several countries.
11. Membership shall be open to non-members of ESPEN on application or by request from members of the SIG. However, the number of ESPEN members shall comprise at least 51% of the total membership of the SIG.
12. There is no limit to the number of members of a SIG. However, SIGs shall determine what number of members is optimal to reach its aims, and should take this fact, together with the expertise that new members add to the Group, into consideration when accepting new applications to the group.
13. Members of SIG accept to:
 - a. do their best to attend regular meetings of the Group.
 - b. provide their experience and knowledge to promote the aims of the Group.
 - c. participate in the preparation of reports or documents that may arise as a result of the work of the Group.
 - d. regularly participate in all the tasks that will lead to the fulfilment of the aims of the Group.
14. Only ESPEN members of the SIG will be engaged in ESPEN policy and strategy development.
15. Information regarding member's details of specialist practice based interests, research interests and membership of external groups/committees of interest to the SIG may be added to ESPEN data base. This shall then be used to direct information, questions and queries from the membership.

OFFICERS

16. The Group shall appoint a Chairperson and a Secretary. Both shall be members of ESPEN

17. The Chairperson will be responsible to:
 - a. coordinate all the activity of the SIG by convening meetings and regulating the work of its members and the activities of the Group.
 - b. represent the SIG in front of ESPEN Committees and have the final responsibility for the results of the work of the Group.
18. The Secretary will be responsible to:
 - a. keep records of the activities, meetings, documents or results of the work of the Group.
 - b. manage the database of members
 - c. relate with ESPEN Secretariat in all the procedural and logistic aspects of the work of the Group.
 - d. replace the Chairperson when unavailable.
19. The Chairperson and Secretary shall be elected at a General Meeting of the Group from members of the Group.
20. Officers shall hold office for two years and can be re-elected for two more years. The election of the Chairperson and the Secretary will take place in alternative years. Whenever possible, the election should be made at meetings and congresses of ESPEN.
21. The elections shall be ratified by and shall be accountable to the Scientific Committee of ESPEN.

MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES

22. SIGs require, by definition, to maintain regular meetings and contacts of their members for the proper development of their functions. Thus, each Group shall hold at least one general meeting in every calendar year.
23. One of the general meetings will serve the purpose of electing the officers, approve the annual accounts, if applicable, and passing any resolution governing the policy structure and mode of operation of the Group.
24. Apart from the general meetings, the Groups are expected to have usual contact through electronic means, at a pace that is in accordance to its size, aims and activities.
25. SIGs should establish contact as early as possible with ESPEN Professional Congress Organization to benefit from a meeting room during the ESPEN Congress.
26. SIGs are sovereign in the form of organization and conduct of their meetings and activities. However, the Secretary of each SIG will keep records of these meetings and activities, and regularly inform ESPEN Scientific Committee.
27. At least one officer of ESPEN (Executive or Scientific Committee) shall be entitled to receive notice of, and attend and vote at and be counted in the quorum of every meeting of the Group.
28. SIGs may organize seminars, workshops or symposia to fulfil the aims of the Group. These activities should always be open to any ESPEN member, and will always need to be ratified by the Executive Committee, after hearing the report of the Scientific Committee. The SIG will have to warrant the financial viability of these activities and ESPEN will never be liable for them. Should a commercial company sponsor the activity, ESPEN may ask for an overhead for the use of its name and reputation.
29. The Group should show its activities through several aspects: contribution to the scientific program at the Congress, submissions to ESPEN Grants, research projects, publications, etc.

30. The SIGs should also write a short report of their activities every one or two years, which will be approved by the Scientific Committee and published if possible in Clinical Nutrition or e-SPEN.
31. Any resolution, document, report of activity of the Group should be approved at a general meeting of the Group, requiring the support of sufficient ESPEN members to form a majority of all members present at the meeting.
32. Documents produced by the SIG will be an important way of expression of the Society. Thus, all documents or products will have to be finally approved by the Executive Committee, after hearing from the Scientific Committee, before they become available to others in paper or electronic format. Results of the SIG work that may be used or applied outside the Group (scientific or political documents, courses, reports...) will always have to be ratified by the Executive Committee, after hearing the report of the Scientific Committee.

FINANCE, ACCOUNT, REPORTS AND RELATIONSHIP WITH ESPEN

33. ESPEN will support and promote the SIG by:
 - a. offering support for group meeting logistics in a way that it is seen egalitarian for all SIGs.
 - b. helping SIG members in the creation of links with other societies and organizations, including those that may help obtaining financial support for the Group,
 - c. bringing to the SIG all the information that is available to ESPEN and may be linked with the activities of the group.
 - d. using SIG members as first contacts in any scientific or political activity that is related to the Group work.
 - e. opening a specific area within the website of ESPEN to the needs of SIG.
34. SIG must be self-financing and will not receive financial support from ESPEN unless exceptionally authorised in advance by the Executive Committee of ESPEN.
35. SIG Officers will control and organize the finances of the Group (i.e., incoming support, reimbursement of each travel fees, etc). Ordinarily, ESPEN Committees will not take part in the administration of SIGs.
36. SIGs are part of ESPEN and they perform activities relevant to ESPEN. Members of the Groups should consider they are working within this organization in all the activities they perform for the Group. All the SIGs will be at all times subject to ESPEN Bylaws, rules and regulations.
37. Should a conflict of interests between different SIGs arise, the Scientific Committee will decide on the mechanism for conflict resolution. If conflict persists, the Executive Committee will make a final decision.

TERMINATION

38. SIG will be terminated in any of the following circumstances:
 - a. by a reasoned request of the majority of its members
 - b. when the activities of the SIG cease to exist, and the Scientific Committee proposes to the Executive Committee the dissolution of the Group.
 - c. when the SIG does not meet the minimum requirements for size, country representation or activities.
 - d. when the Group is unable to choose its officers.
 - e. when it deviates from the objectives that led to its creation, or is unable to comply with its aims.
39. Termination of a SIG will have to be approved by the ESPEN Committee after hearing Scientific Committee.