



The International Association of Physics Students

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How to create a National Committee of IAPS?

This is a short document aimed at answering some basic questions concerning the creation of a new National Committee (NC). The document was crafted by Andrea Celon, co-founder (August 2014) and first President of the Italian Association of Physics Students and revised by Lucio Milanese of NC Italy and the IAPS EC.

The first question is: why creating an NC?

An NC represents its whole country within IAPS and it's not limited to the usually small ensemble of students that take part in IAPS events. When planning the creation of an NC the ultimate drive should be to reach all physics students within one's own country. It is a challenging goal but that's exactly what makes it worth pursuing. It should be noted that creating an NC takes some effort but it should definitely involve significant teamwork rather than being a "solo" achievement. On the upside, the entire process can be great fun! Founding an NC is not only about sorting out bureaucratic issues but also (and often, mainly) about fostering deep bonds with other students and creating something "bigger than ourselves" (with a lot of parties, eventually, included in the activities...).

Use the support of a National Physical Societies – if possible

The very first and probably easiest step should be to look for a National Physical Society (e.g. Deutsche Physikalische Gesellschaft, Società Italiana di Fisica, IOP) that usually exists in every country. There might already be a young association of students related to it that resembles an NC. If it is already there, the next step should be to read their Charter or rules. Comparing that document with the IAPS Charter, the future NC group should be able to understand if this existing association fits their needs.

Sometimes the young physics association differs a lot from IAPS as for standards, sometimes there is no association or the National Physical Society is not interested in the project you want to develop. If such is the case, the best way of carrying out the task is to create from scratch a proper young association that conforms totally to IAPS standards. Every nation should have laws that can help you and guide you through all the necessary procedures to create such an association.

The reason to embark in this bureaucratic journey (which starts with a google search on "how to create an association" in your country) is to make sure that the newly created NC will have stability (and live on!) even after the first group of motivated people moves past university life. The main objective is to create an NC that will stand unwavering through the years and keep the association growing, with the final goal of reaching all physics students in the country.

Starting point for an own charter – the IAPS Charter

The IAPS Charter constitutes a perfect example of how one should craft the “constitution” of the new association. Essential roles are : 1) President, 2) Secretary, 3) Treasurer. Other optional but crucial positions within an EC are 1) Events Coordinator, 2) Vice-president, 3) Local Committees Coordinator (responsible of the relations with local committees within one’s country). The Charter of the association should definitely include having an Executive Committee (EC) that does most of the work and which is elected democratically from all members. The EC members are a team that promotes assiduously the interests of all the associated members.

An obvious question should be: who comes first? The Charter of the NC (that explains how the election of the EC should happen) or the EC members that write the Charter?

Following the example of how the greatest constitutions all over the world were written, a group of founders should write the Charter and decide how to proceed in the very first election. To write a suitable Charter the young physicists group should refer to IAPS Charter that is an extremely well written document. Special consideration should be taken to how the NC should be structured: the EC is the central office and should promote the growth of Local Committees/NC groups in every physics department.

How to kick-start it

Obviously it will take time to grow but the umbrella structure is the most suitable to reach the highest number of students and to keep them informed on the NC activities. A small fee should be asked to every member as there will be costs to get the NC going on (paying for the website, etc.).

What to do next, is to decide whether to try to reach a sizeable group of people interested and make the election happen or elect the EC members within the group of founders. The first way, despite being the most correct and ethical solution, is hard to come by as it is extremely difficult to convince people to get interested in something that they don’t know of. It should also be considered that most of the Founders have already taken part in IAPS events and are probably more qualified and motivated to pursue this objective than others.

Right after the election of the EC, the new EC should get the Charter legally recognized and should start promoting the newly born association. An annual meeting of members is essential, and it should be arranged following the ICPS style (but with smaller numbers), with guest lecturers and student session (this mini-ICPS can be a very enjoyable event if it’s well organized).

After this point everything is up to the creativity and good work of the EC and members and to enjoy the process.