

Guiding principles

for

National Contact Points (NCPs)

under

the CERV Programme

Contents

I. Context.....	2
II. Mission	2
III. Fundamental Principles.....	3
Respect of fundamental rights.....	4
Knowledge about the CERV programme’s thematic areas and actors.....	4
Staff capacity and equipment	4
IV. Key Principles for NCPs activities.....	4
Confidentiality and conflict of interest	4
Independence of NCPs.....	5
Avoidance of partiality.....	6
V. Core functions of an NCP	6
Informing and awareness raising.....	6
Assisting, advising, and training.....	6
Guidance and cooperation.....	7
VI. Cooperation between NCPs and DG JUST/EACEA	7

I. Context

National Contact Points (NCPs), as professional support services, play a crucial role in reaching the CERV programme's objectives. They serve as essential support structures, offering information and on-the-ground advice to potential applicants and beneficiaries. Importantly, they ensure that the programme is accessible to all potential applicants and provide this assistance in the participants' "own language", a task that would be challenging for the DG JUST and EACEA to achieve without the NCPs' support.

II. Mission

The Regulation (EU) 2021/692¹ establishing the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) Programme for the period 2021-2027 constitutes the legal basis for the present Guiding principles. It reads as follows:

(17a) In order to increase user-friendly accessibility and provide impartial guidance and practical information in relation to all aspects of the Programme, contact points may be set up in Member States to provide assistance to both beneficiaries and applicants. Programme Contact Points should be able to carry out their functions independently, without interference in their decision making from public authorities. Member States should be able to choose the most appropriate management of programme contact points, including, among others, through public authorities, civil society organisations or consortia thereof. Programme contact points are not to have any responsibility regarding programme management.

NCPs' main role is to inform citizens about the Programme and to support the European Commission and the Executive Agency in the implementation of the Programme. In particular, their role will be to assist applicants, stakeholders and beneficiaries with respect to all aspects of the programme, to attract new applicants, including at local level, in countries with low participation and to facilitate the participation of the programme's stakeholders

The activities of the NCPs are structured around these tasks' areas:

- Promoting the programme at national, regional and local level
 - providing information to potential applicants on the different strands of the programme;
 - creating, updating and feeding a dedicated website/webpage for the CERV programme (in national languages)
 - producing promotional material such as leaflets, newsletters, videos, brochures, infographics, digital material promoting the programme;

¹ Available here : [EUR-Lex - 32021R0692 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

- promoting the CERV programme through the use of social media;
- organising and attending (physical and online) information meetings, conferences, workshops with a scope to promote CERV programme and attract new applicants also targeting specific groups of stakeholders or thematic issues when needed ;
- answering requests for information and supporting applicants;
- facilitating partner search;
- Supporting stakeholders' cooperation at national, regional and local level
 - mobilising relevant organisations to become involved into the CERV programme, paying particular attention to reaching out to new organisations;
 - undertaking actions to reach regions which so far do not participate a lot in the programme;
 - developing co-operation with the structures of the same nature in other EU funding programmes, such as Erasmus+, Creative Europe or as well with the structural funds in joint or complementary promotion activities;
 - informing beneficiaries about the Grant management system (eGrants).
- Disseminating programme results and enhancing the visibility and impact of CERV programme.
 - supporting DG JUST/Executive Agency and developing dissemination activities to promote funded projects outputs and results and provide citizens with information on the programme's achievements;
 - supporting DG JUST/Executive Agency with data and policy input regarding the potential of the CERV programme in the respective country;
 - liaising with other EU information offices in the country (Europe Direct Centres, Representation of the Commission, European Parliament Office) to create synergies and to maximise the visibility of the Programme.
 - Improving the knowledge and capacity of potential beneficiaries to address issues related to areas covered by the programme such as EU values, child protection policy, gender mainstreaming, etc.)

III. Fundamental Principles

NCPs are established, operated, and financed by Member States and by third countries participating in the CERV programme. The EU also makes funding available to these NCPs through regular noncompetitive calls for proposals. While acknowledging different national circumstances, the relevant national authorities must ensure that the nominated NCP is compliant with the below guiding principles including sufficient administrative capacity and performance monitoring.

Respect of fundamental rights

NCPs must respect fundamental rights and the principles of democracy and rule of law as defined under Article 2 TEU:

“The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.”

Knowledge about the CERV programme’s thematic areas and actors

- NCPs must be fully conversant with the objectives, principles and content of the CERV programme
- Therefore, NCPs should organise their functioning so as to cover all areas of action of the CERV programme, i.e.: EU values, gender equality and its mainstreaming, non-discrimination and its mainstreaming, combatting racism, xenophobia and all forms of intolerance, rights of the child, EU citizenship rights, rights to data protection, civil society and civic participation, raising awareness about European common history, culture, cultural heritage and values ,, town-twinning, combatting gender-based violence against women, combatting all forms of violence against children and other groups at risk.
- NCPs should have good knowledge of the civil society sector in the fields covered by the CERV programme including at regional and local level.

Staff capacity and equipment

- NCPs should be supported within their respective host organisations or by their national authorities in terms of staff and equipment (e.g. IT) to a level commensurate with the scope of the mandate, and the size of the targeted groups.

IV. Key Principles for NCPs activities

Confidentiality and conflict of interest

- Confidentiality and conflict of interest rules must be robustly established in all NCPs structures. In accordance with national law, systems must be in place to ensure that confidential information that comes into the possession of NCPs is treated accordingly.
- NCPs must not have conflicts of interest between their NCP activities and other professional engagements. It is imperative for NCPs to take proactive measures to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest, ensuring fair treatment for all parties.

- If, at any point during its mandate, the NCP identifies a situation that may create an actual or perceived conflict of interest, it must immediately inform EACEA (European Education and Culture Executive Agency) about the specific details of the situation.
- Individuals employed by a NCP are ineligible to serve as evaluators in an evaluation of a CERV proposal. However, they are allowed to be evaluator for other EU funded programmes such as Erasmus+, Creative Europe, etc.
- Individuals employed by a NCP are also prohibited from participating in the drafting of proposals or in the implementation of proposals or projects.

If the organisation hosting the NCP decides to participate in a proposal or a project linked to a CERV call for proposals, mitigating measures must be established within the organisation to ensure impartiality and avoid conflict of interest (e.g. "firewalls" must exist between the departments involved in submitting proposals and those responsible for the NCP function, it must be demonstrated that costs are separated, etc.)

In practice, if the NCP host organisation participates in a proposal or in a project linked to a CERV call for proposals, they must:

- put in place measures to ensure that the concerned department working on the proposal/project do not receive privileged information concerning the call they are applying to (such as trainings organised by EACEA, JUST or NCPs)
- inform the EACEA/JUST on their intention to submit a proposal (via written declaration) as NCP hosting organisation, describing the mitigating measures within the institution, and confirming that the necessary measures are in place.

In case an NCP host organisation does not comply with the provisions of this section, it will have to withdraw from the proposal/action. Non-compliance will also lead to the consequences set in Articles 136 and 141 of the Financial Regulation (e.g. exclusion or rejection of a person or entity from participating in an award procedure or in an application/action).

Independence of NCPs

- NCPs must operate autonomously and without external influence. They should be free from undue pressure or bias from any specific group, organisation or individual.
- Independence ensures that NCPs can carry out their responsibilities objectively, without favouring the interests of any stakeholder.

Avoidance of partiality

- NCPs treat all parties fairly and impartially without giving preference to any specific group. This principle is crucial for maintaining the integrity of the NCPs' role of facilitating communication with, ensuring coordination for and providing support to various stakeholders involved or interested in participating in the CERV programme.

NCPs must act independently and neutrally to ensure fairness, equity, and credibility in their interactions. This independence is essential for building trust and confidence among the diverse entities engaging with the NCPs.

V. Core functions of an NCP

Informing and awareness raising

- Circulate general and specific documentation on the CERV programme, including on conditions for participation, on possibilities and conditions for submission of proposals, and on project budgeting and reporting.
- Organise information and promotional activities – in liaison with the Commission services when appropriate - e.g. info-days, seminars, conferences, newsletters, web site, social media, fairs, etc.
- Raise awareness of CERV funding opportunities.
- Mobilise relevant organisations to participate actively in the CERV programme, with a specific focus on engaging new actors.
- Take actions to extend the programme's reach to regions that have historically had limited participation.
- Provide beneficiaries with information on the Commission's corporate calls and grant management system known as eGrants.

Assisting, advising, and training

- Assist applicants with a view to increasing and improving their participation in the CERV programme
- Facilitate partner search activities notably by using internet-based tools and cooperation networks at local, national and regional level.
- Advise on administrative procedures, rules and issues (e.g. role and responsibilities of participants in a consortium, costs, rights and obligations of participants, ethical rules.
- Explain the scope and the modalities of types of actions foreseen in the CERV programme.

- Organise training sessions (both physical and virtual) where appropriate, for intermediaries and information multipliers to ensure high quality of advice.
- Where appropriate, organise courses and training seminars for specific target groups or on specific topics/areas (legal aspects, modalities for participation, financial rules, gender mainstreaming, EU values, Child protection policies, etc.)

Guidance and cooperation

- Guide stakeholders to other EU support network services if relevant (for instance, the *EU around me* map); strengthen cooperation between NCPs within the network by promoting joint activities, sharing of best practices, exchange of knowledge, hence enhancing synergies amongst them.

VI. Cooperation between NCPs and DG JUST/EACEA

NCPs are essential partners for the DG JUST and EACEA in implementing the CERV programme. DG JUST and EACEA will facilitate and support NCPs through regular meetings, trainings and help to ensure compliance with guiding principles.

DG JUST and EACEA will maintain close contact with the NCPs to ensure good communication and a high level of support.

DG JUST and EACEA will:

- Support NCPs through regular meetings, trainings and help ensure compliance with the guiding principles.
- Establish an efficient, up-to-date information channel, regular meetings, webinars between JUST/EACEA and the NCPs.
- Provide in-time general and specialist information for the appropriate performance of the NCPs.
- Invite NCPs to regular meetings (mixture of physical and on-line meetings to provide information and specific training if needed).
- Inform about activities that are organised by DG JUST and EACEA on themes related to the CERV programme.
- Discuss the collaboration, share experience, identify good practices, and address problems including pre-meetings and interactive sessions for internal exchange and possibility for peer learning.