

NCP@UEFISCDI

NCP UNIT STRATEGY

2021 – 2027

- V1. Dec. 2021 – Core Strategy
- V1. June 2022 – SWOT 2021, Gap Analysis 2021
- V2. Feb. 2023 – SWOT 2022, Gap Analysis 2022
- V3. Feb. 2024 – SWOT 2023, Gap Analysis 2023
- V4. June 2024 – NCP EIC&EIE Individual Strategy
- V5. Aug. 2024 – Update Strategy, Gap Analysis 2024
- V6. May 2025 – Update Strategy, Project-based implementation
- V7. July 2026 – Update Strategy 2026-2027, SWOT, Gap Analysis 2025, 2026 (Jan.-June)

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I. Vision, Mission, Values

Purpose

The primary purpose of the Horizon Europe NCP@UEFISCDI is to:

- **Promote awareness.** Raise awareness about the opportunities available under Horizon Europe among Romanian researchers, institutions, and companies.
- **Support participation.** Provide comprehensive support throughout the entire lifecycle of participation in Horizon Europe, from project conception and proposal submission to project management and dissemination.
- **Facilitate collaboration.** Act as a bridge between Romanian entities and potential international partners, fostering collaborative networks across Europe and beyond.
- **Ensure inclusivity.** Promote inclusivity by encouraging participation from a diverse range of entities, including those from less-developed regions, SMEs, and underrepresented groups.

Vision (one day...) (2027)

We will challenge our skills and abilities and create an NCP center of excellence for Horizon Europe that is strong, dependable, efficient and effective, allowing our colleagues from research and innovation communities in Romania to participate more and with more chances of success in the Horizon Europe programmes.

Mission (every day)

The mission of the Horizon Europe NCP@UEFISCDI is to foster excellence in research and innovation by facilitating Romanian participation in Horizon Europe. The NCP@UEFISCDI is committed to providing tailored guidance, support, and information to researchers, innovators, and institutions, ensuring they can effectively contribute to and benefit from the Horizon Europe framework programme. We are ready to help, and go the extra mile, and provide expert support and assistance to our colleagues to participate more and with more chances of success in the Horizon Europe framework programme.

Values

- Commitment
- Focus on the applicant
- Efficiency
- Effectiveness
- Growth
- Integrity

II. Strategy NCP@UEFISCDI

This Strategy applies to the Unit of National Contact Points at UEFISCDI (NCP@UEFISCDI) and the Horizon Europe programmes allocated to the Unit, i.e. ERC (European Research Council); MSCA (Marie-Sklodowska Curie Actions); CL2 (Cluster 2 – Culture, creativity and inclusive society); CL6 (Cluster 6 – Food, bioeconomy, natural resources, agriculture and environment); EIC (European Innovation Council); EIE (European Innovation Ecosystems); Widera (Widening participation and strengthening the ERA).

To realize its mission, purpose, and vision, the NCP@UEFISCDI will pursue the following **goals**:

1. Increasing the confidence of the Romanian academic and innovation community in the permanent support and expertise of the National Contact Points of the NCP Unit.
2. The establishment of collegial and professional working relationships with the entire Romanian community in order to participate with more chances of success in the Horizon Europe programs assigned to the NCP Unit.

II.1. Strategic Objectives

SO1. Information, awareness raising on Horizon Europe programmes at NCP@UEFISCDI. Outreach and communication.

SO2. Assistance and support for research and innovation proposals in Horizon Europe

SO3. Assistance and support for the internationalization & visibility of Romanian research and innovation communities.

SO4. NCP training-capacity building

SO1

Information, awareness raising on Horizon Europe programmes at NCP@UEFISCDI. Outreach and communication

- Newsletter (info email for news and calls, NCP website update, UEFISCDI website update, NCP Brainmap community update)

SO2

Assistance and support for research and innovation proposals in Horizon Europe

- Support materials (guides, presentations, e-learning videos)
- Events (info days, workshops, seminars) – online, hybrid, in person
- Q&A (email, phone..)
- Meetings with applicants
- Assistance for finding partners (e.g. expression of interest, organization profile on platforms)
- Proposal pre-check

SO3

Assistance and support for the internationalization & visibility of Romanian research and innovation communities

- Promote success stories
- Build networks and develop connections between organizations (in Romania and outside)
- NCP training (reading, participation at NCP training)
- Establish and maintain links with the EC and relevant POs per HE programme
- Assistance for finding partners (e.g. expression of interest, organization profile on platforms)

SO4

NCP training-capacity building

- Participate in EU NCP support networks
- Attend EC webinars and workshops
- Allocate time for studying EC and HE documents
- Facilitate peer learning and knowledge sharing

II.2. Strategy Map

1. Applicant Perspective

To achieve our vision, how must we look to our applicants?

- Expert and knowledgeable NCP
- Quality of support materials
- Prompt and useful assistance

2. Internal Perspective (NCP@UEFISCDI)

What are the internal processes or things that NCP@UEFISCDI must do well in order to make applicants happy?

- Newsletter (info email for news and calls, NCP website update, UEFISCDI website update, NCP Brainmap community update)
- Support materials (guides, presentations, e-learning videos)
- Events (info days, workshops, seminars) – online, hybrid, in person
- Q&A (email, phone..)
- Meetings with applicants
- Assistance for finding partners (e.g. expression of interest, organization profile on platforms)
- Proposal pre-check
- Promote success stories
- Build networks and develop connections between organizations (in Romania and outside)
- NCP training (reading, participation at NCP training)
- Establish and maintain links with the EC and relevant POs per HE programme

Internal processes NCP@UEFISCDI:

1. Track participation and impact. Establish a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to track Romanian participation in Horizon Europe and assess the impact of NCP activities.
2. Continuous Improvement. Regularly review and refine strategies based on feedback and evolving needs of the research and innovation community.

3. Learning & Growth Perspective (NCP@UEFISCDI)

Human resources and a “people” perspective.

- NCP@UEFISCDI capacity building and training. Build expertise on each HE programme.
- Better communication skills (internal, external)

4. External Perspective (UEFISCDI, MCID, EC, NCP networks)

What are the internal processes or things that NCP@UEFISCDI must do well in order to make stakeholders happy?

- Prompt, useful and documented response to requests
- Inform UEFISCDI on relevant calls, EC policies and documents
- Report to UEFISCDI, MCID, EC and NCP networks annually
- Promote success stories to UEFISCDI, MCID, EC and NCP networks

II.3. Expected Outcomes

- Increased awareness of applicants on Horizon Europe opportunities
- Better knowledge of applicants of research and innovation proposals/projects in Horizon Europe

- Increased number of proposals submitted to Horizon Europe programmes
- Higher success rate of Romanian applications
- Better international visibility for Romanian applicants

II.4. Implementation Plan

Year 1-2 (2021-2023): Focus on building internal capacities, awareness campaigns, and establishing professional working relationships with the Romanian academic and innovation community.

Year 3-4 (2024-2025): Intensify support services, enhance digital tools, and expand outreach activities.

Year 5 onwards (2026-...): Evaluate progress, refine strategies, and aim for greater integration of Romanian entities in Horizon Europe.

Annex 1. SWOT

SWOT 2021

	Helpful	Harmful
INTERNAL	Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
	• Dedication • Knowledge • Efficiency • Effectiveness • Colegiality	• Insufficient contribution on legal & financial aspects • Inadequate time management • Inadequate NCP website
EXTERNAL	Opportunities (O)	Threats (T)
	• Expand to larger NCP team • Reach out to different communities (local & regional authorities) • Set up a ERA Dialogues and Strategic Consultation formats with vice rectors, scientific directors, heads of RDI departments	• Insufficient collaboration with other Romanian NCPs • Insufficient collaboration with national NCP coordinator(s)

SWOT 2022

	Helpful	Harmful
INTERNAL	Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
	• Dedication • Knowledge & Expertise • Efficiency • Effectiveness • Colegiality	• Inadequate time management
EXTERNAL	Opportunities (O)	Threats (T)
	• NCP community on Brainmap • Reach out to different communities (local & regional authorities) • Increased connectivity with and among organisations	• Insufficient collaboration with other Romanian NCPs • Insufficient collaboration with national NCP coordinator • Lack of collaboration with members in EC Programme Committees

SWOT 2023

	Helpful	Harmful
INTERNAL	Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
	• Dedication • Knowledge & Expertise • Efficiency • Effectiveness • Colegiality • Trustworthy relationships with applicants	• Inadequate time management • High work volume and pressure on NCP
EXTERNAL	Opportunities (O)	Threats (T)
	• NCP community on Brainmap • NCP community on LinkedIn • Reach out to different communities (local & regional authorities; EEN; ADR) • Increased connectivity with and among organisations	• Insufficient collaboration with other Romanian NCPs • Too many new EU policies in a short time span • Unclear, chaotic EC processes and programmes, lack of predictability • Lack of collaboration with members in EC Programme Committees • Difficult to motivate applicants

SWOT 2024

	Helpful	Harmful
INTERNAL	Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
	• Dedication • Knowledge & Expertise • Efficiency • Effectiveness • Colegiality • Trustworthy relationships with applicants • NCP community on Brainmap	• Inadequate time management • High work volume and pressure on NCP
EXTERNAL	Opportunities (O)	Threats (T)
	• NCP community on LinkedIn • Reach out to different communities (local & regional authorities; EEN; ADR) • Increased connectivity with and among organisations • Active involvement in NCP support project proposals (eg. ERC, EIT, MSCA)	• Insufficient collaboration with other Romanian NCPs • Too many new EU policies in a short time span • Unclear, chaotic EC processes and programmes, lack of predictability • Lack of collaboration with members in EC Programme Committees • Difficult to motivate applicants to submit and re-submit • Low success rates of HEu calls discourage the applicants

SWOT 2025

	Helpful	Harmful
INTERNAL	Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
	• Dedication, collegiality and strong professional commitment. • Consolidated knowledge and programme-specific expertise across the NCP Unit. • Trust-based and increasingly stable relationships with applicants and beneficiaries. • Broader portfolio of support services: information, proposal design, pre-check, ESR analysis, resubmission guidance and partner-search facilitation. • Growing NCP communities and stronger use of European NCP networks, brokerage and matchmaking opportunities. • Increasing capacity to adapt services on the basis of recurring applicant feedback and programme-level observations.	• High work volume and time pressure, especially around call deadlines. • Personalised services are increasingly resource-intensive and difficult to provide uniformly. • Service standards for intensive support (timing, depth and number of feedback rounds) are not yet fully standardised. • Knowledge management and systematic tracking of recurring issues and service outcomes need further consolidation. • Some support processes still depend strongly on individual NCP availability and continuity.
EXTERNAL	Opportunities (O)	Threats (T)
	• Use the 2025 applicant survey and programme-level analyses to better target support services. • Expand practical training, call-fit guidance, proposal pre-check and resubmission support. • Strengthen partner-search, brokerage, EOI and visibility activities through NCP support projects and European networks. • Develop stronger links with research managers, institutional support structures, EEN and other relevant national actors. • Promote success stories and peer learning to improve confidence and practical understanding among applicants. • Use the 2025–2026 calls to move from broad awareness raising towards more strategic participation support.	• Very high competition and limited call budgets can discourage submission and resubmission, including for well-evaluated proposals. • Persistent gaps in institutional research-management capacity, legal/financial support and internal proposal support. • Limited international visibility and access to established networks remain barriers for some organisations. • Late requests for support reduce the usefulness of proposal guidance and increase pressure on NCP resources. • Programme complexity, changing requirements and fragmented support pathways can create uncertainty for applicants. • Insufficient or uneven collaboration across parts of the national support system may delay clarification and referral.

SWOT 2026 (Jan. – June)

	Helpful	Harmful
	Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
INTERNAL	• Mature programme expertise and strong institutional memory accumulated since 2021. • Established relationships of trust with applicants, beneficiaries and European NCP networks. • Support has evolved from general information towards strategic guidance on call fit, readiness, proposal positioning, evaluation feedback and implementation. • Growing ability to distinguish newcomer needs from advanced applicant and beneficiary needs. • More structured use of applicant feedback and recurring operational signals for service improvement. • Experience in partner-search facilitation, brokerage, pre-screening and post-evaluation support.	• Personalised and iterative support remains highly resource-intensive. • Continuous follow-up throughout the full proposal/project lifecycle is not yet systematically ensured across all programmes. • A differentiated service model and common standards for proposal support are not yet fully operationalised. • Knowledge management, cross-programme learning and service-performance monitoring require further formalisation. • Coordination with some NCPs, national actors and specialised services remains uneven.
	Opportunities (O)	Threats (T)
EXTERNAL	• Use accumulated 2021-2026 evidence to refine the NCP service model and update the Strategy for the transition to FP10. • Introduce systematic call-fit/readiness tools and differentiated levels of support according to applicant maturity. • Strengthen research-management communities and institutional dialogue on internal support capacity. • Expand implementation-oriented support and referral for funded coordinators and project managers. • Use NCP networks, support projects, brokerage events and travel grants to strengthen international visibility and partnerships. • Develop clearer guidance on generative AI, confidentiality and responsible use in proposal preparation.	• Increasing competition and high proposal volumes raise the importance of strategic call selection and may intensify applicant fatigue. • Newcomers requiring basic support coexist with experienced applicants needing advanced, time-intensive guidance. • Implementation, consortium-management and budget-reallocation issues are becoming more visible among funded projects. • Persistent institutional capacity gaps can shift expectations towards NCP services beyond their sustainable role. • Programme complexity and frequent procedural changes increase the need for continuous NCP expertise updating. • Uncertain continuity of some transnational NCP support instruments may reduce access to brokerage, pre-screening or travel-support opportunities.

Annex 2. Strategic Gap Analysis

HE NCP@UEFISCDI Strategic Gap Analysis 2021		
Current State	Actions	Objective/Desired State
Where you are now	Steps to achieve your goal	Where you aim to be
First time full-time NCPs for an EU R&I framework programme. Uncharted territory...	1. Applicant Perspective - Expert and knowledgeable NCP - Quality of support materials	Capacity building. Each and all NCPs become experts on their HE programmes, to provide expert support and assistance to our colleagues to participate more and with more chances of success in the Horizon Europe programme.
	2. Internal Perspective (NCP@UEFISCDI) - NCP training (reading, participation at NCP training) - Support materials (guides, presentations)	
	3. Learning & Growth Perspective (NCP@UEFISCDI) - NCP@UEFISCDI capacity building and training. Build expertise on each HE programme. - Better communication skills (internal, external)	
	4. External Perspective (UEFISCDI, MCID, EC, NCP networks) Inform UEFISCDI on relevant calls, EC policies and documents	

HE NCP@UEFISCDI Strategic Gap Analysis 2022		
Current State	Actions	Objective/Desired State
Where you are now	Steps to achieve your goal	Where you aim to be
Applicants & Institutions - Potential applicants do not have enough confidence to submit project proposals in Horizon Europe - The existence of other funding opportunities at the national level - Not all Romanian institutions have a strategy for the development and submission of HE proposals and provide timely support for potential applicants. - Not all Romanian institutions have strong international visibility/networks to achieve partnerships in Horizon Europe. - Missing (or very few) profile organizations on the Funding&Tenders portal. - Need for support in writing the proposal. - Need for specific legal and financial information during the elaboration of the proposal.	1. Applicant Perspective - Expert and knowledgeable NCP - Quality of support materials - Prompt and useful assistance	Building internal capacities, awareness campaigns, and establishing professional working relationships with the Romanian academic and innovation community.
	2. Internal Perspective (NCP@UEFISCDI) - Newsletter (info email for news and calls, NCP website update) - Support materials (guides, presentations) - Events (info days, workshops, seminars) – online, hybrid, in person - Q&A (email, phone..) - Meetings with applicants - NCP training (reading, participation at NCP training) - Establish and maintain links with the EC and relevant POs per HE programme	
	3. Learning & Growth Perspective (NCP@UEFISCDI) - NCP@UEFISCDI capacity building and training. Build expertise on each HE programme. - Better communication skills (internal, external)	
	4. External Perspective (UEFISCDI, MCID, EC, NCP networks) - Prompt, useful and documented response to requests - Inform UEFISCDI on relevant calls, EC policies and documents - Report to UEFISCDI, MCID, EC and NCP networks annually	

HE NCP@UEFISCDI Strategic Gap Analysis 2023		
Current State	Actions	Objective/Desired State
Where you are now	Steps to achieve your goal	Where you aim to be
Applicants & Institutions • Inadequate support at the institutional level for applicants, including motivating them to apply on HE. • Insufficient or inadequate support for the implementation of the HE projects project on the financial, logistical, infrastructure side. • Researchers are not motivated to apply. • Researchers express their interest in HE by contacting the NCP and/or completing the EOI on our website, the NCP opens the way for a dialogue, but not all researchers are interested to continue.	1. Applicant Perspective • Expert and knowledgeable NCP • Quality of support materials • Prompt and useful assistance 2. Internal Perspective (NCP@UEFISCDI) • Newsletter (info email for news and calls, NCP website update, UEFISCDI website update, NCP Brainmap community update) • Support materials (guides, presentations, e-learning videos) • Events (info days, workshops, seminars) – online, hybrid, in person • Q&A (email, phone...) • Meetings with applicants • Assistance for finding partners (e.g. expression of interest, organization profile on platforms) • Proposal pre-check • Promote success stories • Build networks and develop connections between organizations (in Romania and outside) • NCP training (reading, participation at NCP training) • Establish and maintain links with the EC and relevant POs per HE programme 3. Learning & Growth Perspective (NCP@UEFISCDI) • NCP@UEFISCDI capacity building and training. Build expertise on each HE programme. • Better communication skills (internal, external) 4. External Perspective (UEFISCDI, MCID, EC, NCP networks) • Prompt, useful and documented response to requests • Inform UEFISCDI on relevant calls, EC policies and documents • Report to UEFISCDI, MCID, EC and NCP networks annually • Promote success stories to UEFISCDI, MCID, EC and NCP networks	Increasing the confidence of the Romanian academic and innovation community in the support and expertise of each National Contact Point of the NCP Unit.

HE NCP@UEFISCDI Strategic Gap Analysis 2024		
Current State	Actions	Objective/Desired State
Where you are now	Steps to achieve your goal	Where you aim to be
Applicants: • Misidentification of their motivation to do the project. • Lack of expertise for EC/HE requirements or lack of expertise for the chosen field of research. • Some applicants have difficult relationships with other organizations. • Lack of sufficient knowledge to match their very specific areas with HE project calls. Institutions: • Organizations not sending feedback to the NCP for what they need. • We receive their requests at the last minute. • Lack of links with other Romanian organizations. • They not share their knowledge/collaborators to foster further HE participation.	1. Applicant Perspective • Expert and knowledgeable NCP • Quality of support materials • Prompt and useful assistance 2. Internal Perspective (NCP@UEFISCDI) • Newsletter (info email for news and calls, NCP website update, UEFISCDI website update, NCP Brainmap community update) • Support materials (guides, presentations, e-learning videos) • Events (info days, workshops, seminars) – online, hybrid, in person • Q&A (email, phone...) • Meetings with applicants • Assistance for finding partners (e.g. expression of interest, organization profile on platforms) • Proposal pre-check • Promote success stories • Build networks and develop connections between organizations (in Romania and outside) • NCP training (reading, participation at NCP training) • Establish and maintain links with the EC and relevant POs per HE programme 3. Learning & Growth Perspective (NCP@UEFISCDI) • NCP@UEFISCDI capacity building and training. Build expertise on each HE programme. • Better communication skills (internal, external) 4. External Perspective (UEFISCDI, MCID, EC, NCP networks) • Prompt, useful and documented response to requests • Inform UEFISCDI on relevant calls, EC policies and documents • Report to UEFISCDI, MCID, EC and NCP networks annually • Promote success stories to UEFISCDI, MCID, EC and NCP networks	Providing tailored guidance, support, and information to researchers, innovators, and institutions, ensuring they can effectively contribute to and benefit from the Horizon Europe programme.

HE NCP@UEFISCDI Strategic Gap Analysis 2025		
Current State <i>Where you are now</i>	Actions <i>Steps to achieve your goal</i>	Objective / Desired State <i>Where you aim to be</i>
- Applicants: basic information gaps persist among newcomers, while experienced applicants increasingly need support on call fit, proposal design, ESR interpretation and resubmission. - Applicants: confidence to submit or resubmit remains fragile in highly competitive calls; well-evaluated proposals may still remain unfunded because of limited budgets. - Applicants: access to suitable partners, international visibility and entry into established consortia remain recurring difficulties. - Institutions: Horizon Europe participation is often insufficiently embedded in institutional strategy; research-management, legal/financial and implementation support remain uneven. - Institutions: some organisations need stronger knowledge of innovation pathways, commercialisation and engagement with industry. - NCP service: demand for personalised proposal support is growing, frequently close to deadlines, increasing workload and pressure on NCP time. - Coordination: referral to Legal & Financial NCPs and other actors is useful, but support pathways and access to evaluation information are not always timely or consistent.	- Applicant Perspective: provide expert, programme-specific and tailored guidance; strengthen call-fit discussions, proposal design, pre-check, ESR analysis and resubmission support. - Internal Perspective (NCP@UEFISCDI): update support materials; organise targeted workshops/info days; maintain Q&A and individual meetings; standardise partner-search and referral practices. - Internal Perspective: use the 2025 applicant survey and programme analyses to better target services and monitor recurring needs. - Network building & visibility: promote EOIs, brokerage events, F&T profiles, travel grants, matchmaking and links with EEN, EURAXESS, MCAA and other relevant networks. - Learning & Growth Perspective: continue NCP training, EC webinars, peer learning and dedicated time for studying programme documents. - External Perspective: strengthen cooperation with EC services, NCP networks, national authorities, Programme Committee members and institutional research-management actors.	- Romanian applicants engage more strategically with Horizon Europe, selecting better-fitting calls and preparing stronger, more mature proposals. - Applicants receive earlier, clearer and more consistent support across the proposal lifecycle, including evaluation and resubmission. - Applicant organisations progressively strengthen internal research-management, legal/financial, internationalisation and implementation capacity. - NCP services remain accessible, expert and tailored, while becoming more predictable and consistent in the use of intensive support resources. - International visibility and access to relevant networks and partners improve through sustained brokerage and matchmaking support.

HE NCP@UEFISCDI Strategic Gap Analysis 2026		
Current State <i>Where you are now</i>	Actions <i>Steps to achieve your goal</i>	Objective / Desired State <i>Where you aim to be</i>
- Applicants: general awareness has improved, but readiness is uneven; gaps remain in strategic call selection, research ambition, track record, evaluation logic and proposal positioning. - Applicants: newcomer needs for basic guidance coexist with advanced needs for proposal strategy, consortium development and implementation support. - Beneficiaries: project managers and coordinators increasingly request support on partner-related issues, cost-category changes and implementation challenges. - Applicants: high competition and limited budgets increase the need for selective participation, call-fit assessment and realistic timing of submission. - Institutions: research-management capacity and institutional support remain uneven; some pathways and support instruments exist but are not consistently visible or used. - NCP service: applicant interaction is more regular and trust-based, but continuous, iterative feedback is not yet systematically ensured across all programmes. - NCP service: personalised support is resource-intensive; common standards, knowledge management and service-performance monitoring require further consolidation. - Coordination: collaboration and referral across the national support ecosystem remain uneven in some areas.	- Applicant Perspective: introduce more systematic call-fit and readiness guidance, including early screening where relevant and strategic advice on whether and when to submit. - Internal Perspective (NCP@UEFISCDI): operationalise a differentiated service model covering information, capacity building, individual strategic guidance, proposal support and post-award/referral support. - Internal Perspective: standardise proposal pre-check rules, timing, depth of feedback and referral routes; strengthen shared knowledge management and recurring-issue tracking. - Capacity building: expand targeted proposal-writing, evaluation-logic, project-management and implementation support for both newcomers and experienced applicants. - Institutional capacity: strengthen dialogue with research managers and organisational leadership on internal support functions, internationalisation and proposal/project management. - Network building & visibility: continue brokerage, partner-search, EOI, travel-grant and network-promotion activities through European NCP and support projects. - Learning & Growth Perspective: protect time for NCP expertise development, peer learning and monitoring of 2026–2027 programme changes. - External Perspective: use aggregated NCP observations as structured feedback to relevant national and European actors; prepare the service model for FP10.	- A mature NCP@UEFISCDI service model that combines accessibility with differentiated, strategic and sustainable support. - Applicants are increasingly empowered to assess fit, readiness and proposal quality and to take informed responsibility for participation decisions. - Applicant organisations assume stronger responsibility for research management, legal/financial support, internationalisation and project implementation. - Roles across applicants, institutions, NCPs and other support actors are clearer and complementary, reducing duplication and unrealistic expectations. - NCP performance is assessed through service quality, relevance, accessibility, coverage and added value, rather than being equated with national success rates. - Operational experience is systematically converted into organisational learning and structured feedback for Horizon Europe implementation and FP10 preparation.

Annex 3. NCP Individual Strategy and Operational Plan 2021- 2027

Aim

To effectively disseminate information, provide support to applicants, and enhance Romania's participation in the Horizon Europe (HE) programmes assigned to each NCP.

The HE programmes assigned to the NCP Unit at UEFISCDI are: ERC, MSCA, CL2, CL6, EIC, EIE, EIT, Widening&ERA.

Objectives

O1. Increase awareness: Raise awareness about the HE programme, opportunities, and benefits among Romanian researchers, innovators, and businesses.

O2. Support and guidance to enhance participation: Increase the number of high-quality applications from Romania to the HE programmes. Provide comprehensive support and guidance to potential applicants throughout the application process.

O3. Network building and visibility: Facilitate the creation of networks and partnerships between Romanian and European organizations. Increase the visibility of Romanian organisations.

Actions and Indicators

O1. Information dissemination, awareness raising

O1.1. NCP website: Develop and maintain a comprehensive, user-friendly website with detailed information on HE calls, guidelines, success stories, FAQs, and resources.

O1.2. Newsletters (info emails): Regularly send out newsletters with updates on new calls, deadlines, and relevant events.

O1.3. Events and workshops: Organize webinars, workshops, and info days to provide detailed information and guidance on HE programmes.

O1.4. Social media: Use LinkedIn to share news, success stories, and engage with the community.

Indicators:

I1.1. Website traffic and user engagement metrics.

I1.2. Number of newsletters sent per HE programme.

I1.3. Number of events organized and participant feedback.

I1.4. Social media engagement metrics (followers, likes, shares).

O2. Application support services

O2.1. Email support: Provide email support for inquiries and assistance.

O2.2. Support materials: Elaborate support materials (guides, presentations, e-learning videos) in Romanian and English.

O2.3. Proposal design: Meetings (online, in person) to discuss and assist proposal design.

O2.4. Proposal review: Pre-submission proposal review (pre-check) to enhance the quality of applications.

O2.5. Training and capacity building for applicants: Organize training sessions (online, in person) on proposal writing, submission process and project management for potential applicants.

O2.6. Matchmaking services: Facilitate matchmaking services to connect applicants with potential partners for collaborative projects (e.g. expression of interest, organization profile on platforms, brokerage events).

Indicators:

I2.1. Number of inquiries handled through email and phone (support interactions).

I2.2. Number of support materials (guides, presentations, e-learning videos).

- I2.3. Number of proposal design meetings with applicants.
- I2.4. Number of proposals reviewed and feedback provided.
- I2.5. Number of training sessions conducted by NCP and participant feedback.
- I2.6. Number of successful matchmakings and visibility initiated.

O3. Network building and visibility

O3.1. National and European networks: Contribute to national and European networks to encourage collaboration and knowledge sharing.

O3.2. Knowledge and innovation ecosystem: Engage with the EEN, ADR, local authorities, including academia and innovation communities in Romania.

O3.3. HE programme community: Create and develop a community for each HE programme to benefit from information, networking, and training opportunities.

O3.4. Promotion of success stories: Highlight and promote success stories and case studies of Romanian entities that have benefited from HE funding ("Success @ Horizon!").

Indicators:

- I3.1. Number of networking events organized.
- I3.2. Number of new connections and partnerships formed.
- I3.3. Increase in Romanian participants in the HE programme community.
- I3.4. Number of success stories (case studies) shared.
- I3.5. Number of Romanian organisations' profiles on European platforms.

O4. NCP training-capacity building

O4.1. Participate in EU NCP support networks: NCPs to engage with EU NCP support networks to exchange knowledge, share best practices, and collaborate on cross-border initiatives. NCPs to participate in specialized working groups within the EU NCP networks.

O4.2. Attend EC webinars and workshops: NCPs regularly attend webinars and workshops organized by the European Commission (EC) to stay updated on Horizon Europe (HE) and other EU programs. Provide NCPs with resources and support to effectively apply the knowledge gained from these webinars.

O4.3. Allocate time for studying EC and HE documents: Schedule and monitor dedicated study time for NCPs to review and stay updated on relevant EC and Horizon Europe (HE) documents, guidelines, and updates.

O4.4. Facilitate peer learning and knowledge sharing: NCPs to share their experiences, challenges, and solutions with peers, enhancing collective knowledge. Peer-review sessions where NCPs can critique and provide feedback on each other's proposals or strategies.

Indicators:

- I4.1. Number of NCP trainings conducted within the EU NCP support networks.
- I4.2. Number of active NCP participants in EU NCP support network activities.
- I4.3. Number of NCPs attending EC webinars and workshops.
- I4.4. Number of EC webinars attended by each NCP.
- I4.5. Percentage of NCPs reporting increased knowledge and confidence after attending EC webinars.
- I4.6. Average hours per month allocated by NCPs for studying EC and HE documents.
- I4.7. Average number of key documents reviewed by NCPs each month.
- I4.8. Level of participation in knowledge-sharing platforms (from 1 to 10).
- I4.9. Number of NCPs reporting increased confidence and skills from peer interactions.

Annex 4. NCP EIC&EIE Individual Strategy and Operational Plan

Specific actions

1. Targeted awareness campaigns to inform specific sectors and stakeholders about EIC & EIE opportunities.

Why: Many potential applicants may not be aware of the EIC programs or how they can benefit from them.

Actions:

- Identify key sectors with high innovation potential (e.g., IT, biotech, green energy).
- Use sector-specific channels and events to disseminate information.
- Leverage media partnerships for broader reach.

Indicator: Increase in the number of inquiries and expressions of interest from targeted sectors.

2. Provide training and capacity-building programs focused on EIC-EIE applications.

Why: Low success rates often comes from poorly written proposals and lack of understanding of the application process.

Actions:

- Organize workshops and webinars on EIC & EIE application processes, focusing on successful proposal characteristics.
- Offer assistance and support for high-potential applicants.

Indicator: Improvement in the quality of submitted proposals and feedback from training participants.

3. Proposal review and feedback

Why: Providing constructive feedback before submission can significantly improve proposal quality.

Actions:

- Establish a team of sector-specific experts to review and provide detailed feedback on draft proposals.
- Set deadlines for submitting proposals for review well before the EIC & EIE deadlines.

Indicator: Increase in the number of proposals receiving positive feedback from the EIC & EIE.

4. Promote success stories and case studies of previous Romanian EIC & EIE applicants.

Why: Highlighting local success can inspire and motivate potential applicants. Provide concrete and practical tips and hints.

Actions:

- Create detailed case studies of successful applicants.
- Feature these stories prominently on the NCP website, newsletters, and social media.

Indicator: Higher engagement with promotional materials and increased interest in EIC & EIE programs.

5. Personalized consultation services to potential applicants.

Why: Direct, individualized support can address specific challenges and questions.

Actions:

- Set up a meeting system for one-on-one consultations.
- Provide tailored advice based on the applicant's project and sector.

Indicator: High satisfaction rates from consultation services and higher application submission rates.

6. Engagement with industry leaders and experts. Involve industry leaders and experts in the support process.

Why: Insights and advice from experienced professionals can greatly enhance proposal quality.

Actions:

- Create a group of industry leaders and innovation experts (EEN).
- Organize training programs where applicants can receive guidance from industry professionals.

Indicator: Improved proposal quality and increased success rates.

NCP EIC&EIE Focus

(to be monitored and revised annually)

EIC Pathfinder

EIC Pathfinder supports early-stage development of future and emerging breakthrough technologies. It targets high-risk, high-gain projects and is suitable for research-intensive and groundbreaking ideas.

Relevance for Romania:

- Research strengths. Romania has a solid academic and research base, with several universities and research institutions excelling in various fields.
- Innovation potential: There is significant potential for groundbreaking innovations in areas such as information technology, biotechnology, and renewable energy.
- Funding needs: Early-stage, high-risk projects often face challenges in securing initial funding, which Pathfinder can address.

NCP potential actions:

- Develop collaborations between academia and industry to develop high-risk, high-reward projects.
- Conduct targeted campaigns in research institutions to raise awareness about Pathfinder opportunities.
- Provide support for proposal development, including training on how to articulate high-risk, high-gain projects.

EIC Transition

EIC Transition funds innovation activities that go beyond the experimental proof of principle in laboratory to support both the maturation and validation of novel technologies and the development of a business case.

Relevance for Romania:

- Bridging the gap: Many Romanian projects successfully achieve proof of concept but struggle to transition towards market readiness.
- Commercialization challenges: Transition funding can help address challenges related to technology maturation and business model development.
- SME support: Romania has a growing number of innovative SMEs that can benefit from support to scale up their technologies.

NCP potential actions:

- Identify projects that have demonstrated proof of concept and need assistance in transitioning to market-ready solutions.
- Facilitate connections with potential investors and industry partners to aid in the transition phase.

EIC Accelerator

EIC Accelerator offers funding and support to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and start-ups with high-risk, high-potential innovations to help them develop and scale up their business.

Relevance for Romania:

- Start-Up ecosystem: Romania's start-up ecosystem is growing, with an increasing number of tech-based start-ups and SMEs showing potential for innovation.
- Market expansion: Many Romanian SMEs are looking to expand their market reach and scale their operations.

- Support for growth: Accelerator funding can provide the necessary resources for SMEs to scale up, including funding, mentoring, and market access.

NCP potential actions:

- Identify high-potential SMEs and start-ups that can benefit from Accelerator funding and support.

Annex 5. Implementation plan – Gantt chart NCP@UEFISCDI

Implementation plan

Year 1-2 (2021-2023): Focus on building internal capacities, awareness campaigns, and establishing professional working relationships with the Romanian academic and innovation community.

Year 3-4 (2024-2025): Intensify support services, enhance digital tools, and expand outreach activities.

Year 5 onwards (2026-2027): Evaluate progress, refine strategies, and aim for greater integration of Romanian entities in Horizon Europe.

Gantt Chart 2021-2022

	2021	2022	
	Sem. II	Sem. I	Sem. II
O1. Information dissemination, awareness raising			
O1.1. NCP website			
O1.2. Newsletters (info emails)			
O1.3. Events and workshops			
O1.4. Social media			
O2. Application support services			
O2.1. Email support			
O2.2. Support materials			
O2.3. Proposal design			
O2.4. Proposal review			
O2.5. Training and capacity building for applicants			
O2.6. Matchmaking services			
O3. Network building and visibility			
O3.1. National and European networks			
O3.2. Knowledge and innovation ecosystem			
O3.3. HE programme community			
O3.4. Promotion of success stories			
O4. NCP training-capacity building			
O4.1. Participate in EU NCP support networks			
O4.2. Attend EC webinars and workshops			
O4.3. Allocate time for studying EC and HE documents			
O4.4. Facilitate peer learning and knowledge sharing			

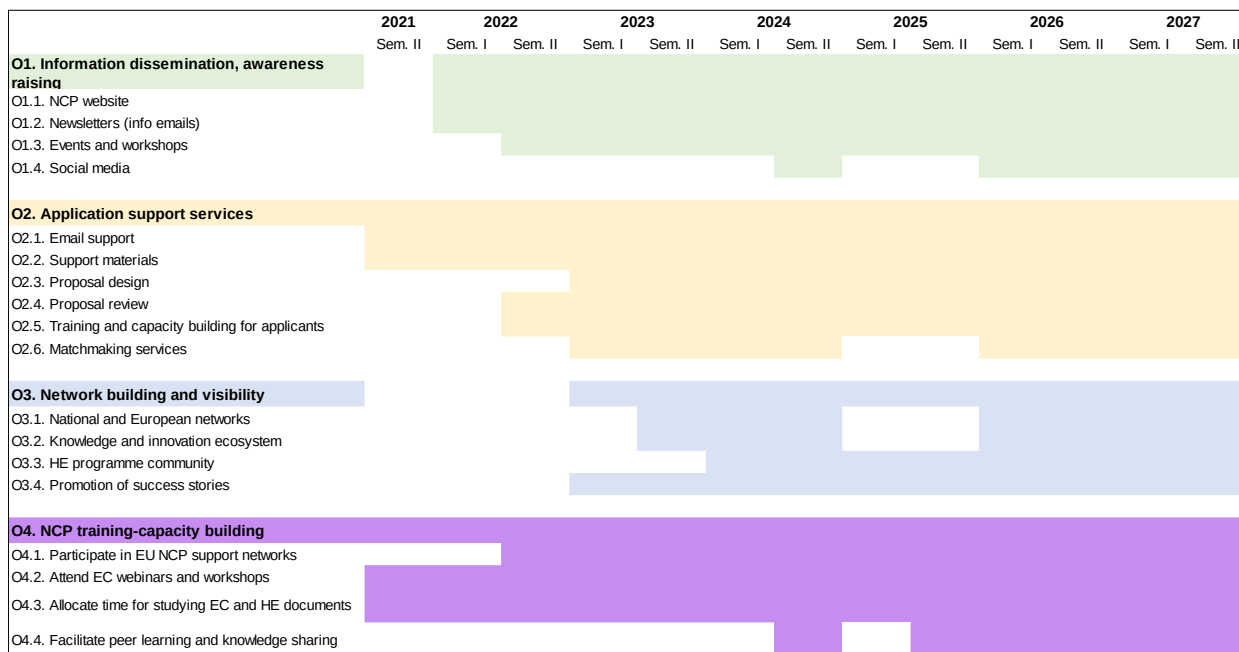
Gantt Chart 2021-2023

	2021	2022		2023	
	Sem. II	Sem. I	Sem. II	Sem. I	Sem. II
O1. Information dissemination, awareness raising					
O1.1. NCP website					
O1.2. Newsletters (info emails)					
O1.3. Events and workshops					
O1.4. Social media					
O2. Application support services					
O2.1. Email support					
O2.2. Support materials					
O2.3. Proposal design					
O2.4. Proposal review					
O2.5. Training and capacity building for applicants					
O2.6. Matchmaking services					
O3. Network building and visibility					
O3.1. National and European networks					
O3.2. Knowledge and innovation ecosystem					
O3.3. HE programme community					
O3.4. Promotion of success stories					
O4. NCP training-capacity building					
O4.1. Participate in EU NCP support networks					
O4.2. Attend EC webinars and workshops					
O4.3. Allocate time for studying EC and HE documents					
O4.4. Facilitate peer learning and knowledge sharing					

Gantt Chart 2021-2024

	2021	2022		2023		2024	
	Sem. II	Sem. I	Sem. II	Sem. I	Sem. II	Sem. I	Sem. II
O1. Information dissemination, awareness raising							
O1.1. NCP website							
O1.2. Newsletters (info emails)							
O1.3. Events and workshops							
O1.4. Social media							
O2. Application support services							
O2.1. Email support							
O2.2. Support materials							
O2.3. Proposal design							
O2.4. Proposal review							
O2.5. Training and capacity building for applicants							
O2.6. Matchmaking services							
O3. Network building and visibility							
O3.1. National and European networks							
O3.2. Knowledge and innovation ecosystem							
O3.3. HE programme community							
O3.4. Promotion of success stories							
O4. NCP training-capacity building							
O4.1. Participate in EU NCP support networks							
O4.2. Attend EC webinars and workshops							
O4.3. Allocate time for studying EC and HE documents							
O4.4. Facilitate peer learning and knowledge sharing							

Gantt Chart 2021-2027



Strategic refinement priorities (2026–2027)				
Priority / action	2026		2027	
	Sem. I	Sem. II	Sem. I	Sem. II
SP1. Systematic call-fit and readiness tools				
SP2. Differentiated service model and common proposal-support standards				
SP3. Post-award / implementation-oriented support and referral				
SP4. Research-management community and institutional dialogue				
SP5. Knowledge management, recurring-issue tracking and cross-programme learning				
SP6. Service-performance monitoring and structured feedback				
SP7. Guidance on generative AI, confidentiality and responsible use				
SP8. FP10 preparation and strategy update				

Note: These refinement priorities operationalise the 2026 SWOT / Strategic Gap Analysis and complement the core O1–O4 activities above.

Annex 6. Horizon Europe NCP Guide. Minimum standards and guiding principles for setting up national contact point (NCP) systems

Horizon Europe - The EU Framework Programme
for Research and Innovation
running from 2021 to 2027

Minimum standards and Guiding principles

for setting up systems of

National Contact Points (NCP systems)

under Horizon Europe

version: April 2024

https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ncp-guiding-principles_he_v2.0_en.pdf