

NCP@UEFISCDI Activity Report 2021–2026



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Author: Antoaneta Victoria Folea

Contact:

Horizon Europe NCP Unit

Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding – UEFISCDI

30 Frumoasă Street (ground floor), Bucharest

ncp@uefiscdi.ro

<http://www.ncp.uefiscdi.ro>

Note on preparation of the report and use of AI tools

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Executive summary

This report presents the activity of the NCP@UEFISCDI Unit from October 2021 to June 2026, covering both the volume of documented activity and the evolution of the service model.

Key results

- 6,382 support interactions; 634 newsletters; 78 events organised; 650 support materials; 283 proposal-design meetings and 141 proposals reviewed before submission.
- 416 matchmaking and visibility actions, 687 stakeholder meetings, 24 networking events, 362 new connections and partnerships, and 113 success stories / case studies.
- Expertise development included 289 documented participations in training activities within European NCP networks, 360 participations in European Commission webinars, and review of 870 key documents.

Main conclusions

- The model evolved from building expertise and trust, to diversifying services, and then to adapting support more clearly to applicant experience and project stage.
- NCP service performance is not equated with the national success rate or with the volume of Horizon Europe funding secured; the Unit is more appropriately assessed through accessibility, quality and relevance of support, expertise, and the capacity to adapt services.
- Priorities for the next period are clearer standards for proposal support and pre-check, differentiated support with equitable access for newcomers, clearer referral pathways, stronger knowledge management and service-quality indicators, and preparation for the transition to FP10.

Interpretation note

Indicators represent documented activity volumes, not counts of unique people or organisations. In the quantitative annexes, 0, N/A (not applicable) and ND (no distinct documented value) are explicitly distinguished, and training/webinar indicators are interpreted as documented participations where several experts may attend the same activity.

Key message: the report documents the scale and maturation of NCP@UEFISCDI activity and provides a basis for consolidating a clearer, more differentiated and more sustainable support model.

This report presents the activity of the NCP@UEFISCDI Unit from October 2021 to June 2026 and shows how the Unit’s strategic priorities were translated into services, activities and practical support tools for the research and innovation community.

The report combines documented activity indicators with a qualitative account of how the service model evolved over time: from information and general guidance towards more specialised and differentiated support for applicants, beneficiaries and organisations.

Figure 1. NCP@UEFISCDI activity at a glance, October 2021–June 2026

Documented activity volumes across the programmes managed by the Unit.



Note: indicators represent documented activity volumes, not unique people or organisations. Cluster 1 reporting begins in late 2025.

(Source: NCP@UEFISCDI operational records. Values are activity volumes rather than counts of unique people or organisations).

Context and purpose

The NCP@UEFISCDI Unit began operating in October 2021 as a dedicated structure supporting Romania's participation in part of the Horizon Europe programme. The Unit Strategy for 2021–2027 defined four main areas of work: information and promotion of Horizon Europe opportunities; support for proposal preparation; support for the internationalisation and visibility of Romanian organisations; and continuous development of NCP expertise.

This report covers the period from October 2021 to June 2026 and shows how these strategic directions were translated in practice into services, activities and support tools for the research and innovation community.

The report looks not only at what was delivered, but also at how the support model evolved over time: from information and general orientation towards more specialised services adapted to the experience and needs of applicants and beneficiaries.

1. Methodology and data sources

The report is based on information and data collected by the NCP@UEFISCDI Unit in its day-to-day activity from 2021 to June 2026. It draws on programme-level records, planning and analytical documents, support materials and tools developed by the Unit, and feedback received from applicants and beneficiaries.

Quantitative data are used where the available records are sufficiently clear and comparable. For activities that can be aggregated, the report presents documented totals for the period analysed. For indicators that describe a status at a particular point in time, such as the size of a programme community, the most recent available value is used. Three distinct reporting conventions are used in the tables: 0 for a documented zero value, N/A for an indicator that is not applicable to the programme or instrument type, and ND where no distinct documented value is available in the record used. An absent value should not automatically be interpreted as zero.

For Cluster 1, NCP activity within the NCP@UEFISCDI Unit began in late 2025, so the reporting period is shorter than for the other programmes.

The report aims to provide as accurate a picture as possible of the Unit's activity and the evolution of its services, without turning incomplete historical series into estimates or assumptions.

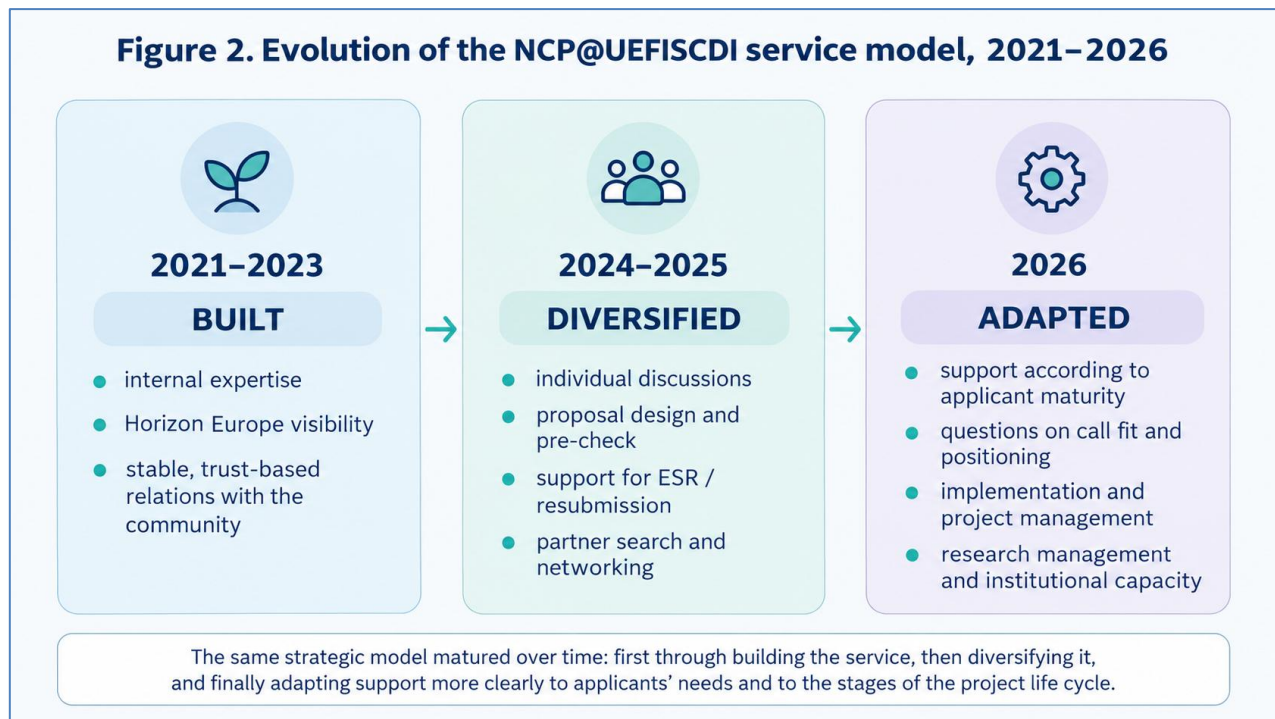
2. Evolution of the NCP@UEFISCDI Unit, 2021–2026

The activity of the NCP@UEFISCDI Unit evolved gradually as the team built experience and the needs of applicants and beneficiaries became more diverse.

During 2021–2023, the priority was to build internal expertise, increase the visibility of Horizon Europe and establish stable, trust-based working relationships with the research and innovation community. This corresponded to the first phase of the NCP Unit Strategy.

During 2024–2025, the services became more varied and more specialised. Alongside information and promotion, direct interactions with applicants increased in both number and type, including individual discussions, proposal-structuring support, pre-check, analysis of evaluation results, resubmission support, partner search and networking.

In the first half of 2026, accumulated experience allowed support to be adapted more clearly to applicant profiles and needs. Requests related to the period after submission also became more visible, including project implementation, consortium management, research management and the capacity of organisations to support participation in Horizon Europe.



(Source: NCP@UEFISCDI operational data and analyses).

3. Information, promotion and outreach

Keeping the community informed has been a constant part of NCP@UEFISCDI activity from the beginning. Between 2021 and June 2026, NCP experts sent 634 newsletters dedicated to the programmes in the Unit's portfolio and organised 78 information events, workshops and other community activities.

In addition to events organised directly, NCP@UEFISCDI experts participated in or contributed to many events organised with other organisations and networks. These activities brought Horizon Europe opportunities to different groups of potential applicants and created opportunities for direct discussion about calls, participation conditions and proposal preparation.

Over time, information activities became more targeted. While the first years focused mainly on explaining Horizon Europe and presenting available opportunities, later activities increasingly addressed specific calls, instruments or applicant groups.

Support materials played an important role in this evolution. During the period analysed, 650 materials were developed, including guides, presentations, explanatory resources and e-learning materials. These resources complemented direct interaction with applicants and made it possible to address recurring questions and difficulties in a form accessible to a wider audience.



(Source: NCP@UEFISCDI operational records).

4. Proposal-preparation support

Support for proposal preparation has been one of the central components of NCP@UEFISCDI activity.

Between 2021 and June 2026, 6,382 support interactions by email and telephone were recorded. These covered a wide range of questions, from clarifications on calls, eligibility and the Funding & Tenders Portal to proposal structure, evaluation criteria and stages of the application process.

As the Unit gained experience and its relationship with the community became more established, support became more applied and personalised. The period includes 283 documented proposal design meetings and 141 proposals reviewed before submission, with feedback provided to applicants. For the proposals-reviewed indicator, the counting unit is the proposal/draft rather than each feedback round; the same proposal reviewed in several rounds is counted once.

Pre-check was not intended to assess scientific content on behalf of evaluators or applicants. Its purpose was to help applicants understand call requirements, proposal structure and evaluation criteria. Depending on the programme and stage of the proposal, discussions could cover project coherence, call fit, clarity of objectives, section structure, impact, consortium roles or compliance with call requirements.

Support did not always end at submission. In recent years, discussions about evaluation outcomes and resubmission have become more frequent. Analysis of Evaluation Summary Reports (ESRs), identification of areas for improvement and discussions with applicants considering resubmission have become part of the service in several programmes within the Unit's portfolio.



(Source: NCP@UEFISCDI operational records).

5. Partnerships, networking and visibility

Participation in Horizon Europe depends not only on the quality of an idea or proposal, but also on access to relevant partners, networks and collaboration settings. For this reason, supporting organisational visibility and facilitating connections have been an important part of NCP@UEFISCDI activity.

Between 2021 and June 2026, 416 matchmaking and visibility actions were documented. Depending on the programme, these included promoting expressions of interest, facilitating access to brokerage platforms and events, supporting organisational profiles, and connecting organisations with networks or potential partners.

During the same period, NCP@UEFISCDI experts organised 24 networking events and documented 362 new connections and partnerships. The form of these activities differed between programmes, reflecting the nature of the instruments and the communities involved.

The relationship with the community was also built through direct dialogue. Unit records include 687 stakeholder meetings during the period analysed, involving applicants and beneficiaries, research and innovation organisations and other actors relevant to Horizon Europe participation.

Alongside the creation of new connections, activity also aimed to increase the visibility of existing experience. The Unit promoted 113 success stories and case studies and, where relevant to the programme, documented 307 profiles of Romanian organisations on European platforms.

The Unit also developed communities around different Horizon Europe programmes. These figures are not added across years because the same person may remain a community member over time. The most recent available values are therefore used to describe community size at the reporting point.



(Source: NCP@UEFISCDI operational records).

6. Development of NCP expertise and capacity

The quality of support provided to the community depends directly on NCP expertise and on the ability of NCPs to stay up to date with Horizon Europe rules, calls and programme changes. Continuous competence development has therefore been a constant priority of the NCP@UEFISCDI Unit.

Between 2021 and June 2026, Unit records include 289 participations in training activities within European NCP support networks and 360 participations in webinars organised by the European Commission. These indicators reflect documented participations rather than necessarily unique events: where several NCP experts attend the same activity, their participations may be recorded separately. These activities supported continuous updating of knowledge on Horizon Europe programmes and instruments, procedural changes, call-specific features, evaluation processes and issues relevant to supporting applicants and beneficiaries.

An important part of this learning process was the systematic study of European Commission and programme documents. Unit records include 870 key documents reviewed during the reporting period, including work programmes, guidance documents, training materials and other resources needed for NCP work.

Participation in European NCP networks also provided access to exchanges with NCPs from other countries, examples of good practice, peer learning and programme-specific information. These

contacts strengthened both individual expertise and the Unit's capacity to respond to increasingly diverse and specialised requests.

As applicant support became more complex, NCP learning needs also evolved. The focus is no longer only on knowing programme rules, but also on understanding evaluation logic, proposal design, project implementation and the wider context in which Horizon Europe operates.



(Source: NCP@UEFISCDI operational records).

7. Activity profile by programme

Although NCP@UEFISCDI activity is organised around the same strategic objectives, the type of support provided differs between programmes. These differences reflect the nature of the instruments, applicant profiles, call complexity and the types of relationships needed for participation.

Table 1. Activity profile across the Horizon Europe programmes managed by the NCP@UEFISCDI Unit

Programme	Main focus of NCP@UEFISCDI activity
ERC	individualised support, proposal design, pre-check, resubmission
MSCA	proposal support, mobility, visibility, profiles and networks
Cluster 1	community building, information, expertise development
Cluster 2	proposal support, outreach, networking, stakeholder engagement
Cluster 6	proposal support, matchmaking, networking, visibility

EIC / EIE	innovation, proposal support, ecosystems and matchmaking
EIT	information, community building, connection to ecosystems
WIDERA	proposal support, institutions, networking, research management

For **ERC (European Research Council)**, activity is primarily oriented towards individualised support for researchers, discussion of applicant profile and proposal positioning, draft review and resubmission support. Matchmaking and organisational-profile indicators do not apply in the same way as they do in collaborative programmes.

For **MSCA (Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions)**, activity combines information and proposal-preparation support with an important component of international visibility and connection. Profile promotion, support in identifying opportunities and analysis of evaluation results have been used to support both individual applicants and host organisations.

For **Cluster 1 (Health)**, NCP activity within the Unit began in late 2025. The available data therefore cover a shorter period and mainly reflect the initial stage of community building, information and development of programme-specific expertise.

For **Cluster 2 (Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society)**, activity included both information and proposal support, alongside intensive dialogue with relevant organisations and communities. In recent years, the focus expanded towards new categories of potential applicants, visibility and access to networking and partnership opportunities.

For **Cluster 6 (Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment)**, the activity volume reflects the complexity and diversity of the community served. Support included information, individual discussions, proposal design, pre-check, matchmaking, networking and activities to increase the visibility of Romanian organisations.

For **EIC (European Innovation Council)** and **EIE (European Innovation Ecosystems)**, activity focused on applicants with an innovation profile, understanding the instruments, proposal development and connection with relevant innovation-ecosystem actors. Matchmaking and visibility support were particularly relevant for instruments involving collaboration or ecosystem development.

For **EIT (European Institute of Innovation and Technology)**, activity had a strong information, community-building and ecosystem-connection component. As the Unit's portfolio expanded, so did the need to clarify the specific nature of EIT compared with other Horizon Europe opportunities.

For **WIDERA (Widening Participation & Strengthening the European Research Area)**, activity combined proposal support with networking, partner search, pre-check and community development. The institutional character of many Widening instruments made dialogue with organisations and research-management structures particularly relevant.

The same strategic framework was therefore applied differently across programmes. The NCP role was not uniform; it was adapted to the instrument, the applicant profile and the needs of each community.

8. Evolution of the NCP@UEFISCDI service model

Across 2021-June 2026, NCP@UEFISCDI activity changed not only in volume but also in the type of support provided.

In the early years, a substantial share of activity focused on information, explaining Horizon Europe, presenting calls and guiding applicants towards relevant resources.

Gradually, as team experience increased and more complex community needs emerged, services expanded towards more applied forms of support: individual discussions, proposal design, pre-check, analysis of evaluation results, resubmission support, matchmaking and networking.

During 2025-2026 this evolution became even more visible. Applicants and beneficiaries increasingly requested support not only in finding a call or preparing a proposal, but also in decisions around call fit, project positioning, preparation for evaluation, implementation and project management.

Organisational needs also became more visible. In some cases, the issue was not only proposal preparation, but the institutional capacity to sustain participation: research management, legal and financial support, international partnerships, project management and the use of experience gained through previous projects.

This evolution led to clearer differentiation of services. A newcomer to Horizon Europe requires a different type of support from a researcher preparing a resubmission, a consortium coordinator or a beneficiary already in implementation.

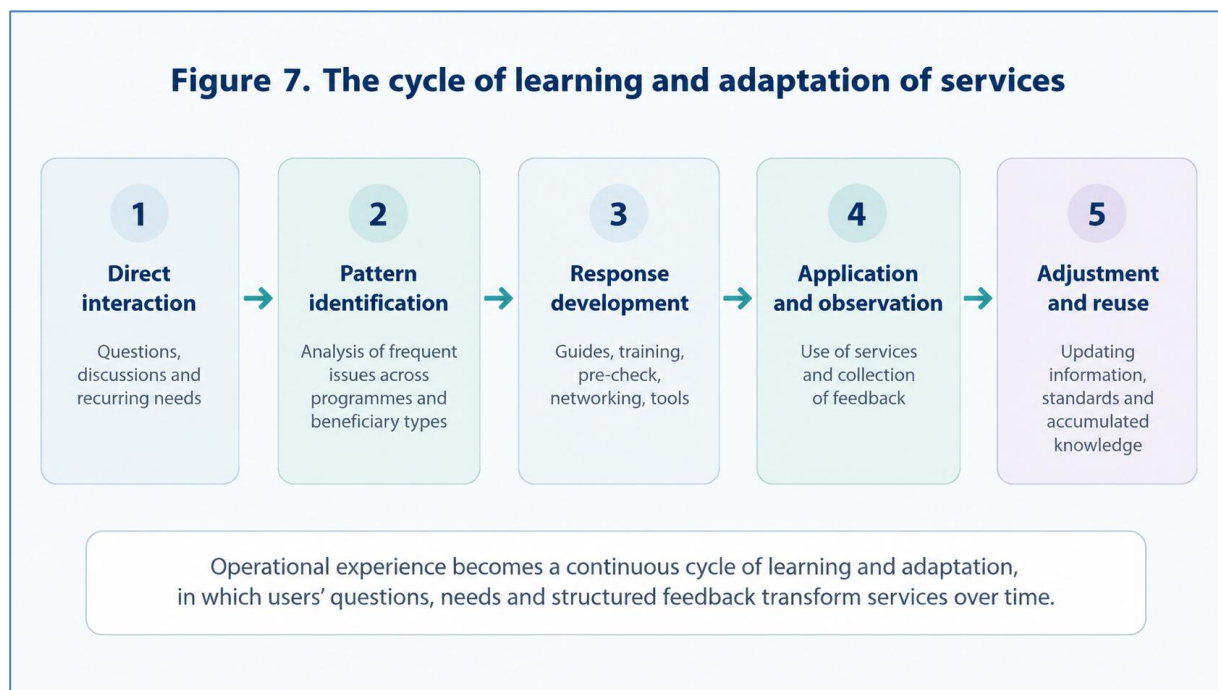
9. Results and organisational learning

Activity during 2021-June 2026 shows not only an increase in the number and diversity of services delivered, but also a gradual accumulation of experience within the NCP@UEFISCDI Unit.

Continuous contact with applicants, beneficiaries and organisations made recurring needs more visible: difficulties in choosing the right call, preparing proposals, finding partners, interpreting evaluation results, deciding on resubmission and, increasingly, managing implementation and project-management issues. These observations were used to adjust services. As certain types of request recurred, the Unit developed new materials, training sessions, individual meetings, pre-check formats, matchmaking activities and other support tools.

Another important result was the strengthening of internal expertise. Continuous participation in training, European Commission webinars and European NCP networks supported regular knowledge updates and exchange of experience with comparable structures across Europe.

At the same time, the Unit's activity contributed to more stable relationships with the community. The high volume of interactions, meetings and support activities reflects sustained dialogue with applicants and organisations interested in Horizon Europe.



(Source: NCP@UEFISCDI practice).

The report does not seek to attribute Romania's Horizon Europe participation outcomes directly to the NCP Unit. Success rates, funding secured or Romania's position in the programme depend on many factors, including proposal quality, organisational capacity, consortia, the level of competition and programme conditions. The Unit's activity is more appropriately assessed through the aspects it can directly influence: access to information, the quality and diversity of support, availability of expertise, development of resources and the ability to adapt services to community needs.

10. Directions for 2026–2027 and the transition to FP10

Experience accumulated between 2021 and June 2026 provides a sufficiently clear basis for adjusting the next stage of NCP@UEFISCDI work.

During 2026-2027, the emphasis can shift from expanding the number of services towards consolidating and organising them. Several activities developed in recent years are already mature and can continue in a clearer, more predictable and more accessible form.

An important direction is to differentiate support according to applicant experience and project stage. The needs of a newcomer are different from those of an applicant preparing a resubmission, a consortium coordinator or a beneficiary in implementation. NCP Unit services can be organised more clearly around these profiles.

At the same time, recent experience points to the value of common standards for selected services, particularly proposal support, pre-check and referral to other sources of expertise. Clear standards can support both equitable access and sustainable use of NCP time and expertise.

Another priority is stronger internal knowledge management. Recurring issues, frequently asked questions, solutions identified and experience accumulated across programmes can be organised and reused more systematically so that learning does not remain only at individual level.

For the transition to FP10, Horizon Europe experience can be used to identify community needs early and adapt services before the start of the next framework programme. Direct relationships with applicants and organisations remain one of the most important sources of information for the future development of the Unit.



(Source: NCP@UEFISCDI operational experience).

Table 2. Development priorities for NCP@UEFISCDI services, 2026–2027

What we keep	What we consolidate	What we prepare
information, training, proposal support, networking	service standards, knowledge management, differentiated support	transition to FP10, new needs, new instruments

Conclusions

October 2021-June 2026 was a period of building and maturation for the NCP@UEFISCDI Unit. Activity started from the need to inform and guide the community and gradually expanded towards more applied, specialised services closer to the concrete needs of applicants and beneficiaries.

The data presented in this report show sustained activity in information, proposal support, networking, visibility and continuous development of NCP expertise. At the same time, direct interaction with the community made recurring needs visible and supported gradual adjustment of the services provided.

One of the most important results of the period analysed is this capacity to adapt. As applicant experience became more diverse and requests more complex, support evolved from general responses towards more differentiated assistance adapted to the programme, instrument type and stage reached by the applicant or beneficiary.

The report does not seek to link NCP activity directly to national Horizon Europe results. These outcomes depend on a much wider set of factors. The Unit can instead be assessed through the quality and diversity of its services, accessibility of support, development of expertise and capacity to respond to changing needs.

For the next period, the main challenge is no longer the continuous creation of new services, but the consolidation of existing ones, clearer support standards, stronger internal learning mechanisms and preparation for the transition to FP10.

Experience accumulated during 2021–2026 gives the NCP@UEFISCDI Unit a strong basis for the next stage of development: a clearer, more differentiated and more sustainable support model built around real community needs.

During the period analysed, the NCP@UEFISCDI Unit moved from building the service towards consolidating a mature model of support for participation in Horizon Europe.

Annex 1. NCP@UEFISCDI activity indicators by programme, January-June 2026

This annex reports the documented values for January–June 2026. The “Romanian participants in the HE programme community” indicator is a status value per programme and should not be summed across programmes, because the same participant may belong to more than one community. Conventions: 0 = documented zero value; N/A = not applicable; ND = no distinct documented value. ND should not be interpreted as zero.

Indicator	ERC	MSCA	CL1	CL2	CL6	EIC–EIE	EIT	WIDERA	Total 2026
I1.2 Newsletters sent	15	24	13	14	15	13	8	33	135
I1.3 Events organised	ND	1	ND	1	3	1	ND	2	8
I1.4 Events attended / co-organised by NCP	4	4	4	5	21	ND	4	14	56
I1.5 Social media engagement	ND	ND	12	10	9	11	11	ND	53
I2.1 Support interactions	290	212	15	127	411	216	37	287	1,595
I2.2 Support materials	7	24	6	10	20	12	11	20	110
I2.3 Proposal design meetings	7	6	ND	ND	6	7	ND	35	61
I2.4 Proposals reviewed	4	2	ND	ND	5	2	ND	12	25
I2.5 Applicant training sessions	ND	3	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	ND	3
I2.6 Matchmaking & visibility actions	N/A	11	ND	3	9	ND	ND	1	24
I2.7 Stakeholder meetings	11	6	10	59	11	17	37	41	192

I3.1 Networking events	ND	ND	ND	1	1	ND	ND	1	3
I3.2 New connections & partnerships	N/A	8	ND	ND	71	11	1	13	104
I3.3 Romanian participants in HE programme community	488	281	215	513	630	304	105	326	2,862*
I3.4 Success stories / case studies	ND	24	ND	ND	0	ND	ND	5	29
I3.5 Romanian organisation profiles on European platforms	ND	7	ND	ND	36	ND	ND	ND	43
I4.1 NCP trainings in EU support networks	20	11	ND	7	6	5	13	11	73
I4.4 EC webinars attended	4	10	32	8	9	4	6	6	79
I4.7 Key documents reviewed	126	27	15	22	35	34	38	45	342

* I3.3 is shown as the sum of programme-level status values only for reference in the source table; it should not be interpreted as a unique-person total across programmes.

Annex 2. Definition and interpretation of indicators

Indicator	What it measures	Value type	Interpretation note
I1.2 Newsletters sent	Number of newsletter / information-email communications sent by the NCP to inform the community about calls, news, deadlines and events	Cumulative volume	Annual values are added. The indicator does not represent unique recipients.
I1.3 Events organised	Number of info days, workshops, seminars, webinars or other events organised by the NCP	Cumulative volume	Documented events during the period analysed are added.
I2.1 Support interactions by email and telephone	Requests and interactions through which the NCP provided information, clarification or assistance to applicants and beneficiaries	Cumulative volume	One person or organisation may generate several interactions. The indicator does not represent unique people.
I2.2 Support materials	Guides, presentations, explanatory materials, e-learning resources and other tools developed by the NCP	Cumulative volume	Materials documented in programme records are counted. Updates may be recorded differently depending on programme-level record keeping.
I2.3 Proposal design meetings	Individual or group meetings with applicants dedicated to discussing the structure, logic and preparation of a proposal	Cumulative volume	The indicator measures meetings, not the number of proposals or unique people.
I2.4 Proposals reviewed / proposal review / pre-check	Proposals or drafts for which the NCP provided feedback before submission	Cumulative volume	NCP feedback is not an official evaluation and does not imply responsibility for the scientific content of the proposal. Proposals/drafts are counted rather than feedback rounds; the same proposal reviewed in several rounds is counted once.
I2.5 Applicant training	Training sessions organised by the NCP on proposal writing, submission, project management or other relevant topics	Cumulative volume	Documented activities are added. Participants are not automatically treated as unique people.
I2.6 Matchmaking and visibility actions	Activities through which the NCP facilitated partner identification or applicant visibility: expressions of interest, profiles, brokerage,	Cumulative volume	The indicator reflects facilitation activity, not the actual formation of a consortium or the success of a collaboration.

	contact facilitation, etc.		
I2.7 Stakeholder meetings	Meetings with applicants, beneficiaries, organisations, networks or other actors relevant to Horizon Europe participation	Cumulative volume	Broad indicator; not all meetings constitute proposal support.
I3.1 Networking events	Events organised or facilitated to connect organisations and develop professional relationships	Cumulative volume	Reported separately from general information events where networking is the main purpose.
I3.2 New connections and partnerships	Connections or collaborative relationships documented as a result of networking, matchmaking or facilitation activities	Cumulative volume	Not every connection leads to a proposal or project. The indicator measures connection, not subsequent outcomes.
I3.3 Romanian participants in the HE programme community	Size of the community created and developed around a Horizon Europe programme	Status value	Not added annually. The most recent available value is used because the same person may remain in the community across several years.
I3.4 Success stories / case studies	Examples of participation or projects promoted for visibility, learning and dissemination of good practice	Cumulative volume	Measures examples promoted, not the total number of funded projects.
I3.5 Profiles of Romanian organisations on European platforms	Profiles promoted or supported to increase visibility and facilitate partner search	Documented / cumulative volume, as applicable	Particularly relevant for collaborative programmes. May be marked N/A for predominantly individual instruments.
I4.1 Training in European NCP networks	Training and capacity-building activities attended by NCPs within NCP support networks	Cumulative volume	Participation indicator rather than a count of unique events. If several NCP experts attend the same activity, their participations may be recorded separately.
I4.4 European Commission webinars and workshops	Information / training activities organised by the European Commission and attended by NCP experts	Cumulative volume	Participation indicator rather than a count of unique webinars. If several NCP experts attend the same activity, their participations may be recorded separately in the operational records.
I4.7 Key documents reviewed	Work programmes, guidance, European Commission documents, training materials and other relevant documents studied to maintain expertise	Cumulative volume	Represents knowledge-building activity; it is not a direct indicator of services delivered to the community.
0 / N/A / ND	Conventions used: 0 =	Reporting	0 should not be confused with

	documented zero value; N/A = indicator not applicable to the programme or instrument type; ND = no distinct documented value is available in the record used for this report.	convention	missing data. N/A is used only where non-applicability is clear; ND should not be interpreted as zero.
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Methodological note. The indicators were defined on the basis of the NCP@UEFISCDI Strategy and the Unit's operational records. Documented totals for October 2021–June 2026 are used for volume indicators. For status indicators, such as community size, the most recent available value is used. Values should not automatically be interpreted as counts of unique people or organisations and are not used for performance comparisons between programmes, because the instruments, communities and reporting periods differ.

Annex 3. Evolution of SWOT and Strategic Gap Analysis, 2021–2026

The SWOT material below is reproduced from successive internal strategy updates. Earlier wording reflects the terminology and perspective used at the time and should be read as a longitudinal record rather than as a current assessment.

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) • 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.	Weaknesses (W) • 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) • 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.	Threats (T) • 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
INTERNAL	Strengths (S) • 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.	Weaknesses (W) • 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.
EXTERNAL	Opportunities (O) • 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.	Threats (T) • 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.

Strategic Gap Analysis 2021-2026

The matrices below reproduce the original English wording from successive strategy updates. They are presented as a longitudinal management record; terminology and emphasis changed over time as the service matured.

Strategic Gap Analysis 2021

Current state Where we are now	Actions Steps towards the objective	Objective / desired state Where we 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 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	Capacity building. Each and all NCPs become experts on their HE programmes, to provide expert support and assistance to colleagues participating in Horizon Europe.

Strategic Gap Analysis 2022

Current state Where we are now	Actions Steps towards the objective	Objective / desired state Where we 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 national level • Not all Romanian institutions have a strategy for developing and submitting 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) organisation profiles on the Funding & Tenders Portal • Need for support in proposal writing • Need for specific legal and financial information during proposal preparation	1. Applicant Perspective • Expert and knowledgeable NCP • Quality of support materials • Prompt and useful assistance 2. Internal Perspective (NCP@UEFISCDI) • Newsletter / NCP website updates • Support materials • Events – online, hybrid and in person • Q&A and meetings with applicants • NCP training • Establish and maintain links with the EC and relevant programme officers 3. Learning & Growth Perspective • Build expertise on each HE programme • Better internal and external communication skills 4. External Perspective • Prompt, useful and documented responses • Inform and report to relevant institutional and European actors	Building internal capacities, awareness campaigns, and establishing professional working relationships with the Romanian academic and innovation community.

Strategic Gap Analysis 2023

Current state Where we are now	Actions Steps towards the objective	Objective / desired state Where we aim to be
Applicants & Institutions • Inadequate support at institutional level for applicants, including motivation to apply • Insufficient or inadequate support for implementation of HE projects on financial, logistical and infrastructure aspects • Researchers are not sufficiently motivated to apply • Some researchers express initial interest through NCP contact or EOI, but do not always continue the dialogue	1. Applicant Perspective • Expert and knowledgeable NCP • Quality of support materials • Prompt and useful assistance 2. Internal Perspective (NCP@UEFISCDI) • Newsletter, website and Brainmap community updates • Support materials and e-learning resources • Events, Q&A and meetings with applicants • Assistance for finding partners and proposal pre-check • Promote success stories and build networks • NCP training and links with the EC and relevant programme officers 3. Learning & Growth Perspective • Capacity building and programme expertise • Better communication skills 4. External Perspective • Prompt, useful and documented responses • Reporting and promotion of success stories	Increasing the confidence of the Romanian academic and innovation community in the support and expertise of each National Contact Point of the NCP Unit.

Strategic Gap Analysis 2024

Current state Where we are now	Actions Steps towards the objective	Objective / desired state Where we aim to be
Applicants • Misidentification of motivation for the project • Lack of expertise for EC/HE requirements or for the chosen field of research • Some applicants have difficult relationships with other organisations • Lack of sufficient knowledge to match specific expertise with HE calls Institutions • Organisations do not always provide feedback to the NCP on what they need • Requests may arrive at the last minute • Limited links with other Romanian organisations • Knowledge and collaborators are not always shared 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, website and community updates • Guides, presentations and e-learning resources • Events, Q&A and applicant meetings • Partner-search support, proposal pre-check and success-story promotion • Network building and NCP training • Maintain links with the EC and relevant programme officers 3. Learning & Growth Perspective • Build programme expertise and communication skills 4. External Perspective • Prompt and documented responses, reporting and coordination	Providing tailored guidance, support and information to researchers, innovators and institutions, ensuring they can effectively contribute to and benefit from Horizon Europe.

Strategic Gap Analysis 2025

Current state Where we are now	Actions Steps towards the objective	Objective / desired state Where we aim to be
• 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 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: 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

Strategic Gap Analysis 2026

Current state Where we are now	Actions Steps towards the objective	Objective / desired state Where we aim to be
• 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	• 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: 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	• 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

areas	• External Perspective: use aggregated NCP observations as structured feedback to relevant national and European actors; prepare the service model for FP10	
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