

Guide on Advancing Europe Package



Contents

- Introduction to Guide on Advancing Europe Package2
- Activities of Advancing Europe Package4
 - Pre-check services4
 - Matchmaking6
 - Study visits7
- Annex I – KPIs and finances for AEP beneficiaries8

Introduction to Guide on Advancing Europe Package

Main purpose of this Guide is to present actions to be organized by NCP hosting organisations from the Widening countries and outermost regions which are not partners to the project consortium, towards their national stakeholders in frames of Widera project.

The document also designates the entities which may apply for the reimbursement of the costs of implementing the project, as well as describes the benefits which may be achieved by stakeholders with the below listed services offered by the Work package 8 – Advancing Europe Package (WP8) support:

1. Pre-check services - the services in regard to proposals, to be delivered by NCPs (National Contact Points) and/or external experts, include:
 - support to applicants from Widening countries through dedicated expert database that has been set up as part of the AEP implementation process,
 - organisation of 3 workshops on proposal preparation and 1 Info Day per country,
 - set of materials in national languages;
2. Matchmaking through participation into Pillar II clusters' Brokerage Events;
3. Study visits for researchers and research managers.

The Guide delivers general information regarding actions which shall be scheduled within the Work package and includes links to the materials already published on <https://www.ncpwideranet.eu/> which are related to implementation of the above-listed tasks.

Given that NCP_WIDERA.NET project aims at developing new services towards both Widening NCPs and stakeholder communities, this Guide is intended to be a *live document* and might be updated with new guidelines and suggestions at the later stage of the project implementation.

Beneficiaries of Advancing Europe Package activities

The first group are **project partners** – NCP hosting organisations from Widening countries, beneficiary members of Widera consortium who are contracted with relevant budget intended for implementation of all activities under *Work package WP8 – Advancing Europe Package support*, namely:

1. NARODOWE CENTRUM BADAŃ I ROZWOJU (NCBR), Poland
2. IDRYMA TECHNOLOGIAS KAI EREVNAS (FORTH/PRAXI), Greece
3. AGENCIA ESTATAL CONSEJO SUPERIOR DE INVESTIGACIONES CIENTIFICAS (CSIC), Spain
4. MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION, SPORT, YOUTH, RESEARCH AND INNOVATION (MCST), Malta
5. LIETUVOS MOKSLO TARYBA (RCL), Lithuania
6. SIHTASUTUS EESTI TEADUSAGENTUUR (ETAg), Estonia
7. MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE (MON), Bulgaria
8. AGENCIJA ZA MOBILNOST I PROGRAME EUROPSKE UNIJE (AMEUP), Croatia
9. IDRYMA EREVNAS KAI KAINOTOMIAS (RIF), Cyprus
10. TECHNOLOGICKE CENTRUM PRAHA (TC PRAHA), Czechia
11. FUNDACAO PARA A CIENCIA E A TECNOLOGIA (FCT), Portugal
12. CENTRUM VEDECKO TECHNICKYCH INFORMACII SLOVENSKEJ REPUBLIKY (CVTI SR), Slovakia
13. MINISTRSTVO ZA VISOKO ŠOLSTVO, ZNANOST IN INOVACIJE (MVZI), Slovenia
14. NEMZETI KUTATASI FEJLESZTESI ES INNOVACIOS HIVATAL (NKFIH), Hungary
15. LATVIJAS ZINATNES PADOME (LZS), Latvia
16. AGJENCIA KOMBETARE E KERKIMIT SHKENCOR DHE INOVACIONIT (NASRI), Albania

17. SCIENTIFIC AND INNOVATION PARTNERSHIP ASSISTANCE CENTER (SIPAC), Armenia
18. NATIONAL TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION AUTHORITY (InnovAuth), Israel
19. Ss. CYRIL AND METHODIUS UNIVERSITY IN SKOPJE (IZIIS), Macedonia
20. AGENTIA NATIONALA PENTRU CERCETARE SI DEZVOLTARE (NARD), Moldova
21. TURKIYE BILIMSEL VE TEKNOLOJIK ARASTIRMA KURUMU (TUBITAK), Turkey/Türkiye
22. MINISTARSTVO PROSVETE, NAUKE I TEHNOLOSKOG RAZVOJA (MPNTR), Serbia
23. MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH (MHESR), Tunisia.

The second group are **NCP hosting entities from outside of the consortium** which are authorized to receive financial resources to implement Advancing Europe Package through the means of *Financial Support to Third Parties* scheme: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, France's outermost regions, Morocco, Montenegro, Romania, Ukraine and Kosovo¹.

Support through Cascading Grant Facility will be offered in the form of lump sums ensuring the effective management by the Project Coordinator. FST call will be announced by the coordinator in an open and transparent manner in accordance to the ERA Guidelines. A Committee established by Coordinator and consisting of experienced project members from the Management Board will be responsible for execution of the selection process.

Both groups of NCPs are obliged to report their activities to the Committee every 12 months to ensure that activities indicators are achieved. Reports will be analysed by the Committee and results will also be presented to the European Advisory Board for comments and suggestions. Depending on the progress of achieving the KPIs for AEP, adjustments to KPI numbers can be done at later stage of AEP implementation to ensure that goals set by project are met.

Both groups of NCP hosting organizations are entitled to deliver a predefined number of activities (workshops, participation of stakeholders to brokerage events and study visits, proposals evaluated by experts from Widera database and AEP NCP beneficiaries) that were agreed-upon during the preparatory phase of NCP_WIDERA.NET project. Details on those KPIs are included in Annex I to this Guide.

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Activities of Advancing Europe Package

Pre-check services

The main aim of these services is increasing awareness regarding methodology of proposal's preparation amongst future applicants from Widening countries.

Proposed activities address the main barriers which Widening NCP systems and countries face. The barriers relate to the low participation of legal entities in Framework Programmes, low quality of proposals, weaker connections to collaboration networks and matchmaking opportunities and in many cases a lack of relevant resources in regard to NCP support as the institutional element of national Framework Programmes ecosystems. The barriers will be tackled through the development of professionalised services and setting their standards. The project delivers resources to Widening countries and outermost regions allowing them to successfully achieve a new level of quality. Thanks to the applied model, benefitting NCP organisations will have the opportunity to enhance their capacities and offer a new portfolio of services to clients. Therefore, the intervention will focus on proposal pre-check service including the possibility of contracting external experts for the process and/or performing the activity by NCPs themselves. Moreover, NCPs will receive assistance to deliver high quality training courses on proposal preparation to applicants. In line with the destination priorities, the scope of the service is dedicated to the Widening actions as well as Pillar II and ERA actions with coordination or work package led by Widening applicants. Implementation of this strategy shall allow, in the next step, its extension in a pilot form to other Horizon Europe parts, such as ERC.

Expert database

Expert database is the portal developed by NCBR which purpose is to facilitate the matchmaking of the experts and candidates preparing the proposal within Horizon Europe areas of interest (Widening, ERA, Pillar II clusters).

An open **call for experts** will be launched upon opening of NCP_WIDERA.NET expert database and those will be recruited internationally. Database therefore will include records of external experts qualified to deliver the service of the proposal pre-check. Its structure and functionalities will be adapted to the process of the pre-check. On-line application and evaluation according to the criteria set by the project consortium will precede inserting the record of a relevant expert in the data base. Criteria will include gender aspects, fairness and openness, as well as transparency.

The obligation of candidates for experts while creating the record in the database will be to: prove their expected experience, select areas of interest (Widening, ERA, Pillar II clusters) and specify key words of their expertise.

The database access will be open to all AEP beneficiaries, enabling the selection of the most appropriate candidate to complete pre-check service for a single proposal. The data base will have other functionalities enabling e.g. history track of services and extracting statistics.

A guide and trainings supporting AEP NCPs in using the database will be provided at a later stage, to ensure efficient matching of experts with applicants submitting their draft project proposals.

Potential applicants (coordinators and/or work package leaders) from AEP beneficiary countries will be invited to register in the database as well. AEP will offer a service of matching the applicants with

experts who can provide a pre-check service of the proposals. For this activity to be efficient and beneficial for the applicants, they need to meet several conditions when registering their proposals:

- finished proposal needs to be submitted no later than four weeks before the call deadline,
- the proposal needs to be as close to completion as possible and needs to be prepared in English,
- ideally, the coordinator should reach out beforehand to other pre-check services by the relevant Cluster NCP networks in Pillar II of Horizon Europe.

Selection process of an expert delivering the service should be divided into two steps. The first one will be the creation of the short list based on key words matching between the proposal and experts. The second step will be the selection of the appropriate expert according to the rules of best matching, transparency, availability and gender aspects. Each country participating in the project has the obligation to organize a pre-set number of matching between the experts and the applicants. These numbers are included in Annex I to the guide.

Each expert will be remunerated with €600 (gross, subject to tax) for a single service including analysis of the proposal, preparation of written recommendations and meeting with coordinators team and/or consortium for providing feedback and clarifying any doubts. The single service should last up to 20 working hours and the remuneration level is benchmarked according to the EC standard per diem for evaluators reaching 600 euros. A *Model Contract for Experts* has been prepared by NCBR. This document can serve as a basis for each NCP institution but by no means it is required that NCPs are obliged to use this document only. Each NCP organization has to follow their organization's and national regulations regarding the contracting and paying for expert's interventions so when a different contract is required by specific organization, it can be signed by NCP organization with experts. The same principle is to be applied for remuneration payments – internal procedures of each NCP organization apply.

Workshops and Info Day

Each AEP beneficiary country will organise at least 3 workshops on proposal preparation and one information day in their respective countries. To aid AEP beneficiaries in this activity, several supporting documents were prepared by NCP_WIDERA.NET and are a good starting point in the process of organizing national events in frames of AEP activities: [Proposal pre-screening guide](#), [How to organise national-level seminars](#). AEP beneficiaries are encouraged to invite experts selected from the expert database to take active part in proposal preparation workshops.

To gain more insight and best practices on how to organize workshops on proposal preparation, it is suggested to follow *WP1 – Proposal pre-check* team as four (one-day) transnational seminars covering different widening regions (1. Baltic region; 2. V4 region; 3. Portugal, Greece, Cyprus, Malta + Western Balkan countries, 4. North Africa and Outermost regions) are scheduled to be organized in 2023 and 2024. AEP beneficiaries will be informed about dates, scope of Horizon Europe calls to be covered by the seminars as well as audience that will be targeted by those events.

To further support organization of national information days, NCP_WIDERA.NET will prepare a set of materials that AEP beneficiaries may use for the benefit of their events. Materials will be provided by the project's WP4 team and AEP beneficiaries can use their AEP assigned budget to translate them in national languages.

Information regarding the workshops and Info Days organized under WP1 and AEP activities of WP8 will be published and disseminated through [NCP_WIDERA.NET project webpage](#).

Matchmaking

Matchmaking events play an important role in the process of enhancing participation of stakeholders from Widening countries in Framework Programmes calls for proposals. Brokerage events offer multiple opportunities to establish working contacts between coordinators looking for new partners into their proposals and vice versa.

AEP partners can utilize entries of applicants from the Widera database and select them to be recipients of the financial support. AEP offers financing travels and logistics of applicants to Pillar II clusters Brokerage Events which are organized in situ.

NCP_WIDERA.NET does not set any strict conditions for selection of applicants by AEP beneficiaries but it might be considered to give priority to those institutions that can actively participate and contribute to brokerage events, namely:

- potential coordinators,
- potential WP leaders or contributors to projects,
- institutions willing to share their competences and ideas through pitch presentations that are a common part of brokerage events.

Each AEP beneficiary will be responsible of selecting representatives from institutions, having in mind their internal priorities, needs of research communities and overall goal of AEP to enhance active and successful participation of Widening community in Horizon Europe calls for proposals.

NCP_WIDERA.NET's *WP1 – Proposal pre-check and WP2 – Matchmaking* teams work jointly with NCP projects of Pillar II to provide networking opportunities to Widening applicants in a broader Horizon Europe environment. The final goal is to help the applicants build valuable partnerships within Pillar II as well as within Widening calls, including Hop-on facility. AEP partners will be provided with up-to-date information about every opportunity for their stakeholders to take part in on-site brokerage events.

WP1 and WP2 teams will also work closely with organizers of Pillar II brokerage events to include training activities (organised as side events to brokerage events) dedicated to Pillar II applicants from Widening countries. Aim of those training events will be to:

- help them prepare and coordinate successful proposals for Pillar II calls,
- support and train on how to successfully join proposals for Pillar II calls,
- join ongoing Horizon Europe-funded projects using the hop-on facility

Annex I provides information on a number of participations to be financially supported by each AEP beneficiary. Travel limits were pre-set to €1000 per travel and each AEP NCP organization is responsible to cover and reimburse expense of national stakeholders according to internal rules and procedures of each NCP organization.



Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most brokerage events have been moved to be organized fully online. This requires more careful approach towards collaboration with Pillar II NCP networks, to keep track of brokerage events scheduled to be organized and to identify those events that will take place on-site.

Study visits

Study visits are integral part of *WP2 – Matchmaking* within NCP_WIDERA.NET project. The aim of study visits (6 such visits are planned) is to allow representatives of Widening institutions (researchers and research managers) to gather best practices from advanced partners' institutions (in terms of research management) and to explore potential collaboration under WIDERA topics of Destination 1 and 2 and for joint research projects, including other parts of HE such as Pillar II, ERA or EIC opportunities. Upon completion of setting the standards of study visits and selection of host organisations, calls for participation for every study visit will be sent directly to AEP beneficiaries and published on project website as well.

As with other AEP activities, every AEP NCP is responsible of selecting potential participants of study visits from their respective countries and cover their logistics costs. More information can be found in Annex I.