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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION**

**Guidelines on the assessment of the capacity of National Coordination Centres to manage funds to fulfil the mission and objectives laid down in Regulation (EU) 2021/887**

# 1. Introduction

A reinforced presence on the technology supply chain is a key objective of the Union's new cybersecurity strategy for the Digital Decade<sup>1</sup>. The Regulation establishing the European Cybersecurity Industrial, Technology and Research Competence Centre and the Network of National Coordination Centres ('CCCN Regulation')<sup>2</sup>, which was adopted on 20 May 2021, seeks to build technological capacities in cybersecurity and foster the wide uptake of cybersecurity best practices. It creates a Network of National Coordination Centres ('NCCs') spelling out criteria and a procedure for the nomination of NCCs (article 6) and describing their tasks (article 7).

According to the CCCN Regulation<sup>3</sup>, *“the national coordination centre shall be a public sector entity or an entity, a majority of which is owned by the Member State, which performs public administrative functions under national law, including by means of delegation, and having the capacity to support the Competence Centre and the Network in fulfilling their mission as set out in Article 3 of this Regulation. It shall either possess or have access to research and technological expertise in cybersecurity. It shall have the capacity to engage effectively and coordinate with industry, the public sector, the academic and research community and citizens, as well as with authorities designated pursuant to Directive (EU) 2016/1148”*<sup>4</sup>.

Recital (27) of the CCCN Regulation sets out the following criteria for NCCs: *“National coordination centres should have the necessary administrative capacity, should possess or have access to cybersecurity industrial, technological and research expertise and should be in a position to effectively engage and coordinate with the industry, the public sector and the research community.”*

The CCCN Regulation foresees that under certain conditions, NCCs can receive direct funding<sup>5</sup>, i.e. be awarded grants without calls for proposals. Furthermore, it foresees the possibility for NCCs to provide Union financial support to third parties (“cascading grants”)<sup>6</sup>.

The CCCN Regulation gives Member States full autonomy in nominating their respective NCCs.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, for NCCs to be able to receive direct funding, the Commission must recognise them *“as having the necessary capacity to manage funds to fulfil the mission*

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<sup>1</sup> The EU's Cybersecurity Strategy for the Digital Decade, JOIN(2020) 18.

<sup>2</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/887 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing the European Cybersecurity Industrial, Technology and Research Competence Centre and the Network of National Coordination Centres (OJ L 202/8.6.2021), thereafter, “CCCN Regulation”.

<sup>3</sup> CCCN Regulation, Article 6(5).

<sup>4</sup> Directive (EU) 2016/1148 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 July 2016 concerning measures for a high common level of security of network and information systems across the Union (OJ L 194/19.7.2016).

<sup>5</sup> CCCN Regulation, Article 7(3) and Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (thereafter, “Financial Regulation 2018/1046”), point (d) of the first paragraph of Article 195.

<sup>6</sup> CCCN Regulation, point (f) of paragraph 1 and paragraph 3 of Article 7; Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#), Article 204.

<sup>7</sup> CCCN Regulation, Article 6(1).

*and objectives laid down in [the] Regulation”<sup>8</sup>, in accordance with the Horizon Europe<sup>9</sup> and the Digital Europe Programme regulations<sup>10</sup>.*

**This document provides guidelines on the necessary capacity for an NCC to manage EU funds, as well as how the Commission will assess this capacity. It contains in annex a submission form to be transmitted to the Commission.** The Commission must take the relevant decision within three months of the Member State’s request.<sup>11</sup>

While the CCCN Regulation refers to the “capacity to manage [Union] funds”, in particular from the Digital Programme and possibly also from the Horizon Europe programme, NCCs are to be considered as applicants for and “beneficiaries” of Union funds under direct management in the meaning of the Financial Regulation, and therefore, should comply in particular with the non-exclusion, eligibility and selection criteria<sup>12</sup> set out in the Financial Regulation as well as additional criteria laid down in the CCCN Regulation. Further conditions regarding funding may also be laid down in work programmes, invitations to submit proposals and grant agreements, as applicable.

The Commission’s implementation of the Union budget is subject to the rules applicable under the Financial Regulation. Specific guidance provided by the Commission, in particular on the Financial Regulation, basic acts such as the regulation establishing the Digital Europe Programme and the regulation establishing Horizon Europe Programme or the Model Grant Agreement<sup>13</sup>, and the Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment<sup>14</sup> complement and take precedence over the present document.

## 2. Legal nature of NCCs and the role within EU projects targeting NCCs

According to the CCCN Regulation<sup>15</sup>, an NCC shall be a public sector entity, or an entity, a majority of which is owned by the Member State, performing public administrative functions under national law, including by means of delegation. An NCC shall have the capacity to support the Competence Centre and the Network in fulfilling their mission as set out in the CCCN Regulation.

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<sup>8</sup> CCCN Regulation, Article 6(6) and Article 7(3).

<sup>9</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1290/2013 and (EU) No 1291/2013 (OJ L 170/12.5.2021), thereafter the “Horizon Europe Regulation”.

<sup>10</sup> Regulation (EU) 2021/694 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2021 establishing the Digital Europe Programme and repealing Decision (EU) 2015/2240 (OJ L166/11.5.2021), thereafter the “Digital Programme”.

<sup>11</sup> CCCN Regulation, Article 6(6).

<sup>12</sup> Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#), Articles 136, 197 and 198.

<sup>13</sup><https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/how-to-participate/reference-documents;programCode=HORIZON>

<sup>14</sup>[https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/rules-lev-lear-fca\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/rules-lev-lear-fca_en.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> CCCN Regulation, Article 6(5).

Article 6(1) of the CCCN Regulation refers to “one entity [...] to act as its national coordination centre.” Recital (26) of the Regulation states “(...) Other public sector entities or entities performing public administrative functions in a Member State should be able to assist the national coordination centre in that Member State in carrying out its functions.”

Therefore, an NCC shall be a single legal entity. For the purpose of receiving EU financial support targeting NCCs, NCCs may be assisted by other public sector entities or entities performing public administrative functions as part of a consortium. NCCs can also share tasks and resources with other entities (such as “affiliated entities” or “subcontractors”).<sup>16</sup>

In case the NCC forms a consortium with other entities, the NCC shall act as a coordinator in the meaning of the Horizon Europe or Digital Europe rules. In this case, under the rules of the respective grant agreement, the coordinator will normally have to:

- i. monitor that the action is implemented properly
- ii. act as the intermediary for all communications between the consortium and the granting authority, unless the respective agreement or granting authority specifies otherwise, and in particular:
  - submit the prefinancing guarantees to the granting authority (if any)
  - request and review any documents or information required and verify their quality and completeness before passing them on to the granting authority
  - submit the deliverables and reports to the granting authority
  - inform the granting authority about the payments made to the other beneficiaries (report on the distribution of payments, if required)
- iii. distribute the payments received from the granting authority to the other beneficiaries without unjustified delay.

In principle, a coordinator may not delegate or subcontract the above-mentioned tasks to any other beneficiary or third party (including affiliated entities). However, in the case where the coordinators (i.e. the NCCs) are public bodies, they may delegate the tasks set out in Point (ii) last indent and (iii) above to entities with ‘authorisation to administer’ which they have created or which are controlled by or affiliated to them. In this case, the coordinator retains sole responsibility for the payments and for compliance with the obligations under the respective grant agreement.

### 3. Exclusion Criteria

Entities shall be excluded from participating in award procedures or from being selected for Union funding where those entities are in any of the exclusion situations specified in Article

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<sup>16</sup> The rules for participation of such entities in an action are laid down in the relevant basic act (Regulation establishing Digital Europe Programme or Regulation Horizon Europe Programme) and the Financial Regulation and are further detailed in the respective grant agreement. For example, “Affiliated entities” - entities affiliated to a beneficiary within the meaning of Article 187 of the Financial Regulation 2018/1046, which participate in the action with similar rights and obligations as the beneficiaries (obligation to implement action tasks and right to charge costs and claim contributions). ‘Subcontractor’, as per point (62) of Article 2 of the Financial Regulation, means an economic operator that is proposed by a candidate or tenderer or contractor to perform part of a contract or by a beneficiary to perform part of the tasks co-financed by a grant. For further information: <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/funding-tenders-opportunities/display/OM/Apply+with+partners+or+as+individuals> )

136 of the Financial Regulation 2018/1046. Further to these exclusion situations, entities shall be rejected from an award procedure where those entities fall into one of the rejection situations specified in Article 141 of the Financial Regulation.

As part of the application form in annex, the Commission will ask the Member State to declare that the entity nominated or to be nominated as NCC, as well as any entity assisting the NCC, do not find themselves in an exclusion situation. The NCC and any assisting entity will be asked to declare the same at the time of every grant awarded.

## 4. Legal validation; financial, administrative and operational capacity

The requirements covered in this section reflect the eligibility criteria and financial and operational capacity requirements for beneficiaries of Union funds as set out in Articles 197 and 198 of the Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#) as well as the capacity requirements for NCCs as set out in Article 6 and recitals (25) to (27) of the CCCN Regulation.

### 4.1 Legal entity validation and legal entity appointed representative (LEAR)

The Financial Regulation determines the conditions for participating to grants, also called the “eligibility criteria”. The specific work programme, call for proposals or basic act may lay down additional eligibility criteria, which shall be established with due regard for the objectives of the action and shall comply with the principles of transparency and non-discrimination.

NCCs must be first registered<sup>17</sup> in the Participant Register<sup>18</sup> of the Funding and Tender Opportunities Portal (the ‘Portal’), unless this had already been done before in the context of another EU funding action.<sup>19</sup>

After completing its registration, the NCC will receive a 9-digit Participant Identification Code (PIC). This PIC should be communicated by email to the Commission as part of an NCC’s request to be recognised as eligible for “direct” Union financial support (see section 5 and annex) and should be referred to in further correspondence with the EU Commission services. If the NCC is part of a consortium in line with section 2 above, all entities involved in the consortium need to obtain a PIC to be communicated to the Commission.

The Central Validation Service of the European Commission will validate the registration of the NCC in the Participant Register according to the Rules for Legal Entity Validation, legal entity appointed representative (LEAR) Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment<sup>20</sup>,

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<sup>17</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/how-to-participate/how-to-participate/1>

<sup>18</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/how-to-participate/participant-register>

<sup>19</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home>

<sup>20</sup> See all rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/rules-lev-lear-fca\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/rules-lev-lear-fca_en.pdf)

unless already validated before in the Participant Register in the context of EU funding. The validation process is based on official supporting documents provided by the NCCs.<sup>21</sup> In this respect, NCCs will be requested by the Central Validation Service to provide via the Participant Register a signed legal entity identification form and all supporting documents necessary for legal validation and for the appointment of the LEAR. For more information please refer to the Online Manual<sup>22</sup>.

If the NCC is part of a consortium, for the purpose of being recognised as eligible for direct EU financial support, all entities involved in the consortium should undergo the legal validation and LEAR appointment.

An additional eligibility criterion deriving from the CCCN Regulation<sup>23</sup> is that the NCC shall be a public sector entity, or an entity, a majority of which is owned by the Member State, performing public administrative functions under national law, including by means of delegation. Where the Commission's Central Validation Service does not validate an NCC's legal status as that of a "public body"<sup>24</sup> the NCC may declare that it nevertheless meets the above eligibility criterion and submit or refer to documentation to that effect. In such a case, the Commission will examine whether the entity is majority-owned by the Member State or can otherwise be considered as a public-sector entity. In this case the Commission will in particular look at whether the candidate NCC's mission or activity is in the general interest (public service mission), is supervised or controlled by the State, and look at the extent to which it is publicly funded. If the NCC is part of a consortium, all involved entities will have to meet the above eligibility criterion.

Within the context of the Digital Europe Programme<sup>25</sup> and Horizon Europe Programme<sup>26</sup> requirement that participants in certain actions are not subject to ownership or control by countries or entities from countries that are not eligible to participate, an assessment of ownership/control of NCCs and where relevant of other entities within a consortium will also be carried out. In this respect, NCCs and where relevant other entities within a consortium may be requested by the Central Validation Service to provide all supporting documents via the Participant Register.

## 4.2 Financial capacity

The Financial Regulation requires that NCCs, like all beneficiaries of EU funds, have sufficient financial and operational capacity to carry out the proposed action or work programme.<sup>27</sup> A sufficient financial capacity means stable and sufficient resources to successfully implement the project(s) and contribute one's

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<sup>21</sup> See footnote 20.

<sup>22</sup> <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/funding-tenders-opportunities/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=1867802>

<sup>23</sup> CCCN Regulation, Article 6(1).

<sup>24</sup> 'Public body' means any legal entity established as a public body by national law or an international organisation. 'Established as a public body by national law' means: incorporated as a public body in the act of creation or recognised as a public body by national law, and governed by public law. Both conditions must be fulfilled. (See footnote 20)

<sup>25</sup> Digital Europe Programme Regulation, Articles 6(2), 12(5) and 12(6).

<sup>26</sup> Horizon Europe Regulation, Article 22(5).

<sup>27</sup> Financial Regulation 2018/1046, Articles 196 and 197.

share. Organisations participating in several projects must have sufficient capacity to implement all these projects.

The verification of financial capacity shall not apply to public bodies, including Member State organisations. Many, but not necessarily all, NCCs will fall into the category of public bodies.

For NCCs which are not public bodies, a financial capacity check will be carried out on the basis of relevant documents submitted in accordance with the Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment.<sup>28</sup> In this respect, such NCCs will be requested by the Central Validation Service to provide all supporting documents via the Participant Register.

If the NCC is part of a consortium, for the purpose of being recognised as eligible for direct EU financial support, all involved entities will have to undergo the financial capacity assessment, except for entities which are public bodies.

If the Commission considers that the financial capacity of an NCC which is not a public body is not satisfactory, it may require further information or mitigating measures such as an enhanced financial responsibility regime, a reduced or no pre-financing or pre-financing split in instalments, or (one or more) pre-financing guarantees.

## 4.3 Operational capacity

NCCs must have the capacity necessary to carry out their tasks defined in Article 7 of the CCCN Regulation. Furthermore, they must have operational and legal means to apply the administrative, contractual and financial management rules laid down at Union level. The present section sets out requirements related to NCCs' staff, their ability to implement financial support to third parties, and their risk management and internal control capacities. NCCs must also have the capacity to engage effectively and coordinate with the Cybersecurity Competence Community. Member States will confirm that their NCC meets these operational capacity requirements when submitting the application form in annex and will be asked to provide relevant supporting documents.

### 4.3.1 Capacity related to staff

Operational capacity will be assessed on the basis of the competence and, where relevant, experience of the NCCs and their staff, including operational resources (human, technical and other) or, exceptionally, the measures proposed to obtain such capacity by the time implementation tasks start.

NCCs will have to demonstrate their capacity to contribute to the mission and objectives of the CCCN Regulation and for managing and implementing the activities supported with EU funding via the following information:

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- General profiles (qualifications and experiences) of the NCC staff, and
- Description of the affiliated and otherwise involved entities' staff (government or otherwise).

### 4.3.2 Capacity related to Financial Support to Third Parties (“cascading funding”)

NCCs should be able to allocate grants through a system of financial support to third parties (“cascading funding”) in line with Article 204 of the Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#) and with Article 7(1)(f) of the CCCN Regulation. NCCs may provide financial support to third parties when at least the following elements are defined in the grant agreement between the NCC on the one side and the Competence Centre on the other:

1. the maximum amount of financial support for each third party (‘recipient’), which shall not exceed EUR 60 000 according to Article 204 of the Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#). This threshold may be exceeded where achieving the objectives of the actions foreseen in the grant agreement would otherwise be impossible or overly difficult.
2. the criteria for calculating the exact amount of the financial support
3. the different types of activity that qualify for financial support, on the basis of a closed list
4. the persons or categories of persons that will be supported and
5. the criteria and procedures for giving financial support

The financial support to third parties may be provided in any of the forms of Union contribution specified in Article 125 of the Financial Regulation 2018/1046, including in the form of lump sums. However, the provision of lump sums and other simplified forms of cost needs to be agreed with the granting authority (i.e. the Competence Centre or the Commission on its behalf) and set out in the grant agreement, including a sound methodology through which the amount of lump sums or other simplified cost options is established.

NCCs should have the capacity of carrying out calls for proposals with equivalent guarantees of objectivity as in Commission calls. NCCs should have appropriate rules and procedures in place for providing financial support to third parties. Such rules and procedures need to fulfil the following conditions:

- They comply with the principles of sound financial management, equal treatment and non-discrimination;
- They ensure transparency, with adequate publication of calls for proposals, direct award procedures being limited to reasonable amounts or being duly justified;
- They prevent conflicts of interest throughout the entire grant award procedure

The task of allocating financial support to third parties may be carried out by an entity than the NCC as part of a consortium. In such a case, the entity which will manage financial support to third parties will have to have the above rules and procedures in place.

As mentioned above, the Digital Europe and Horizon Europe programmes require that participants in certain actions are not subject to ownership or control by countries or entities from countries that are not eligible to participate. If this is the case for a project aimed at

NCCs and involving financial support to third parties, the NCC will have to ensure that third parties receiving financial support also comply with this requirement.

As part of the application form to be used by Member States (see annex), Member States will be asked to declare that their proposed NCC will have the capacity to allocate EU financial support to third parties in line with the conditions mentioned above. Where possible, Member States should submit supporting documents such as the NCC's internal guidelines or vademecums for allocating funding to beneficiaries.

### 4.3.3 Financial management, internal control and risk management

Internal control is a process that helps an organisation to achieve its objectives and sustain operational and financial performance, respecting rules and regulations. It supports sound decision making, taking into account risks to the achievement of objectives and reducing them to acceptable levels through cost-effective controls. In order to identify, assess and manage risks which could lead to reputational and/or financial damages for the Union, NCCs should

- Set up and ensure the functioning of an effective and efficient internal control system based on international best practices and relating to operations, reporting and compliance allowing in particular to prevent, detect and correct irregularities and fraud;
- Deploy a continuous, proactive and systematic process of identifying, assessing, and managing risks, including risks of conflict of interest, in line with the accepted risk levels;
- Use an accounting system that provides an understandable, functional, accurate, complete and reliable information in a timely manner;
- Be subject to an independent external audit, performed in accordance with internationally accepted auditing standards by an audit service functionally independent of the person or entity concerned;
- In line with the previous section, apply appropriate rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties, including transparent, non-discriminatory, efficient and effective review procedures, rules for recovering funds unduly paid and rules for excluding from access to funding;
- Make public adequate information on their recipients equivalent to that provided for under Article 38 of the Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#);
- Ensure protection of personal data, in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation<sup>29</sup> (GDPR), and setting up appropriate procedures accordingly.

As part of the application form to be used by Member States (see annex), Member States will be asked to declare that their proposed NCC will have the above-mentioned measures in place by the time of the signature of the first grant for EU financial support pursuant Article 7(3) of

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<sup>29</sup> Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation) (OJ L 119 4.5.2016, p. 1), as corrected by Corrigendum, OJ L 127, 23.5.2018, p. 2.

the CCCN Regulation. NCCs should submit supporting documents of their risk management policy and of their internal control policy.

If the NCC is part of a consortium, at a minimum the entity which will manage financial support to third parties should have the above-mentioned measures in place.

Concerning cooperation for the protection of the financial interests of the Union, entities receiving Union funds (under direct and indirect management) shall agree in writing to grant the necessary rights as referred to in Article 129(1) of the Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#) and Article 29(4) of the CCCN Regulation, and shall ensure that any third parties involved in the implementation of Union funds grant equivalent rights. This concerns in particular the necessary rights and access required for the Commission, for the European Public Prosecutor's Office pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2017/1939<sup>30</sup>, for the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), and for the Court of Auditors, to conduct audits and investigations in accordance with their respective competences.

NCCs will have to keep records and other supporting documents to prove the proper implementation of the action in line with the accepted standards in the respective field (if any), for a period of 5 years, in line with Article 132(1) FR. The records and supporting documents must be made available upon request or in the context of checks, reviews, audits or investigations. If there are on-going checks, reviews, audits, investigations, litigation or other pursuits of claims under a grant agreement (including the extension of findings), NCCs must keep these records and other supporting documentation until the end of these procedures.

#### 4.3.4 Coordination of the Cybersecurity Competence Community at National Level

NCCs must have the capacity to engage effectively and coordinate with the Cybersecurity Competence Community. The Cybersecurity Competence Community will consist of industry, including SMEs, academic and research organisations and other relevant civil society associations. Furthermore, the Cybersecurity Competence Community will consist of, as appropriate, relevant European Standardisation Organisations, public entities and other entities dealing with cybersecurity operational and technical matters and, where relevant, stakeholders in sectors that have an interest in cybersecurity and that face cybersecurity challenges.<sup>31</sup>

NCCs together with any entity assisting them in line with Section 2 of this document should have the capacity to fulfil the following functions, in line with Article 7 of the CCCN Regulation:

- Contact Point for and coordination of the Cybersecurity Competence Community at the national level;
- Contribution to strategic tasks (EU-level agenda, work programmes);

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<sup>30</sup> Council Regulation (EU) 2017/1939 of 12 October 2017 implementing enhanced cooperation on the establishment of the European Public Prosecutor's Office ('the EPPO')

<sup>31</sup> CCCN Regulation, Article 8(2).

- Promoting participation in cross-border projects and in cybersecurity actions funded by relevant Union programmes;
- Providing technical assistance
- Coordination with national, regional and local level;
- Providing financial support to third parties;
- Contributing to promoting Cybersecurity educational programmes;
- Promoting the outcome of the work of the Network, the Cybersecurity Competence Community and the Competence Centre at national, regional, and local level;
- Assessing requests by entities established in the same Member State to become part of the Cybersecurity Competence Community;
- Advocating and promoting the involvement of relevant entities in the activities arising from the Competence Centre, the Network and the Cybersecurity Competence Community.

NCCs should furthermore demonstrate that they are in a position to coordinate relevant activities with Digital Innovation Hubs created pursuant to the Digital Europe Regulation as well as National Contact Points for Horizon Europe, in particular in the field of security and cybersecurity.<sup>32</sup>

To document this coordination capacity, NCCs should provide documentation detailing their mission, their organisational setup, and the proposed way of engaging and coordinating the Cybersecurity Competence Community.

## 5 Request by Member States and Commission assessment

Article 6(2) of the CCCN Regulation provides that *“at any time, a Member State may ask the Commission for an opinion concerning whether the entity that the Member State has nominated or intends to nominate to act as its national coordination centre has the necessary capacity to manage funds to fulfil the mission and objectives laid down in this Regulation. The Commission shall issue its opinion to that Member State within three months of the Member State’s request.”*

Similarly, article 6(6) provides that once nominated, *“at any time, a national coordination centre may request to be recognised as having the necessary capacity to manage funds to fulfil the mission and objectives laid down in this Regulation, in accordance with Regulations (EU) 2021/695 and (EU) 2021/694. Within three months of such a request, the Commission shall assess whether that national coordination centre has such capacity and shall issue a decision.”*

Hence, NCCs which are not interested in being recognised as eligible for direct EU financial support do not need to undergo a Commission assessment. On the other hand, NCCs which are interested in being recognised can either request a Commission assessment *before* being formally nominated as NCC pursuant to Article 6(1) of the CCCN Regulation or at any time thereafter.

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<sup>32</sup> Topic HORIZON-CL3-2021-SSRI-01-03: National Contact Points (NCPs) in the field of security and cybersecurity.

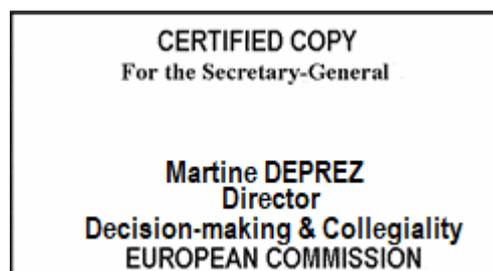
The present guidelines should assist Member States/NCCs making such a request. Member States/NCCs should make the request by using the application form annexed to this document, which reflects the requirements mentioned above. Application forms should be sent by email<sup>33</sup>. In addition, Member States/NCCs should take the steps laid down in section 4.1 of this document. The Commission can only start the assessment process once all the necessary documents have been submitted.

In making the request for an opinion or a recognition, Member States/NCCs formally commit to fulfilling the criteria and providing all supporting documents.

The Commission's assessment will be led by DG Communication Networks, Content and Technology (CONNECT). Decisions will be taken by an Authorising officer in DG CONNECT, on the basis of recommendations by an evaluation committee made up of at least two different Commission units, in analogy with Article 200 of the Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

Any decision not to recognise an NCC as having the necessary capacity to manage funds to fulfil the mission and objectives shall be duly reasoned, setting out the requirements that the requesting NCC has not yet fulfilled and that justify the decision to withhold recognition. Any NCC whose request for recognition has been rejected may resubmit its request with additional information at any time.<sup>34</sup>

The EU reserves the right to carry out — at any moment — checks, reviews, audits or investigations. If it is found out that a Member State/an NCC provided inaccurate information, any decisions based on the initial Commission assessment of the capacity of that NCC to manage EU funds shall be reviewed and the assessment reconducted.



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<sup>33</sup> CNECT-ECCC-GB@ec.europa.eu.

<sup>34</sup> CCCN Regulation, Article 6(6) subparagraph 5.