



Steps to be taken to set up a national CLARIN consortium

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More information can be found on the project webpage:

<https://www.clarin.eu/content/factsheet-clarin-plus>

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1 Executive Summary

The purpose of this document is to describe the steps to be taken in order to create a national CLARIN consortium, as well as the underlying considerations to be made. It is meant as a support for those countries who are preparing to become a CLARIN member as well as for countries that just joined. This means that it is primarily intended for national coordinators and future national coordinators, i.e. those that are going to manage their country's participation in CLARIN ERIC, but it may also be useful for ministries or research agencies who are preparing the accession of their country.

The document focusses on two important aspects: the construction of a national consortium, and the fulfilment of the CLARIN Agreement, which specifies the work of the national consortium.

All relevant details for preparing to become a CLARIN member can also be found on the following webpage: <https://www.clarin.eu/content/information-potential-new-members>

2 Introduction

CLARIN ERIC is a consortium, with the statutory seat in the Netherlands, consisting of countries. The CLARIN ERIC Office is located in Utrecht, NL. At present (spring 2020), CLARIN has 21 members: Austria (AT), Bulgaria (BG), Croatia (HR), Cyprus (CY), Czech Republic (CZ), Denmark (DK), , Estonia (EE), Finland (FI), Germany (DE), Greece (GR), Hungary (HU), Iceland (IS), Italy (IT), Latvia (LT), Lithuania (LV), The Netherlands (NL), Norway (NO), Poland (PL), Portugal (PT), Slovenia (SI), and Sweden (SE). France (FR), United Kingdom (UK) and South Africa (ZA) have observer status. More members are preparing to join.

3 Joining CLARIN ERIC

As mentioned, the members of CLARIN ERIC are *countries*, not institutions, so the decision for a country to join has to be taken in the relevant ministry or research agency, dependent on the national administrative structures. According to the CLARIN ERIC [statutes](#), a country that wants to join sends an application to CLARIN ERIC, and the General Assembly will decide on acceptance. There is a [template](#) for applying for membership. There is also template for applying to become observer rather than a full member. The webpage with information for (potential) new countries gives a full overview of the various options: <https://www.clarin.eu/content/information-potential-new-members> .

Of course, a ministry or research agency will not decide on their own to join CLARIN ERIC or any other research infrastructure; it is the research community who will show its interest in using the research infrastructure and in creating a national consortium. In many countries the national funding for the kind of consortium that matches the profile of CLARIN will depend first on the existence of a national roadmap for research infrastructures and then on the success of an application for funding in competition with other infrastructures.

4 A national CLARIN consortium and the CLARIN Agreement

This section focusses on the two strongly related tasks: setting up the national consortium and living up to the CLARIN Agreement.

The tasks and obligations that follow from being a member of CLARIN are described at a general level in the statutes.

The statutes describe the overall obligation to **contribute to the construction and operation of CLARIN ERIC**. This is an important message: All members have a responsibility to contribute, not only at the national level, but also at the ERIC level. Below we shall see some examples.

At the same time, the statutes describe the **rights of the member**: the right to use the CLARIN brand, to have access to all solutions developed at the central level, to have access to data and services in other member countries, to have access to expertise in the member countries and in the CLARIN Office, to participate in events, etc. Additionally, CLARIN members may benefit from participating in European projects where CLARIN ERIC is the partner.

4.1 Setting up a national consortium

A national consortium consists of one or more institutions, and needs to have at least one CLARIN technical centre.

What is a good consortium?

A good consortium consists of the important institutions in a country.

The institutions may be well-known universities, research institutes, academies, national libraries, archives or other important language resource institutions. It may also be relevant to include language councils and similar bodies. In addition, it can be important to have good relationships with industrial associations, policy makers, companies etc., as well as the GLAM sector (galleries, libraries, archives, museums), even if they are not members of the consortium.

A good consortium should capture the following types of knowledge:

- Knowledge about specific language resources (data and tools)
- Domain knowledge for the relevant research domains
- Technical expertise

What is the best consortium for a given country depends on many aspects, e.g. on the size of a country, on the possible collaboration arrangements, distribution of know-how and resources etc. In general, we recommend that a consortium consists of more than one institution. This makes the consortium more robust in several ways.

Obviously, there can be institutional, political, financial or other reasons why a certain institution can or cannot be part of a national CLARIN consortium. Also, even if a broad coverage may be recommended, a very large consortium which tries to embrace all possible institutions may be difficult to manage. So, in each case a balance needs to be found.

An essential part of creating a national consortium is the establishment of an **internal national agreement** that defines the distribution of tasks, financial resources etc. A **management structure** is also needed. It is important to specify these details before problems arise.

Provisions should also be made with the national authorities and/or within the consortium for changing the consortium over time. Quite often such changes will consist in enlarging the consortium, but other modifications may arise.

The **national coordinator**, who will be heading the national management structure, has to be appointed by the national authority (ministry, agency, research council or whoever is managing the membership). This appointment of the national coordinator is part of the letter in which the country applies to become a member.

4.2 The CLARIN Agreement

As mentioned, the general duties of a CLARIN member are described in the statutes, so the CLARIN Agreement is a document that specifies in more detail the tasks that the consortium will be taking care of.

The CLARIN Agreement is an agreement between CLARIN ERIC and the national consortium. Normally the CLARIN Agreement is signed by the national coordinator, but in some countries the authority will want to countersign. This can be an advantage, because those who sign can be taken to express a responsibility.

Earlier, the CLARIN Agreement was made for one year, and had to be renewed every year. This proved to be too time-consuming, and now the national consortium can choose the period. It may be 1 year, 2 years, or the funding period, whatever fits best in the national environment.

The CLARIN Agreement describes the specific national contributions provided by the national consortium. They are split into those contributions that are coordinated by CLARIN ERIC, and those that coordinated locally, but of course compliant with CLARIN.

National contributions coordinated by CLARIN ERIC (as listed in the CLARIN Agreement):

- a) Data and service centres, at least one type B centre (to be treated in a separate document)¹
- b) Access facilities: open to all employees and students in member countries through authentication
- c) User Authentication and Authorisation system
- d) Contributions to the Knowledge Sharing Infrastructure
- e) Membership in CLARIN ERIC committees and any other contribution lending itself for coordination

A few comments on these items:

- a) A member needs to provide at least one technical (type B) centre. The reason for this requirement is that this is the obvious place for national researchers to

¹ An overview of centre types and requirements is given in <https://www.clarin.eu/content/centre-requirements-revised-version>

deposit their data. This is also where they will expect to find tools and services for their own language. Centres have to be assessed periodically; the assessment procedure is described in in section 3 of the document at

<https://www.clarin.eu/content/centre-requirements-revised-version>. The centre does not need to be provided from day 1; plans to create a centre are sufficient.

- b) CLARIN has committed itself to Open Source and Open Access policies. Therefore, tools and data should be made openly and freely available to students and researchers, whenever possible.
- c) As access to resources, tools, and services may be regulated by licenses, an Authentication and Authorisation system is needed². Most countries have national systems in place that manage the access for university employees and other researchers, as well as students. However, this is not totally homogeneous across Europe, so you can ask the CLARIN Office for suggestions for solutions if you encounter problems. Maybe others have already solved a similar problem.
- d) One of the very important aspects of a successful research infrastructure is the access to knowledge. In CLARIN this pillar of the infrastructure is called the Knowledge Sharing Infrastructure (KSI). All members are requested to contribute to the KSI. This can be done in various ways, in particular all members are invited to contribute a knowledge centre, e.g. with a specialisation on their own language. But knowledge centres building on any type of expertise are welcome. Knowledge centres can be single-sited or multi-sited (virtual), and they can be in one country, or several countries can share the responsibility. A knowledge centre is not needed from day 1, but it should be one of the goals for a national consortium to set up a knowledge centre at some point. See the current overview of Knowledge centres <https://www.clarin.eu/content/knowledge-centres>.
- e) The overall CLARIN KSI is coordinated by a committee, the Knowledge Sharing Infrastructure Committee (KSIC) <https://www.clarin.eu/governance/knowledge-sharing-infrastructure-committee>.
- f) CLARIN values the thematic committees and their work. Thematic committees provide standards that take into account the different languages, national legislation etc., to the extent possible. Here we mention three committees in particular: CLARIN Legal and Ethical Issues Committee (CLIC) <https://www.clarin.eu/governance/legal-issues-committee>, CLARIN Standards Committee (CSC) <https://www.clarin.eu/governance/standards-committee> and the [CLARIN User Involvement Committee](#) presented below. National teams are invited to participate in these, provide their input and take back the insights and promote them in their country.

National contributions coordinated at the national level:

- g) Enhancements and improvements of existing resources, tools and services
- h) Creation of new resources, tools and services
- i) Measures to promote the adoption and adherence of CLARIN standards in national programmes and projects
- j) Measures to create a knowledge sharing infrastructure at the national level
- k) Measures for uptake by researchers
- l) Any other contribution relevant to the goals of CLARIN

² From centre requirements: Centres need to join the national identity federation where available and join the CLARIN service provider federation to support single identity and single sign-on operation based on SAML2.0 and trust declarations.

A few comments on these items:

- g) A very large part of the national contribution is to make resources, tools and services available for sharing. This particular contribution concerns maintaining, enhancing and improving what is already existing.
- h) A national consortium should also provide new resources, tools and services. This may be done by user projects, by negotiating with researchers, libraries, archives, etc.
- i) As mentioned above under f) the CLARIN partners develop standards together. Such standards are important for interoperability: the interoperability of data and tools within a country and across CLARIN. Therefore, CLARIN consortia should use the standards themselves, and should promote the standards.
- j) Not only at the European level, but also at the national level, the knowledge sharing is essential, and it is important to see the access to knowledge as an asset for CLARIN, to set it up in a visible way, and to promote it. A helpdesk function is one way of providing help and knowledge sharing, and a helpdesk should be provided by all partners. There are many other ways: setting-up local knowledge centres, organising workshops and tutorials, participating in workshops and tutorials organised by others etc.
- k) Uptake by researchers and students is very important. CLARIN has a User Involvement Committee where ideas are developed and shared:
<https://www.clarin.eu/governance/user-involvement-committee>
- l) There may be national contributions of a specific nature.

5 Experience/Lessons learnt

Most of the lessons learnt have been included in the above chapters, but we want to add a few more comments here, partly resulting from discussions with users.

- Where to find information?
 1. CLARIN ERIC website www.clarin.eu. For new members this page can be useful <https://www.clarin.eu/content/information-potential-new-members>
 2. Helpdesks are a very important tool. This is true at different levels: The CLARIN ERIC helpdesk can help with questions at the general level. The national helpdesks help with questions related to the national activities. See <https://www.clarin.eu/content/support>
 3. Knowledge centres and their specific helpdesks obviously are focussed on their area of expertise.
- The subject field and purpose of CLARIN? Only humanities and social sciences? No, not necessarily – CLARIN could expand, say, to bioinformatics, to industry etc.
- Be patient. One of the lessons learnt is that it may take a very long time, from the moment that the wish to join CLARIN is first discussed with the ministry or research agency and with other bodies, till funding has been obtained and an application has been sent to CLARIN ERIC. It will also take time to create a national consortium and start working.

6 Final remarks

In this short document we hope to have covered the important questions. We are very interested in feedback that may improve the document. Please contact CLARIN at clarin@clarin.eu or a specific person.

References and further reading

- CLARIN ERIC Statutes <https://www.clarin.eu/content/clarin-eric-statutes>
- Governance structure <http://www.clarin.eu/content/governance>
- Information for (potential) new members: <https://www.clarin.eu/content/information-potential-new-members>
- Template for applying to become a CLARIN member: https://office.clarin.eu/v/CE-2011-0006-Request-membership_template.doc
- Template for applying to become a CLARIN observer: https://office.clarin.eu/v/CE-2011-0007-Request-observer_template.docx
- CLARIN Agreement template https://office.clarin.eu/v/CE-2018-1329-CLARIN-Agreement-Template_2019.docx
 - Example: The Slovenian consortium has kindly given access to their current CLARIN Agreement: https://office.clarin.eu/v/CE-2020-1613-CLARIN-Agreement-Slovenia_1.01.2020-31.12.2023.pdf
 - Example: The Bulgarian consortium has kindly given access to their current CLARIN Agreement: https://office.clarin.eu/v/CE-2019-1564-CLARIN-Agreement_Bulgaria_1.12.2019-1.12.2021.pdf
- National internal consortium agreement. As an example the Norwegian consortium has kindly provided their document: https://www.clarin.eu/sites/default/files/CLARINO_CA_28mars2012-endelig.pdf
- Overview of centre types: <https://www.clarin.eu/content/centre-requirements-revised-version>
- Knowledge centres and the Knowledge Sharing Infrastructure <http://www.clarin.eu/content/knowledge-centres>
- Standards and Formats <http://www.clarin.eu/content/standards-and-formats>