



## D5.3-1

# Steps to be taken to set up a national CLARIN consortium

### Document information

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<b>Author(s)</b>	Bente Maegaard, <a href="mailto:bmaegaard@hum.ku.dk">bmaegaard@hum.ku.dk</a>
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<b>Contact address</b>	<a href="mailto:contact-clarinplus@clarin.eu">contact-clarinplus@clarin.eu</a>

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## 1 Executive Summary

This report is designed 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 CLARIN Agreement, which specifies the work of the national consortium. Subsequent documents will treat cost estimation, technical centre assessment, standards etc.

The document builds on the experience gathered during the first years of CLARIN ERIC. The CLARIN-PLUS workshop on facilitating the creation of national consortia, held in Bergen (Norway), in March 2016, also gave very useful input through the discussions and through feedback from the participants.

## 2 Introduction

CLARIN ERIC is a consortium, with the statutory seat in the Netherlands, consisting of national consortia in each of the member countries. The Central Office is located in Utrecht, NL. At present (autumn 2016), CLARIN has 19 members: Austria (AT), Bulgaria (BG), Czech Republic (CZ), Denmark (DK), Dutch Language Union (DLU), Estonia (EE), Finland (FI), Germany (DE), Greece (GR), Hungary (HU), Italy (IT), Latvia (LT), Lithuania (LV), The Netherlands (NL), Norway (NO), Poland (PL), Portugal (PT), Slovenia (SI), and Sweden (SE). United Kingdom (UK) has observer status. More members are preparing to join.

The purpose of this document is to provide a guide to the creation of a national consortium in CLARIN.

The document can also be used during the stage in which a country is preparing itself for joining CLARIN ERIC.

Until now, there has been no single place where all relevant information could be found, so we hope that this guide will facilitate the task of future members.

## 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 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. (A link to the statutes is provided at the end of this document.)

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 the 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 expertise in the member countries and in the Central Office, to participate in events, to have access to data and services in other member countries 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 or other important language resource institutions. It may also be relevant to include language councils and similar bodies. It can also be important to have good relationships with industrial associations, policy makers etc., 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 cannot be part of a national CLARIN consortium. A very large consortium which tries to embrace all possible institutions is difficult to manage. So, a balance needs to be found.

An essential part of creating a 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. Most 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. This is often done by the national authority (ministry, agency, research council or whoever is managing the membership), and certainly the national coordinator needs to be acknowledged by the authority.

## 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 member country. Normally the CLARIN Agreement is signed by the national coordinator on behalf of the member, 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 member 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 member. 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 A or B centre (to be treated in a subsequent document)<sup>1</sup>
- 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 centre, normally a type B centre. The reason for this requirement is that this is the obvious place for national researchers to deposit their data. This is also where they will expect to find tools and services for their own language. However, a country may agree with another country that the other country provides the necessary services. Centres have to

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<sup>1</sup> An overview of centre types is given in <http://hdl.handle.net/11372/DOC-77>

- be assessed; this will be described in a separate document in this series. The centre needs not 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 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 needed. 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 your 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. The overall CLARIN KSI is coordinated by a committee, the Knowledge Sharing Infrastructure Committee (KSIC).
  - e) 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. There are committees on standards, metadata, technical centres, legal issues etc. National teams are invited to participate in these, provide their input and take back the insights and promote them in their country. This activity can be said to be part of the KSI, but normally the committees work at the same level as the KSIC.

***National contributions coordinated at the national level:***

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

A few comments on these items:

- f) 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.
- g) 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.
- h) As mentioned above under e) the CLARIN partners develop standards together. Such standards are important for the integration of data and tools within a country and across CLARIN. Therefore, CLARIN members should use the standards themselves, and should promote the standards.
- i) 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 this 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.

- j) 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](http://www.clarin.eu)
  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. Such decisions will be taken by the CLARIN decision-making bodies.
- 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 the author!

## References and further reading

- CLARIN ERIC Statutes <http://hdl.handle.net/11372/DOC-75>
- Governance structure <http://www.clarin.eu/content/governance>
- CLARIN Agreement template <https://www.clarin.eu/content/clarin-agreement-template>
- 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>
- Overview of centre types: <http://hdl.handle.net/11372/DOC-77>
- National internal consortium agreement. As an example the Norwegian consortium has provided their document, in English: [https://www.clarin.eu/sites/default/files/CLARINO\\_CA\\_28mars2012-endelig.pdf](https://www.clarin.eu/sites/default/files/CLARINO_CA_28mars2012-endelig.pdf) And the Swedish consortium has provided their document, which is in Swedish: <https://www.clarin.eu/file/3658>.