



Regional cooperation for European integration and bridge between macro-regions ...

The **Central European Initiative (CEI)**, founded in Budapest on 11 November 1989, is a regional intergovernmental forum committed to supporting European integration through cooperation between and among its Member States and with the European Union (EU), other interested public institutions or private and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), as well as international and regional organisations. In order to offer a solid contribution to European integration, the CEI combines multilateral diplomacy and project management, both as donor and recipient. Its institutional and geographical position enables the CEI to act as a bridge between European macro-regions.

18 Member States

10 EU MS: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia.

8 non-EU MS: Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Ukraine.

Strategic Objectives

- Support CEI Member States on their path towards European integration
- Promote the alignment of CEI Member States to EU standards
- Implement small and medium-sized projects
- Convert constructive ideas into innovative results

Structure

The CEI operates in a flexible manner to promote intergovernmental, inter-parliamentary and business cooperation.

- **Governmental Dimension**
Provides political and economic orientation and is responsible for the organisational and financial directives of the CEI. It is composed of the **Committee of National Coordinators (CNC)**, key body responsible for the definition, co-ordination, management and implementation of CEI cooperation; **Working bodies** (Networks of Focal Points, project implementation groups and ad hoc task forces); the **Secretariat**, executive body managing the overall activities of the Organisation. It also deals with the development and implementation of projects and is located in Trieste (Italy). Decisions are taken and approved by the **Ministers for Foreign Affairs** and the **Heads of Government**, meeting respectively once a year. The **Presidency** is held by a CEI Member State and rotates on an annual basis.
- **Parliamentary Dimension**
CEI representatives of national Parliaments cooperate and meet in the framework of the **Parliamentary Assembly**, the **Parliamentary Committee** and the **General Committees** (on Political and Home Affairs; on Economic Affairs; on Cultural Affairs).
- **Business Dimension**
Promotes an active participation of the business communities of the CEI Member States in a bottom-up approach, fostering inputs, open discussions and recommendations for Political Leadership.

Areas of Cooperation

Towards a Knowledge-based Society	Towards a Sustainable Economy and Development	Towards an Inclusive Society
Research and Innovation	Transport, Logistics and Accessibility	Intercultural Cooperation
Life-long Education and Training	Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy	Media
Information Society	Climate, Environment and Rural Development	Civil Society
	SMEs and Business Development	



Funds & Instruments

CEI Cooperation Fund

Provided by all Member States, it supports seminars, workshops, conferences, training courses, focusing on mobility of participants. Since 2002, 830 activities have been co-financed with around €7.7 million and an overall value of about €50 million. It is estimated that around 5,000 participants take part in the events every year.

CEI Fund at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)

Established by Italy in 1992, the Fund provides grant-type technical assistance (prefeasibility and feasibility studies, project implementation, management training, capacity building, and pre-loan audits) in support of investments and operations of the EBRD. The Fund, managed by the Office for the CEI Fund at the EBRD, has been financed by Italy with €38.5 million. It supports projects targeting the whole CEI Region. More than €23 million have been committed for 122 technical cooperation projects able to mobilise €4.8 billion of international investments in the countries of operations. For each euro provided by the CEI Fund, the EBRD and other financiers have invested €215.

CEI Know-how Exchange Programme

Provides grants for projects related to capacity building and transfer of good practices from EU to non-EU CEI Member States. Since 2004, almost €2.4 million have been allocated by Italy through the CEI Fund at the EBRD and by Austria through an agreement with the Austrian Development Agency. So far, 87 projects for an overall value of nearly €6.3 million have been supported.

CEI Participation in EU Projects

Enhances the involvement of CEI countries in EU projects focusing on transnational and regional cooperation for European integration. Since 2004, 14 projects have been implemented with a total fund mobilisation of €16.3 million; 14 projects are under implementation (4 as Lead Partner) for a total fund mobilisation of €30.2 million, of which €9.8 million administered by the CEI. The main areas of intervention are: interregional and cross border cooperation, transport, energy, sustainable development, information society, SMEs, civil protection, culture, higher education, science and technology.

Networks

CEI Science and Technology Network (S&TN): supports scientific and technological cooperation through seven renowned international research centres based in Trieste and their partner/affiliated institutions in CEI countries. Since 2004, 60 fellowships (training programmes, workshops, conferences and research activities) and about 100 activities have been supported through resources provided by Italy of around €1.6 million with a fund mobilisation of around €3 million.

CEI University Network (UniNet): Supports cooperation among universities and other institutions of higher learning in the CEI area and fosters the mobility of postgraduate students and teachers. Since 2004, more than 80 projects (PhD and Master's courses, summer schools and seminars) have been co-financed with a total allocation of around €1 million provided by Italy for more than 1,000 beneficiaries (students, researchers, professors) with a fund mobilisation of around €7 million.

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