



CEI Plan of Action 2014-2016



Mission of the Central European Initiative

The Central European Initiative (CEI), a regional intergovernmental forum open to change, is 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, while also bridging European macro-regions.



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Belarus ★

Poland ★

★ Ukraine

★ Czech Republic

★ Austria

★ Slovakia

★ Hungary

★ Moldova

Slovenia

★

★ Croatia

★ Romania

★ Italy

★ Bosnia and Herzegovina

★ Serbia

★ Montenegro

★ Bulgaria

★ Macedonia

★ Albania

Foreword

by CEI Secretary General

This Plan of Action (PoA) provides the Central European Initiative (CEI) with a focused and project-oriented roadmap for the tri-annual period 2014-2016.

Elaborated by the CEI Member States, in cooperation with the CEI Secretariat and the CEI Networks of Focal Points, the CEI PoA is conceived as a flexible and dynamic tool able to quickly adapt to the evolving European landscape. It is composed of two parts: the first one highlights the CEI's core mission, as well as the main strategic objectives and measures for a structural and financial strengthening of the Organisation as well as for enhancing its visibility; the second one presents a list of priorities per area of cooperation, with a set of concrete actions building upon the results achieved in the recent past, thus ensuring coherence and follow-up.

In drawing up the PoA, special attention was paid to the real needs and proposals expressed by the CEI Member States. Moreover, efforts were made towards prioritisation and streamlining, aimed at avoiding dispersion of resources and at concentrating on sectors where the CEI's expertise and working methodology may represent a true added value. The main goal is to bring the CEI Member States closer together in joint initiatives and encourage further regional cooperation in a structured and result-oriented manner aimed at making tangible contributions towards a knowledge-based and sustainable economy in an inclusive society. In order to reach this ambitious goal, the PoA offers the necessary framework to steer the CEI's future action, while committing the Organisation to a constant improvement of its performance.

Giovanni Caracciolo di Vietri
CEI Secretary General

Executive Summary

2014 marks the 25th anniversary of the Central European Initiative (CEI), launched in 1989 as the first regional intergovernmental forum in Europe. Facing a different and fast-changing political environment, the CEI's mission to promote regional cooperation for European integration is supported by its 18 Member States, thus calling for a structured roadmap able to guide the Organisation in the tri-annual period 2014-2016.

This CEI Plan of Action (PoA), aligned with the EU Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020, intends to capitalise on the main strengths of the Organisation, based on its distinctive methodology for the promotion of effective regional cooperation through a combination of multilateral diplomacy and project management. While remaining a platform for political dialogue, the CEI has developed a strong operational approach aimed at fostering cohesion and integration between EU and non-EU countries. Thanks to its member countries covering Central and South-Eastern Europe, the CEI is in the position to play a bridging role between macro-regions, thus making a contribution to the removal of existing barriers and divisions hindering European integration.

Based on the results achieved in the recent past, this PoA provides the CEI with realistic, feasible and coherent guidelines meant to strengthen its assets, while setting out clear and agreed priorities per each area of cooperation the Organisation is involved in. The document is composed of two sections: **Part 1: CEI Strategic Approach to Regional Cooperation**, outlines four strategic objectives, namely:

- 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
- Open to convert constructive ideas into innovative results

In order to meet these challenges, five measures have been identified, with the aim of strengthening the Organisation from both a structural and financial point of view, as well as in terms of visibility:

- Structural strengthening
- Revisiting the Business Dimension
- Reinforcing institutional links with the EU and other international and regional organisations
- Attracting public and private funds
- Enhancing CEI visibility

Part 2: A CEI Agenda for 2014-2016: Key-priorities per Area of Cooperation, lists the ten areas of cooperation towards which the CEI Member States have decided to address the Organisation's future actions. In line with the Europe 2020 Strategy, these were grouped into three thematic pillars, altogether covering the whole range of CEI activities:

- Towards a Knowledge-based Society
- Towards a Sustainable Economy
- Towards an Inclusive Society

With the aim of avoiding fragmentation of efforts and dispersion of resources, the Member States agreed to focus the CEI's actions on a limited number of priorities per each field of activity by making full use of the CEI instruments and cooperation tools.

PART 1

CEI Strategic Approach to Regional Cooperation

MISSION

The Central European Initiative (CEI), a regional intergovernmental forum open to change, is 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, while also bridging European macro-regions.

Since its foundation 25 years ago, the CEI has been able to constantly adapt to the quickly-evolving European political environment. While acting as a platform for political dialogue, helping maintain cooperative relations and build confidence among the participating countries, the CEI has also developed a strong operational approach to regional cooperation, consisting of a combination of multilateral diplomacy and project management. The CEI's project-oriented approach is composed of two mutually reinforcing elements: the CEI is both a donor institution - providing resources from its funds and instruments - and a recipient institution, competing at EU level in order to attract additional resources for its Member States.

This working methodology is crucial in order to address the CEI's core mission, which can be summarised as the promotion of regional cooperation for European integration. It also makes the CEI unique among other regional organisations promoting cohesion and integration between EU and non-EU countries. Thanks to its specific membership covering Central and South-Eastern Europe, the CEI is well placed to play a bridging role between macro-regions. The CEI's involvement in regional cooperation as well as its bridging function contributes to removing existing barriers and divisions hindering the European integration process.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

For the three-year period 2014-2016, the CEI will focus on four 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;**
- **Open to convert constructive ideas into innovative results.**

The CEI's ability to design and implement EU-funded projects, involving partner institutions from candidate and potential candidate and partner countries, is a major CEI asset to make a tangible contribution to a wide European integration, in particular to the **enlargement process**. Taking into consideration that the progress and development of regional cooperation is conditional to any perspective of accession, the CEI aims at further reinforcing its ability to attract funds from various EU programmes, involving more participants from neighbouring countries.

The CEI will make further efforts to support its Member States targeted by the Eastern Partnership (EaP) and bring them closer to the EU. Cross-border and transnational activities will also be promoted, especially with regard to the multilateral dimension of the EaP. Contacts with the **European External Action Service (EEAS)** will also be enhanced.

The CEI will also focus on territorial cohesion and regional development in order to enhance European integration by reducing economic disparities between and among Europe's regions, while promoting a balanced and sustainable growth. The experience gained through **European Territorial Cooperation (ETC)** (cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation) will constitute a good basis for promoting the elaboration of new project proposals in the ETC framework.

The CEI will contribute to the implementation of **EU macro-regional strategies** by participating in the relevant activities as a main stakeholder in view of the specific competences acquired in different fields. Ensuring synergies and complementarities through specific projects directly managed by the CEI will be the main objective.

Furthermore, the CEI will play a **“bridging role”** between different macro-regional cooperative schemes thanks to the fact that its membership includes countries targeted by the Black Sea Synergy, the Eastern Partnership, the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and the EU Strategy for the Danube Region. The experience gained will be useful for the Adriatic-Ionian Strategy and other potential macro-regional strategies.

Territorial cohesion will also be enhanced by spreading knowledge about the **European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC)** instrument: best practices and experiences will be transferred to other cross-border areas and capitalised by initiating new EGTCs in the region, as applicable.

MEASURES

For the three-year period 2014-2016, the CEI will focus on the following measures:

- A. Structural strengthening**
 - A.1. Enhancing the effectiveness of the CEI structure**
 - A.2. Enhancing the impact of CEI instruments and cooperation tools**
- B. Revisiting the Business Dimension**
- C. Reinforcing institutional links with the EU and other international and regional organisations**
- D. Attracting public and private funds**
- E. Enhancing CEI visibility**

A. Structural Strengthening

A.1 Enhancing the Effectiveness of the CEI Structure

The CEI is supported by its Governmental, Parliamentary and Business Dimensions. A better coordination and interconnection between and among these pillars is crucial in order to strengthen the impact of CEI activities. With regard to the **Governmental Dimension**, efforts will be made in order to enhance coordination between political dialogue and project-oriented activities. In order to avoid fragmentation and lack of focus, annual work programmes, developed by the Presidency, in consultation with the CEI Secretariat as main operational arm, will take the guidelines included in the Plan of Action into account. A stronger role will be played by the Troika and the Enlarged Troika with the aim of ensuring continuity between past, present and future activities. A “review meeting” in order to monitor the implementation of the Plan of Action, assess the results achieved and define future activities will also be considered. Moreover, the Presidency will be entitled to recommend projects to be supported by the Cooperation Fund according to the relevant rules.

In view of the increasing project-management workload, the administrative procedures of the Secretariat will be enhanced in order to comply with internationally accepted standards in the fields of accounting, auditing, internal control and procurement, a condition for the stipulation of a future agreement with the European Commission.

Activities related to the **Parliamentary Dimension** will focus on the promotion of cooperation between parliaments in view of the alignment to EU standards. An intensified coordination between the Governmental and Parliamentary Dimensions, with the support of the Secretariat, will be fostered. Complementary activities will be promoted, particularly in the framework of the thematic General Committees of the Parliamentary Dimension. The exchange of best practices on specific matters will be encouraged for example through the organisation of bilateral study visits, as already proposed by the Parliamentary Committee.

A.2 Enhancing the Impact of CEI Instruments and Cooperation Tools

In order to enhance the impact of CEI instruments and cooperation tools, beyond additional fundraising, continuous monitoring of their functioning procedure, integration and coordination within the overall CEI action and more prioritisation in the management of available funds will be crucial elements.

CEI Cooperation Fund

Thanks to annual contributions from all Member States, the CEI Cooperation Fund is the main tool for fostering mobility and people-to-people contacts in the CEI region. Through what are known as Cooperation Activities, the intra-CEI mobility rate has grown to an average of 5000 people per year. The CEI will further orient its endeavours towards a multiplying and amplification factor through measures comprising, inter alia, a/an:

- **Possible increase of the Cooperation Fund through an updated scale of obligatory contributions;**
- **Enhancement of the involvement of the Focal Points in the appraisal of applications submitted within the annual Calls for Proposals;**
- **Increase of available resources through additional fundraising, including the possibility of voluntary funding of cooperation activities on an ad hoc basis;**
- **Exploitation of possible synergies with other funding instruments.**

Attention will be paid to selecting activities with a clear perspective of attracting funds from the EU and other International Financial Institutions (IFIs).

CEI Fund at the EBRD

More than two decades of partnership between the CEI and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) through the Italy-sponsored CEI Fund at the EBRD has brought about very concrete results in the CEI region. Grant-financing for technical assistance contributed to the preparation and implementation of a number of investment and non-investment operations as well as to the provision of advisory services for EBRD private and public sector clients. The CEI Fund at the EBRD will continue along those lines by focusing on the leverage and transition impact of its technical assistance operations in Official Development Assistance (ODA) eligible CEI Member States. The extraordinary leverage effect achieved so far shall be maintained in the future, to the extent permitted by the EBRD sectors and countries strategies, as a most relevant result.

Thanks to its flexibility, the CEI Fund represents an outstanding example of a demand-driven instrument for a tailored response to strategic challenges. The persisting financial crisis makes this instrument even more valuable to unlock investments in priority areas such as agribusiness, business and finance, capacity building, sustainable energy, institutional development, municipal infrastructure and services, SME support and transport.

In the tri-annual period 2014-16, a strengthened CEI-EBRD partnership in the context of project evaluation and impact assessment is also envisaged. In this regard, the CEI Fund at the EBRD, totally financed by Italy, will be committed to respecting the principles of aid effectiveness along the lines of the “Managing for Development Results” (MfDR) approach.

CEI Know-How Exchange Programme

Building upon the achievements of the CEI Know-how Exchange Programme (KEP) over the last 10 years, the CEI will assess the impact of the programme and the results of the implemented projects. The recommendations and lessons learnt will be incorporated in the KEP programme management in order to further improve the Programme, increase its effectiveness and promote an efficient use of resources. The CEI will also continue maintaining close relations with its KEP donors, and focus on enhancing the programme coordination and its visibility. Special attention will be given to the added value the KEP Programme brings with regard to transforming countries from know-how recipients into know-how providers. Taking into consideration the success of the KEP in tapping into the transition experience of recent EU members, the CEI will also encourage an increased involvement of emerging donors in the programme.

CEI Networks

The CEI University Network and the CEI Science and Technology Network are proven effective tools for promoting regional cooperation in the academic and scientific sectors. In order to enhance their impact, by fully exploiting the relevant resources made available by Italy, special attention will be paid to fundraising, especially through EU Programmes (e.g. along the lines of the CERES Project as an example of financial synergy combining resources made available by the CEI, the European Commission and other donors). Further cooperation between the Networks and the respective CEI Focal Points will ensure a harmonisation and coherence in CEI actions in this field. Finally, the Networks will also coordinate their activities with those of the Business Dimension, in line with the “Triple-Helix Model” (business – government – university).

B. Revisiting the Business Dimension

The revisited Business Dimension will reflect an independent and innovative view on modern economy and in parallel serve as a joint exchange forum among Member States for structural and legal innovation as well as for cross-border and transnational project design and implementation. The majority of prominent business actors in CEI Member States are in the private sector and no longer state-run conglomerates, thus ensuring flexibility to engage in all kinds of economic cooperation as investors, shareholders, green or brownfield entrepreneurs, also in collaboration with other private institutions and/or state authorities. The CEI will promote the participation of private industries and organisations in the Business Dimension, through a distinctive procedure developed by the CEI Secretariat.

The two-pillar approach laid out in the Position Paper “Revisiting the CEI Business Dimension”, based on consolidated proposals submitted under the Hungarian (2013) and Austrian (2014) CEI Presidency, constitutes a first step in this direction. It goes without saying that the actual functioning of this system will be carefully examined before any institutional adjustments are made. When enforced, a strong and flexible mandate will be regarded as essential.

C. Reinforcing Institutional Links with the EU and other International and Regional Organisations

Over the past years, the CEI has developed fruitful contacts with the EU institutions, in particular with a number of Directorates General of the **European Commission (EC)**, i.e. the DG for Enlargement, DG for Mobility and Transport, DG for Research and Innovation and DG for Regional Policy. As to the latter in particular and in view of the bridging role the CEI intends to play vis-à-vis existing and future macro-regional strategies interactions would be enhanced. In addition to the EC, at EU level, the CEI also has fruitful contacts with the European Parliament and the EEAS. The CEI will further improve its ability to clearly communicate its added value and distinctive feature, i.e. the capacity to design and implement EU-funded projects: this activity can make a real contribution to the implementation of EU policies, while at the same time involving those non-EU countries whose capacity to absorb EU funds is still limited. CEI countries in the pre-accession phase have the possibility of benefiting from participation in EU programmes, thus familiarising themselves with EU policies and working methods. In this regard, the role of the CEI as promoter of EU projects, would bring about tangible benefits to its Member States holding an EU candidate, potential candidate or partner status.

Reinforced institutional ties with the EC will have a favourable effect on CEI participation in EU-funded projects. In the next tri-annual period, the CEI intends to promote and participate in more EU-funded actions by constantly elaborating project-ideas and encouraging the establishment of solid international consortia through a more effective involvement of the CEI Networks of Focal Points. The CEI Member States, through their representatives within the CEI Committee of National Coordinators (CNC) and in cooperation with the Secretariat, will have the chance to build strong regional partnerships around common goals and shared project-concepts. The Secretariat will regularly inform the CNC on projects in the preparatory and implementation phase; furthermore, on an annual basis, it will share with the CNC initiatives and activities leading to the elaboration of EU-funded project proposals.

Besides the EU, and the EC in particular, the CEI will endeavour to strengthen working relations with other **international organisations** such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Council of Europe (CoE), as well as with relevant agencies within the United Nations System, in particular United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) - also keeping in mind the CEI observer status at the UN General Assembly. The same goes for **regional organisations** such as the South East European Cooperation Process (SEECP), the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative (AII), as well as for other initiatives with regional scope and with specific sectorial vocation. A cooperation of this kind will be project-oriented and based on a solid mutual knowledge and synergies, in order to identify areas of common interest, promote complementarities and avoid duplications and overlapping.

D. Attracting public and Private Funds

Over the years, the CEI has gained high expertise in project-design promotion and management. The increasing involvement in EU projects proves CEI's capacities in this field. Through additional funding from private and public donors, the use of CEI instruments and its longstanding networks will be optimised: more valuable project proposals submitted to the CEI through the yearly calls will be implemented and additional funds will more appropriately be used as seed money as well. Furthermore, donors will get additional privileged access to the CEI region for their own activities, thus creating a clear win-win situation for recipients and donors, including a considerable spill-over effect for national industries.

E. Enhancing CEI Visibility

In the next tri-annual period, the CEI will develop a communication strategy with the aim of further enlarging its outreach and increasing the visibility of its projects and activities. This strategy will highlight the CEI assets and comparative advantages, and include clear concepts for effective communication. Not only will this be channelled through traditional communication tools, such as the CEI website, newsletters, press releases and publications, but also through web-based social media which could contribute to reaching out and connecting with broad networks of targeted groups and stakeholders in the CEI region and beyond.

The favourable experience with the South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO) and with the ANSA News Agency will provide the necessary framework for enhancing media relations in the CEI region. Media coverage of relevant CEI events (including EU project-related activities) will be further promoted through appropriate actions and more specifically through the new CEI ANSA portal launched in May 2013. All CEI Member States shall contribute to enhancing the CEI visibility in their own countries.

CEI-sponsored “Feature Events” in the field of education and intercultural cooperation, as well as Prizes and Awards offered to talented people, have highly contributed to enhancing visibility and identity in CEI Member States. These activities will serve as a model for developing new initiatives and events.

PART 2

A CEI Agenda for 2014-2016: Key-priorities per Area of Cooperation

The CEI Plan of Action 2014-2016 is aligned with the **EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2014-2020**, which will accompany the implementation of the **Europe 2020 Strategy (EU2020)**. The Member States of the Central European Initiative (CEI) share the overall vision outlined by EU2020, whose three priorities and relevant five headline targets represent a clear reference for non-EU CEI countries as well.

A set of priorities per area of cooperation has been elaborated by the CEI Member States, in cooperation with the Secretariat. CEI Member States agreed to narrow the scope of the CEI Plan of Action and focus on feasible and realistic activities, building upon the best practices and success stories of the previous four-year period and proposing new actions with strong potential in terms of future development. The Member States agreed to focus on **10 areas of cooperation, grouped into 3 main thematic pillars**. For each area of cooperation, a limited number of priorities have been identified, with relevant concrete actions to be implemented in 2014-2016.

CEI Agenda for 2014-2016

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	

The CEI Plan of Action 2014-2016 intends to highlight a clear and recognisable strategic approach to regional cooperation, an approach definable as:

- **project-oriented**, based on concrete actions and projects for the ultimate benefit of the CEI Member States;
- **flexible**, quickly adaptable and adjustable to the fast-changing European landscape;
- **focused**, meant to promote synergies and complementarities, while avoiding fragmentation and dispersion of efforts and resources;
- **realistic**, built on feasible projects and activities, rather than on theoretical commitments;
- **coherent**, providing for structural harmonization and integration among various CEI activities, while ensuring follow-up to the successful activities of the previous four years.

1. Towards a Knowledge-based Society

Research and Innovation

MAIN RESULTS ACHIEVED IN THE PERIOD 2010-2013

In 2010-2013, the CEI promoted various initiatives in the field of Research and Innovation, both at institutional and technical level. As to the former, two ministerial meetings were organised (2011, 2012), thus providing the Organisation with a well-defined strategy to promote scientific cooperation among its Member States in the forthcoming years.

Besides enhancing institutional ties with the relevant Ministries for Science and Research, the CEI developed fruitful contacts with the DG for Research and Innovation of the European Commission (EC). Furthermore, the CEI was invited to participate, as observer, in two important multilateral fora, namely the Steering Platform on Research for the Western Balkans and the Steering Group of Priority Area 7 (Development of the Knowledge Society through Research, Education and Information Technologies) of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region.

At technical level, the CEI supported a number of activities through its Cooperation Fund, such as international conferences, workshops and seminars. In this regard, the CEI Science and Technology Network has proven to be a useful tool for developing joint activities. In particular, the CEI Research Fellowship Programme (CERES), co-funded by the EC Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP7), focused on the promotion of transnational mobility of researchers.

CAPITALISATION ON ACHIEVEMENTS AND FUTURE ACTION

Based on experience and achievements, the CEI intends to develop and enhance its actions by focusing on a few specific priorities - in line with the provisions of the EU2020 Strategy, placing research and innovation on top of its agenda - as well as on the related flagship initiative "Innovation Union". Therefore, while taking part in the on-going policy dialogue, aimed at bridging gaps between and among CEI countries within and outside the European Research Area (ERA), during 2014-2016 the CEI will focus on the following **main priorities and relevant actions**:

PRIORITY 1: Bridging between ERA and non-ERA countries

Action 1.1: promote the participation of non-EU, non-ERA CEI countries in collaborative research projects, by making full use of existing funding opportunities (Horizon 2020, IPA, COST, EUREKA...).

Action 1.2: support transnational mobility of researchers in line with the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for their Recruitment.

PRIORITY 2: Promoting cooperation along the lines of the Triple Helix Model for innovation

Action 2.1: elaborate joint projects and activities with the CEI Business Dimension, the Science and Technology Network and the CEI University Network in order to facilitate links between science, academia and entrepreneurship.

Action 2.2: support the elaboration of Smart Specialisation Strategies in non-EU CEI Member States in order to identify the overall potential of the CEI region in terms of Research and Innovation excellence.

PRIORITY 3: Facilitating access to the institutions of the CEI Science and Technology Network

Action 3.1: promote specific pilot projects of advanced research and technical transfer, based on the strengths of the centres of excellence participating in the CEI Science and Technology Network, while optimising resources through regional networking of Western Balkan Countries, the Danube macro-region and Eastern neighbours.

Action 3.2: raise awareness on specific instruments such as the European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ERIC) and the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KIC), as effective opportunities to integrate research facilities and centres of excellence, and stimulate further transnational and interregional cooperative efforts.

Life-long Education and Training

MAIN RESULTS ACHIEVED IN THE PERIOD 2010-2013

In 2010-2013, the CEI promoted the mobility in the academic world by involving all CEI Member States in activities financed both through the CEI Cooperation Fund (financed by all CEI Member States) and through the CEI University Network (financed by Italy). As to the activities promoted through the Cooperation Fund, special attention was paid to international conferences, workshops and seminars covering the field of human resource development and training as well as higher education.

The CEI University Network turned out to be an effective tool for promoting regional cooperation in the academic sector mainly in areas such as: advanced biotechnology, economics, environment and sustainable development, ICT, infrastructure and logistics, regional development, and public administration.

CAPITALISATION ON ACHIEVEMENTS AND FUTURE ACTION

Based on experience and achievements, the CEI will continue fostering its goals in the field of education by promoting the mobility of students and teaching staff through activities financed by the CEI Cooperation fund as well as through those implemented within the framework of the CEI University Network.

With regard to the latter in particular, special attention will be paid to enhancing the impact of the CEI University Network. Priority will be given to fundraising especially through EU Programmes (e.g. along the lines of the CERES Project as an example of financial synergy combining resources made available by the CEI, the European Commission and other donors). A link between the University and the Science and Technology Networks as well as further cooperation between the Networks and the respective CEI Focal Points will be elaborated in order to ensure harmonisation and coherence to CEI actions in this field. Finally, the Networks will also coordinate their activities with those of the Business Dimension, in line with the “Triple-Helix Model” (business – government – university).

During 2014-2016 the CEI will focus on the following **main priorities and relevant actions**:

PRIORITY 1: Promoting education and training for innovation, economic growth and job creation (especially for the disadvantaged groups)

Action 1.1: anticipate skills European citizens and companies need (through the CEI University Network).

Action 1.2: collaborate with businesses and employment agencies in order to promote learning at the workplace.

Action 1.3: elaborate joint projects and activities with the CEI Business Dimension and the CEI University Network and Science and Technology Network in order to facilitate links between education/science and entrepreneurship in line with the “Triple-Helix Model” (business - government - university).

PRIORITY 2: Cooperation for the elimination of any barriers to adult learning

Action 2.1: expand opportunities for learning mobility by encouraging higher and vocational education institutions to target adult learners.

Action 2.2: enhance partnerships between education and training institutions.

Action 2.3: set up e-learning and distance learning facilities.

PRIORITY 3: Education towards diversities and practices for their acceptance and management

Action 3.1: organise training activities in order to encourage Member States to cooperate and foster activities promoting diversity/plurality/tolerance, including gender equality.

Information Society

MAIN RESULTS ACHIEVED IN THE PERIOD 2010-2013

In 2010-2013 the CEI promoted actions and enhanced know-how transfer in the field of Information Society in order to raise awareness on innovative IT solutions and new technologies. Special attention was paid to projects enhancing the use of methods for digital preservation and data security, digital archives as well as digital document management systems. Moreover, the CEI promoted initiatives in line with the EU Digital Agenda, by favouring the accessibility to ICT solutions and e-applications in different sectors.

The topics regarding internet governance in national and international processes and how the effectiveness of diplomacy communication could be improved were also addressed.

CAPITALISATION ON ACHIEVEMENTS AND FUTURE ACTION

Based on experience and achievements, the CEI will continue focusing its efforts in line with the relevant EU actions, such as the Digital Agenda for Europe, by proposing ICT pilot solutions and target applications in the CEI region in order to prevent the digital divide and foster accessibility to ICT without gender or age gaps. The CEI will continue promoting actions favouring cohesion within the region by developing a knowledge-based society. It will provide integrated platforms for sharing governance experience, connecting students and professors in a CEI digital community and promote digital libraries and archives.

The CEI will be committed to supporting and facilitating institutional communication, cooperation initiatives, knowledge sharing and use of open technologies, such as developing a Video-Conferencing Facility.

During 2014-2016 the CEI will focus on the following **main priorities and relevant actions**:

PRIORITY 1: Improving e-governance impact through sector integrated digital eco-systems

Action 1.1: identify assets and backlogs in the CEI region.

Action 1.2: develop e-cooperation procedures at transnational level.

PRIORITY 2: Promoting equal opportunities of an active digital life

Action 2.1: avoid gender and age digital divide.

Action 2.2: promote a safer e-environment for children.

PRIORITY 3: Promoting open education

Action 3.1: elaborate digital libraries and archives and distance learning through the enhancement of e-applications.

2. Towards a Sustainable Economy and Development

Transport, Logistics and Accessibility

MAIN RESULTS ACHIEVED IN THE PERIOD 2010-2013

In 2010-2013, the CEI focused on the main objectives of the White Paper for Transport of the European Commission. The aim was the consolidation of a joint strategic vision of the CEI Member States, as well as of streamlining - in the field of infrastructure and economic development in line with Trans European Transport networks and pan-European corridors - European and national priorities both at technical and political level.

The CEI has extensively supported transition in its Member States in the transport sector by receiving EU and regional funds thanks to its active participation in the EU projects and by financing technical assistance linked to EBRD's operations. The aim was to support the development of efficient, reliable and secure transport systems in six lines of transport: railways, ports, aviation, roads, shipping and logistics. For example, the CEI provided technical assistance through the Italy-sponsored CEI Fund at the EBRD for rail reforms supporting railway restructuring in line with international practice and fostering the development of the private sector with special attention to Public Private Partnership (PPP). The CEI also addressed sustainability in this sector by providing technical assistance for reducing energy consumption and improving environmental management in the framework of the EBRD's Sustainable Energy Initiative.

The CEI acted as a part of the European Union Strategy for enhancing territorial cooperation in the field of transport, accessibility and infrastructure development in the context of macro-regional strategies. In this context, attention was paid to matters such as the extension of the TEN-T Network to the Western Balkans, TEN-T guidelines, Motorways of the Sea Policy, green transport corridors and intermodal terminals policy. Moreover, the Organisation played an active institutional role as interlocutor of the European Commission on a monthly basis.

The CEI is one of main regional promoters of pan-European initiatives, also cooperating with other relevant projects focused on intermodal transport, strengthening of the logistic chain, cross-border facilitation. In this regard, the Organisation set up specific projects (SEETAC, 2009; ADRIA-A 2010, RAIL4SEE, 2011; ACROSSEE, 2012) in order to enable a comprehensive initiative for the entire Central and South-Eastern area in the freight and passengers transport sector. In the framework of these EU projects, the CEI has represented a dialogue arena for European, pan-European, national and regional levels, with the involvement of the European Commission, national transport ministries and the most relevant stakeholders active in the Transport and Logistics sector.

CAPITALISATION ON ACHIEVEMENTS AND FUTURE ACTION

Based on experience and achievements, room for capitalisation exists in particular with regard to the promotion of a grid of transnational, multimodal transport corridors for better external accessibility of the CEI region, with well-developed cross-border sections to secure interoperability of national transport networks. The identification of the most added value interregional and regional transport links, which improve access from the transnational corridors to local and regional production areas and customer markets will also be taken into account.

Taking into account the fact that the CEI also addressed sustainability in this sector by providing technical assistance for reducing energy consumption and improving environmental management, environmentally sustainable transport systems will be promoted by the CEI through its participation in the next programming period of EU territorial co-operation programmes and through its cooperation with the EBRD.

During 2014-2016 the CEI will focus on the following **main priorities and relevant actions**:

PRIORITY 1: Contribution to the development of the TEN-T Core and Comprehensive Network in line with the EU strategy 2020 and its extensions to the Western Balkans

Action 1.1: promote projects and specific actions to harmonise regional and national transport policies and reduce non-technical barriers for the Core and Comprehensive Network development in CEI Countries.

Action 1.2: discuss and harmonise joint transport development measures to foster transport demand on existing and new infrastructures with a coordinated approach.

Action 1.3: enhance cooperation between the CEI Member States in implementing projects for railway network development dedicated to the competitive freight and passengers transport.

PRIORITY 2: Acting as a bridge between macro-regional strategies in the transport sector

Action 2.1: establish inter-Institutional co-ordination between the CEI Member States in order to consolidate a common transport strategy as well as improve transport safety.

Action 2.2: creation of a macro-regional Transport Action Plan in line with CEI Member States and EU policies in order to contribute to identify synergies, avoid duplications and promoting strategic EU project proposals with the participation of Transport Ministries and Authorities.

PRIORITY 3: Strengthening an effective coordination and communication network to streamline other regional initiatives, national and regional priorities

Action 3.1: establish High-level Transport Forum among National Authorities and relevant stakeholders in the field of transport and economic cooperation.

Action 3.2: provide a comprehensive plan and promotion of political actions aiming at streamlining and creating synergies between the ongoing international and regional initiatives in the field of transport.

Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy

MAIN RESULTS ACHIEVED IN THE PERIOD 2010-2013

Since 2011 - when a comprehensive Report on Advanced Biofuels in CEI Countries was produced - this area of cooperation has encompassed the emerging sector of Bioenergy. CEI activities in this field have evolved in line with European trends: from the promotion of Advanced Biofuels, to active support of Bioenergy and societal challenges related to the development of Bioeconomy (sustainability, rural development, planning and policy). The CEI has deployed capacities to enhance its role through a variety of actions:

- a) participation in sector-specific fora, including active engagement in initiatives such as the European Biofuels Technology Platform and the Public Private Partnership on Bioeconomy;
- b) pro-active networking with major EU stakeholders and research institutions;
- c) enhancing relations with EU institutions and International Organisations in the field of bioenergy and bioeconomy;
- d) development of project proposals.

As a result, EU stakeholders recognised the CEI's role as focal point for awareness building at governmental level in the region. In parallel, the CEI promoted the establishment of a regional framework for cooperation in sustainable energy, the Sustainable Energy Development Regional Initiative (SEDRI). SEDRI is the first joint initiative between the CEI and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). It aims at providing its Members with an institutional platform for exchanging experiences and promoting small-scale sustainable energy projects. The CEI also addresses energy efficiency, with a relevant track record of technical assistance projects financed by the CEI Fund at the EBRD. This was particularly relevant at corporate level in the industry, agribusiness, transport, retail and real estate sectors.

The CEI Fund has provided support to: a) the Industrial Energy Audit Programme of the EBRD, thus helping maximizing sustainable energy investments and transferring best practices in technology and management techniques; b) to market demand studies, heralding the establishment of EBRD's Sustainable Energy Finance Facilities, which provide capital and promote nascent markets for renewable energy generation.

CAPITALISATION ON ACHIEVEMENTS AND FUTURE ACTION

Based on experience and achievements, the CEI will support the definition of bioeconomy strategies in CEI Countries in line with EU2020, including the creation of regional biomass markets and the promotion of the Danube river as a corridor for sustainable mobilisation of biomass and by-products. Particular attention will be devoted to supporting the implementation of smart specialisation strategies and to the principles of the knowledge triangle as applied to bio-based product value chains. The CEI will build upon the experience gained with the SEDRI Initiative, and will deploy its capacities to contribute to raising awareness by building upon the potential of CEI Member Countries as biomass suppliers and possible key-players for the consolidation of bioeconomy.

During 2014-2016 the CEI will focus on the following **main priorities and relevant actions**:

PRIORITY 1: Consolidation of CEI role in the field of Bioenergy and Bioeconomy

Action 1.1: renew constructive dialogue with Member States to update the definition of seizeable goals for 2014-2016 and the definition of a position paper on CEI objectives in the 2020 perspective.

Action 1.2: enhance synergies with other sectors of CEI activity (e.g. rural development; research and innovation, etc.) in order to emphasise the potentials of the macro-regional approach.

Action 1.3: strengthen relations with EU institutions and International Organisations in particular with the Energy Community and the OSCE, and explore synergies between ongoing international and regional initiatives in the specific field.

PRIORITY 2: Promotion of Bioenergy and Bioeconomy in CEI Member Countries

Action 2.1: consolidate institutional dialogue through the CEI Ministerial Conference on Bioeconomy, also in view of a possible cooperation between EUSDR and countries from the Adriatic-Ionian basin.

Action 2.2: support for defining Bioenergy and Bioeconomy strategies and full-scale development of relevant value chains, and promoting regional markets for biomass and bio-based products.

Action 2.3: raise public awareness for triggering bottom-up demand for relevant policy measures and adequate support to Research and Innovation Smart Specialization Strategies (RIS3).

PRIORITY 3: Consolidation of sustainable energy measures across different sectors

Action 3.1: promote dialogue at regional level, through SEDRI, to facilitate exchange of best practices in the development and financing of small-scale sustainable energy projects.

Action 3.2: provide technical cooperation support to the EBRD Sustainable Energy Initiative in areas such as: energy efficiency for corporate sector, sustainable energy financing facilities, municipal infrastructure energy efficiency and carbon market development.

Action 3.3: promote biotechnologies and know-how transfer among CEI Member States.

Climate, Environment and Rural Development

MAIN RESULTS ACHIEVED IN THE PERIOD 2010-2013

In 2010-2013, the CEI acted as a platform for cooperation and coordination for addressing regional environmental and climate challenges. It has contributed to sharing information on climate change strategies and action plans, especially in the sustainable energy sector as a key sector for the reduction of GHG emissions.

Through the CEI Fund at the EBRD, the CEI financed technical assistance projects in rural development, in support of EBRD operations aimed at developing local supply chains to increase efficient production and at introducing financing schemes that tackle the lack of capital in the sector. The CEI fund also supported EBRD policy dialogue efforts, bringing together investors, distributors, processors and retailers in collaboration with the FAO, to stimulate discussions on the possibilities of improving agricultural practices and removing obstacles.

Activities and projects were supported through the CEI Know-how Exchange Programme in the field of water management, natural resource management, local rural development and rural tourism. The CEI also participated in an FP7 project focusing on the mobilisation of biomass, which brought about the enlargement of the Consortium in order to include the CEI region. The project will contribute to strengthening biomass value chains, thus having a direct impact on the agricultural and forestry sectors in terms of relevant policy actions, but also - in the long run - in terms of job creation, enhanced land management, investment attraction, etc.

CAPITALISATION ON ACHIEVEMENTS AND FUTURE ACTION

Based on experience and achievements, the CEI will continue supporting its Member States in the development of environment and climate activities at regional level, also in the context of the EU macro-regional strategies. The CEI will continue promoting environmental cooperation in the region by fostering synergies and initiatives with other regional organisations and specialised environmental agencies. It will also promote dialogue for facilitating the positive conditions for investments in low-carbon and green economy, such as micro-financing, support for smaller investments and consultancy.

During 2014-2016 the CEI will focus on the following **main priorities and relevant actions**:

PRIORITY 1: Promotion of Agribusiness and Food Security in support to EBRD operations

Action 1.1: finance technical assistance and development programmes aimed at increasing competition, market expansion and the transfer of skills; support the EBRD Private Sector for Food Security Initiative.

Action 1.2: promote innovative and more efficient technologies in agriculture to counteract the adverse effect of climate change.

Action 1.3: support the application of EU standards and regulations (including food safety and good-quality standards), and application of geographical indications for locally produced food products.

PRIORITY 2: Contribution to contrasting climate change and promoting sustainable development of the CEI region, with focus on nature conservation and biodiversity

Action 2.1: contribute to the development of climate change strategies and action plans, in line with the EU Climate and Energy Package, and promote climate change adaptation and mitigation policies and measures, with focus on reducing the GHG emissions and emissions of other air pollutants.

Action 2.2: reinforce cooperation with the Member States and regional actors in the field of European nature conservation, in particular regarding the Biodiversity targets, Ecosystems and Natura 2000 Network.

Action 2.3: foster activities that enhance the environmental asset of the CEI region, by promoting the nature capital of green areas and forests considering their carbon capture potential; promote activities, which strengthen the prevention of specific natural and man-made disasters.

PRIORITY 3: Promotion of the potential of Bioeconomy for Rural Development

Action 3.1: enhance policy dialogue and planning vis-à-vis the new programming period and the launching of IPA2; promote the role of Macro-regions for enhanced strategic planning in rural development.

Action 3.2: prioritise rural development as key success factor for CEI Member States (economic potential, social and environmental implications, etc.) and promote the potential of CEI Member States as producers of organic and bio-food, including the promotion of certification, small productions.

Action 3.3: support activities and projects in the field of water management, waste management and natural resource management, as well as actions fostering local rural development and rural/local tourism.

SMEs and Business Development

MAIN RESULTS ACHIEVED IN THE PERIOD 2010-2013

In 2010-2013, initiatives and programmes promoted by the CEI in this field mainly aimed at transferring experience and best practices, intensifying relations and cooperation among its Member States. The CEI also fostered policies and activities promoting entrepreneurship and the creation of a favourable business climate, in particular for SMEs, as drivers of economic growth.

The CEI re-launched the CEI Business Dimension, by establishing a dynamic structure, incorporating both enterprise and industry stakeholders, with the aim of promoting an active and strong participation of the business communities of the CEI Member States. It promoted operations through the CEI Fund at the EBRD, especially to support micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) providing business expertise through the EBRD Enterprise Growth Programme (EGP) and Business Advisory Services (BAS). By financing these two programmes with other donors, the CEI Fund at the EBRD promoted good management in the MSME sector by providing direct support to individual enterprises from experienced business advisors and consultants, helping them develop their businesses and adapt to market economy demands.

CAPITALISATION ON ACHIEVEMENTS AND FUTURE ACTION

Based on experience and achievements, major opportunities for capitalisation exist in particular with regard to the intensification of regional cooperation for the promotion of a favourable business environment and dissemination of good practices in the field of SME promotion, as well as in initiating concrete cooperation projects. In addition, fostering the involvement of the large industry in the activities of the revisited CEI Business Dimension in order to increase cooperation opportunities, business relations and networking could be very promising. The matter regarding access to finance for enterprises, by disseminating good practices and information on financial programmes and schemes, in particular small-scale financing, developed by the EBRD and other IFIs, will be exploited. Efforts will be made in order to enhance the promotion of international investments and trade, by increasing the attractiveness for foreign investments and the support to trade in the region - also through the organisation of meetings and economic fora for information exchange.

During 2014-2016 the CEI will focus on the following **main priorities and relevant actions**:

PRIORITY 1: Strengthening the CEI Business Dimension

Action 1.1: support SME development through exchange of information and good practices and through promotion of contacts, including relations with national and local administrations in order to increase business opportunities, modern business cooperation and favour a business-friendly environment.

Action 1.2: foster dialogue between governments and business communities, with the involvement of the large industry; support exchange of information on relevant topics of economic policy, economic climate and perspectives, including development programmes, cooperation projects, international investments and trade.

PRIORITY 2: Promoting entrepreneurship through business expertise supported by CEI instruments

Action 2.1: support projects designed to foster SME development and healthy competition, strengthen capacity building and corporate governance. In particular, CEI-funded advisors in the framework of the EBRD Enterprise Growth Programme (EGP) and Business Advisory Services (BAS) will enable enterprises to make structural changes and develop new business skills at senior management level, thus helping them to compete in market economies.

PRIORITY 3: Finance and innovation

Action 3.1: act as a platform supporting CEI Member States in facilitating access to financing for SMEs, in particular by identifying possible sources of financing and disseminating good practices.

Action 3.2: boost the entrepreneurial initiative by supporting actions and instruments aimed at improving technological and organisational innovation of enterprises.

3. Towards an Inclusive Society

Intercultural Cooperation

MAIN RESULTS ACHIEVED IN THE PERIOD 2010-2013

In 2010-2013, the CEI supported the implementation of a number of activities proposed by Member States with the aim of promoting cultural dialogue and preserving cultural diversity, including the protection and promotion of minority cultures. Special attention was given to activities strengthening cross-border cooperation including the mobility of artists and experts in view of enhancing the exchange of experience and best practices in various fields, such as literature, music, contemporary art, and cinema. In order to enhance the professional competencies in cultural management, specific activities involved museums, public administrations, institutions, private organisations and agencies. In this framework, the CEI Venice Forum for Contemporary Art Curators represented a valuable example. Flagship initiatives were promoted to support and encourage talented young people, such as the CEI Fellowship for Writers in Residence, the CEI Award for young designers, the “Eastweek Project” supporting cooperation among cinema schools. A network of art and design schools of the CEI region was also initiated.

The CEI also organised, the first time, the exhibition “Free Port of Art”, involving artists from all CEI countries thus providing them with a major opportunity in terms of visibility in the context of the Venice Biennale. Thanks to these actions, the CEI was able to develop relevant partnerships at local, national and regional level.

A dialogue with competent international organisations (Council of Europe, UNESCO) was also activated as well as the participation in EU-funded projects in the field of culture. The protection and promotion of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities was also among the priorities of CEI intercultural cooperation with the aim of contributing to a democratic management of differences and diversities in multicultural societies, taking into account the concepts set out in the CEI Instrument for the Protection of Minority Rights. CEI activities developed in the framework of intercultural cooperation also contributed to strengthening the visibility of the CEI and enhancing its identity.

CAPITALISATION ON ACHIEVEMENTS AND FUTURE ACTION

On the basis of past experience and achievements and based on the fact that intercultural dialogue represents a good way to promote mutual understanding, a better coexistence among peoples and an active sense of European citizenship and belonging, the CEI will further contribute to playing an active role in this respect. Efforts will be made to strengthen the existing networks and connect regional cooperation mechanisms at EU macro-regional level. The CEI will further contribute to fostering intercultural dialogue and preserving the cultural and linguistic identity of minority groups. It will continue promoting initiatives to advance the capacities of relevant stakeholders to attract financial resources, especially EU funds, for cultural projects and initiatives. Efforts will also be made in order to connect culture, heritage, art and the field of education with the involvement of local communities in designing public artworks.

During 2014-2016 the CEI will focus on the following **main priorities and relevant actions**:

PRIORITY 1: Fostering intercultural dialogue and preserving cultural diversity

Action 1.1: stimulate networking and exchange of experience among cultural stakeholders; endorse transnational co-productions in the field of performing arts, music and cinema; support mobility, such as artists/writers-in-residence programmes especially addressed to young people.

Action 1.2: advance capacities in managing and safeguarding cultural heritage, also through digital technologies; exploit the potential of cultural heritage to develop cultural tourism and contribute to territorial growth and create joint tourist offers based on shared-cultural-heritage thematic routes.

PRIORITY 2: Developing “diversity management” capacities

Action 2.1: promote “train the trainers” activities in fields such as linguistic and cultural mediation, cultural heritage protection and diversity management through the involvement of universities, NGOs, research institutes, with special focus to social pluralities, tolerance and empathy among groups including a reconsideration of history and memory in deeply divided societies in particular.

Action 2.2: exchange experience in preserving cultural and linguistic identity of minority groups, in line with the principles of the CEI Instrument for the Protection of Minority Rights, also through study visits in bordering areas and research activities encouraging all Member States to sign the Instrument. Promote Roma inclusion and integration in the Balkans, in line with the objectives of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015.

PRIORITY 3: Supporting cultural and creative industries

Action 3.1: develop actions and policies to reinforce entrepreneurship within the cultural and creative sectors to develop creative clusters or incubators in order to facilitate access to financing and establish an appropriate business environment.

Action 3.2: promote the distribution of cultural goods and services outside national contexts, especially in the fields of audio-visual production and artworks.

Media

MAIN RESULTS ACHIEVED IN THE PERIOD 2010-2013

In 2010-2013, the CEI focused its action on the implementation of activities aimed at promoting and protecting media pluralism, transparency and independence. A number of training activities, workshops and events were held under the initiatives of Member States and supported by the CEI, tackling issues such as: the quality of journalism, internet and new media, media business, the role of journalists' associations and NGOs in promoting media pluralism and raising public awareness.

The CEI commitment was complemented by its cooperation with the South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO) and other competent partners, such as the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

Through the CEI-SEEMO Award for Outstanding Merits in Investigative Journalism - which honours the work of journalists engaged in investigative reporting - the CEI emphasised the importance of investigative journalists for democratic developments in the countries of the region. The South East Europe Media Forum (SEEMF), taking place every year in a different country, has become one of the main CEI-supported events in the field of media. It gathers journalists, media owners, top political leaders, NGOs, regional and international organisations to debate key issues and exchange experience and best practices.

A special partnership was established with the Italian News Agency – ANSA, bringing about the launch of a web portal (www.ansa/nuova_europa/eng) including regular and up-to-date news and analysis on the countries of Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe in priority sectors.

In order to promote a major involvement of the national news agencies of CEI countries as well as provide continuity and sustainability to this project, the CEI - in cooperation with the ANSA office in Brussels - has established contacts with the DG Enlargement to explore opportunities and feasible modalities for developing an EU-funded project. An informal meeting among some national news agencies (such as HINA, BETA, TANJUG, FENA, FONET) took place at the margins of the 2012 edition of the South East Europe Media Forum.

CAPITALISATION ON ACHIEVEMENTS AND FUTURE ACTION

Based on experience and achievements and thanks to its potential in terms of networks, implementation mechanisms and funds, the CEI will further support its Member States, especially the non-EU CEI countries, in order to come closer to EU standards in terms of media legislation, digitalisation, public broadcasting service, free movement of journalists and quality journalism. In this framework, the CEI will also take advantage of its experience in designing and managing EU projects in order to seek for EU funds to complement and expand its capacity and implement major projects in the field of protecting and enhancing the freedom of media.

The established cooperation with the OSCE will be strengthened in order to develop joint actions to support the role of media in the process of democratisation and transformation.

Cooperation with ANSA would help to build partnerships between and among news agencies to facilitate the exchange and flow of information as well as experience and practices in order to contribute to advancing the quality of journalism. The ANSA portal could also be used as a tool to increase public understanding regarding the EU enlargement process, to disseminate information on candidate countries and potential candidates as well as to give visibility to regional organisations and EU macro-regional strategies.

During 2014-2016 the CEI will focus on the following **main priorities and relevant actions**:

PRIORITY 1: Promoting media pluralism, transparency and independence

Action 1.1: stimulate networking and exchange of experience among media owners, journalists' associations, universities, NGOs and other competent institutions, also in view of monitoring media developments in the region, taking into account national, EU and international legal frameworks.

Action 1.2: promote the knowledge and implementation of EU standards and directives, such as the Audio-visual Media Services Directive (AVMS), as well as discussions on future developments in the field of media regulations.

Action 1.3: develop cooperation with the European Audiovisual Observatory (EAO) in view of enhancing participation of CEI countries; increase the availability and quality of data and analysis, thus broadening the picture of the media landscape in Europe.

PRIORITY 2: Enhancing quality journalism across Europe

Action 2.1: support professional training to promote highest standards in journalism to the media in order to fulfil their role in democratic societies. Special attention will be paid to the development of digital media.

Action 2.2: promote workshops and roundtables to provide media experts with the necessary background information and tools to understand the mechanisms, impact and challenges of the European integration process and provide a comprehensive and objective report on these matters. Information tools (such as the ANSA portal) and cross-border cooperation activities between national media will be exploited.

Action 2.3: encourage dialogue between and among legislators and journalists regarding the strengthening of the position of journalists in the newsroom; find new schemes of public funding of quality journalism.

Civil Society

Although a forum for intergovernmental cooperation, the CEI has also developed many contacts with NGOs and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), mainly in the context of project-related activities. With the aim of contributing to the process of democratisation and EU integration, the CEI intends to strengthen cooperation with these actors, in particular through its Cooperation Fund as a main tool for promoting people-to-people contacts. The development of dynamic civil societies in non-EU CEI countries will be a CEI priority, also taking into account that this is a pivotal aspect of the EU enlargement process. Regional cooperation for the development of civil societies will be a flexible and result-oriented effort.

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