

Annual Report of the Secretary General 2023

CENTRAL EUROPEAN INITIATIVE

The Central European Initiative (CEI) is a regional intergovernmental forum established in 1989, gathering 17 Member States in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe*.

It supports a united Europe with shared values embracing all countries, regions, peoples and citizens; and fosters the strengthening of capacities of its Member States towards good governance, rule of law and sustainable economic development for stability, social cohesion, environmental sustainability, security and prosperity.

One central mission: working towards European integration and sustainable development through regional cooperation.

**According to the CEI Guidelines and Rules of Procedure the CEI Member States are: Republic of Albania, Republic of Belarus (suspended in March 2022), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Bulgaria, Republic of Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italian Republic, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia, Republic of Poland, Romania, Republic of Serbia, Slovak Republic, Republic of Slovenia and Ukraine.*



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MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY GENERAL



The year 2023 was marked by numerous challenges. Amidst geopolitical shifts, marked first and foremost within our region by the Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, economic uncertainties and societal transformations, the CEI remained steadfast in its commitment to advancing its mission in support of European integration and sustainable development.

Throughout 2023, our Organisation, under the leadership of the Moldovan CEI Presidency, continued to advance its core objectives, leveraging collaboration and innovation to address emerging issues and capitalise on new opportunities. From health, youth, enhancing connectivity to promoting sustainable development, the undertaken initiatives have made tangible impacts, reinforcing the spirit of cooperation and solidarity that lies at the heart of the CEI.

At the same time, the CEI's role as genuine platform for multilateral diplomacy and project management continued along the lines driven by the CEI Plan of Action 2021-2023 through all mechanisms for cooperation, from both a political and project point of view. This combination has enabled the promotion and implementation of numerous high-quality, result-oriented projects and activities.

In the pages of this report, you will find a comprehensive overview of the activities that have defined our journey over the past year. The report delves into the key accomplishments, milestones, and initiatives. From high-level and expert events in the framework of the Moldovan CEI Presidency, interactions with the EU and the UN and strategic partnerships with WHO/Europe and other international and regional organisations, each section highlights the dedication and collective efforts of our Member States, partners, and stakeholders in advancing the goals of the Organisation.

Moreover, through its various funds and instruments of cooperation, such as the multilateral CEI Cooperation Fund, the CEI Fund at the EBRD and the Know-how Exchange Programme, both financed by Italy, and several prizes, the CEI supported numerous projects and activities in 2023. Through its participation in EU-funded projects, the CEI also attracted additional resources.

In support of the above-mentioned, I wish to emphasise the following achievements from these funds and instruments throughout the year:

- *Cooperation Fund*: financed by annual contributions from all Member States, the Fund is designed to implement the CEI strategic goals and objectives through activities ranging from meetings, workshops, conferences, trainings (events in general) aimed at creating longer term relations, networks and partnerships with various stakeholders within the region. Additionally it supports larger and longer-term activities within a focused section annually identified by the CNC with a view to addressing particularly felt challenge/s or sector/s. It is also aimed at facilitating the Member State which is holding the annual CEI Presidency in the implementation of the activities pursuing the priority goals set for the year. This year, two additional streams have been added for the activities to be implemented in 2024, i.e. CEI Flagship Events - Cooperation Activities which have an added value and strategic significance in pursuing the CEI mission, and ensure high visibility and media outreach to the CEI, and in pursuing cooperation with other international and regional organisations on activities of mutual interest. In 2023, 37 Cooperation Activities tackling the objectives of the PoA 2021-2023, approved within the relevant Call for Proposals 2022, were implemented. The Presidency managed to implement 7 activities from its Programme thanks to the support from the Fund. Furthermore, the Call 2023 for the activities to be implemented in 2024, including the new streams, was launched in October.

- *“IMAGINE” Active Young Citizens for Sustainable Development in CEI and All Areas*: the winners of the competition launched in 2022 and announced in May 2023 were: the Montenegrin Public High School “Beco Basic” in Plav, Montenegro with its project idea “Underage marriages, euphemism for a child marriage, a form of gender inequality (social and economic sustainability)”; the Technical Education Centre in Ljubljana, Slovenia with “Trike does the trick”; and the European Institute of Superior Studies - IESS in Reggio Emilia, Italy with “IDEE - Integrating Digital and Environmental Education for the twin transition”. The three winning schools will use their prize either for the implementation of idea itself; to take their students to the UN Headquarters in New York; or for institutional purposes linked to the implementation of the SDGs.
- *CEI Prizes and Awards*: the Moldovan documentary filmmaker *Otilia Babara* received the CEI Award at the Trieste Film Festival; *Lukasz Wilga* from Poland won the CEI Special Prize 2023 at CEI Piano Forum 2023; *Tijana Rakočević* from Montenegro won the CEI Award for Young Writers at Vilenica International Literary Festival; and the Slovenian *Jure Tepina* won the CEI SEEMO Award, during the South East Europe Media Forum in the “Professional Journalists” category, while *Azra Husarić Omerović* from Bosnia and Herzegovina in the “Young Professional Journalists” category.
- *Know-how Exchange Programme (KEP)*, financed out of the CEI Fund at the EBRD funded by Italy: through this Programme the CEI provides support to bilateral/multilateral projects focused on the transfer of know-how, exchange of best practices and capacity building activities, such as trainings, study visits, etc. between EU and non-EU CEI Member States on EU integration issues. Indeed, this Programme, has proven to be an effective and stimulating mechanism for promoting European integration through cooperation in various CEI areas of activity. In 2023, the KEP co-financed 12 new projects with around 460,000 EUR. In addition, 7 KEP projects were implemented and 10 closed throughout the year.
- *Technical Cooperation (TC) Programme* financed out of the CEI Fund at the EBRD, entirely funded by Italy: through this Programme the CEI offers grant-type assistance in support of specific components of investments and operations of the EBRD. TC operations include support for feasibility and pre-feasibility studies, sector and environmental engineering, management training, capacity building, pre-loan audits. In 2023, the CEI Fund at the EBRD committed 1,925,000 EUR for 6 new TC assignments. In addition, 35 TC projects were implemented and 10 closed throughout the year.
- *EU-funded Projects*: the CEI, through its Executive Secretariat, makes use of EU funding programmes as a valuable tool for the attainment of the strategic objectives - the promotion of regional cooperation for European integration and sustainable development - as well as for the implementation of its tri-annual Plan of Action. In 2023, 10 projects were under implementation (3 were closed in the course of the year) with a total budget of about 25 million EUR, of which over 2.6 million EUR were administered by the CEI-Executive Secretariat.

As we reflect on the past year's developments, we stand at a pivotal moment, requiring an increased commitment to fostering collaboration, promoting stability, and driving progress. The CEI remained committed to its founding principles of dialogue and cooperation with the aim of building a more resilient, inclusive, and prosperous future. We faced a dynamic landscape and complexities, calling for a redesigned chart for the future.

It was with this spirit that the new CEI Plan of Action 2024-2026 has been prepared, to provide a strategic framework and goal-oriented roadmap tailored to meet the needs of our Member States, while advancing the mission of the Organisation to achieve two far-reaching priorities, supporting European integration and sustainable development, while also proposing focused actions. The challenging scenario has also triggered discussions on the further strengthening of the CEI and on how to optimise the use of resources to be undertaken in 2024.

As we look ahead, we must acknowledge the work that lies before us. The road to progress is never easy, but with determination, perseverance, and a shared vision, we can overcome any obstacle that stands in our way. Together, we can reaffirm our commitment to building a stronger, more prosperous future for the peoples of our region.

Finally, I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude to all those who have contributed to the success of the CEI over the past year – our Member States, partners, stakeholders, and dedicated staff. Your unwavering support and commitment have been instrumental in driving our mission forward.



PRESIDENCY

The Chairmanship of the CEI (CEI Presidency) rotates annually at the beginning of the calendar year and is based on the alphabetical order of the English names of the CEI Member States, unless decided otherwise. It convenes the meetings envisaged by the CEI Guidelines and Rules of Procedure and other meetings of interest for the Organisation in the framework of the established priorities and programme of the Presidency.

PRIORITIES AND PROGRAMME OF THE MOLDOVAN CEI PRESIDENCY

Moldova took over the rotating CEI Presidency on 1 January 2023. The country demonstrated a keen interest and commitment in using this opportunity for enhancing its regional status. It also demonstrated its firm belief in regional cooperation in general, and regional organisations in particular, as instrumental in addressing current challenges.

The Moldovan CEI Presidency has added a lot of fresh thinking in accomplishing this important task. In this endeavour, it could count on the strong support from the Member States and expertise of the CEI-Executive Secretariat (CEI-ES).



The Moldovan CEI Presidency focused on further promoting the CEI's mission; contributing to the implementation of the CEI Plan of Action; continuing the work of the previous Presidency/ies, thus providing follow-up to what had already been done; and capitalising on the established partnerships. With regard to the latter, the Presidency helped to further step up the dialogue aimed at enhancing cooperation with the EU, the UN and various regional players active in the region.

In doing so, the Presidency further promoted regional dialogue as a key element for strengthening stability, security and prosperity; addressing political challenges; as well as defining new opportunities, by also supporting activities of the CEI-ES. The high level and expert meetings as well as other events organised or supported by Moldova during the year were very well attended by the country representatives and provided ample visibility to the CEI.

Priorities

During its mandate, the Moldovan CEI Presidency focused on the following political objectives: furthering the European integration of the non-EU CEI countries; providing further support to Ukraine, both political and tangible; accelerating the recovery from the pandemic (health, economic, social); and advancing sustainable development through the promotion of the UN 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs.)

In this framework, a number of priorities around which the Presidency focused its activities have been developed, such as: increased political dialogue on the current challenges in the framework of the CEI platforms (MFA Meetings, Parliamentary Committee, meetings of the Committee of National Coordinators— CNC, side-events); regional activities for economic recovery; strengthened connectivity; promotion of cooperation on health-related issues, in cooperation with WHO; enhanced scientific cooperation; deepened cultural relations as a factor of unity, and promotion of the potential of young people as drivers of change.

Programme

Through the implementation of concrete activities focused on the above-mentioned priorities, Moldova contributed to strengthening the multilateral approach to the challenges, encouraging constructive exchange of views and ideas. Noteworthy, among the events organised or supported by the Moldovan CEI Presidency were two Meetings of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs (informal and formal), five CNC Meetings, meetings of the CEI Parliamentary Dimension, expert meetings on health and connectivity, a CEI side event on the occasion of the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, and support to events promoting the CEI Local Dimension and Youth Agenda.

Among the rich programme of the Moldovan CEI Presidency, the activities and events implemented in 2023 are outlined in the Calendar of the Presidency (Annex 1) and are described here-to in chronological order.

ACTIVITIES OF THE MOLDOVAN CEI PRESIDENCY

The Presidency organised and supported a number of activities as envisaged by the established priorities and programme, in the framework of the CEI Dimensions (Governmental, Parliamentary, Economic and Local), activities in partnership with other international and regional organisations, as well as activities aimed at stepping up cooperation with the EU, the UN and other organisations.

CNC Meetings

The CNC met five times in 2023 (in Trieste on 14 February and 15 December; in Brussels on 20 April, in Istanbul of 30 May and in Chisinau on 21 November). The CNC is the key body responsible for the definition, coordination, management and implementation of CEI cooperation as well as for the implementation of CEI programmes and projects through appropriate structures. It meets frequently in order to discuss and coordinate cooperation within the various bodies of the Organisation as well as in relation with other international and regional organisations. In 2023, the CNC meetings witnessed an active participation of the Member States in the deliberations. The Committee drafted and negotiated different documents for adoption from the high-level meetings and discussed the strengthening of relationships with international and regional stakeholders. A number of projects, ideas, and proposals were approved, then tackled by the Secretariat throughout the year.



General Committee on Economic Affairs of CEI Parliamentary Dimension (Bucharest, 27-28 March)

The General Committee on Economic Affairs met in Bucharest on 27-28 March. The meeting held under the topic “The economic consequences of the war in Ukraine for CEI countries” was chaired by Rozália-Ibolya Biró, Head of the Romanian Delegation to the CEI Parliamentary Dimension. Keynote speeches were delivered by the representatives of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Economy. Delegations presented their national situations and inputs for enhancing mutual assistance as regards Ukraine. The need for macroeconomic measures to face the economic effects of the war was particularly highlighted as well as the role of bilateral relations and regional cooperation in the framework of the CEI. Moreover, solidarity with Ukraine and its people was expressed by all delegations, underling the assistance and support actions, as well as the commitment to contribute to the future international, long-term effort to reconstruct Ukraine. The Ukrainian delegation expressed its gratitude for the overall cooperative approach and highly appreciated the open and friendly discussions held within the CEI Parliamentary Dimension.

Meeting with EU Institutions (Brussels, 20 April)

On the occasion of the CNC Meeting held in Brussels on 20 April, the National Coordinators had the opportunity to meet and exchange views with representatives from the EU institutions, namely from the DG NEAR of the European Commission and from the European External Action Service. They both expressed appreciation for the CEI’s work, while the Member States praised the crucial decisions the EU had taken recently with regard to the EU enlargement. They also shared their views on the impact of the process within the countries, and on the public opinion. The discussion also focused on the role that regional cooperation played in keeping the process dynamic as regards the implementation of reforms and alignment of standards. In this regard, the importance of further strengthening cooperation between the CEI and the EU was underlined.

Parliamentary Committee Meeting (Chisinau, 22-23 May)

The meeting of the Parliamentary Committee of the CEI Parliamentary Dimension was held in Chisinau on 22-24 May. The importance of regional cooperation as a tool for addressing the current challenges and mitigating the impact of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine across the region as well as for further promoting the EU integration process was at the core of the meeting. In particular, the parliamentarians exchanged views and experiences on the impact of the war on global energy markets and international energy security. They highlighted the need for strengthening cooperation in promoting energy market reforms according to European rules and international commitments. This, in order to diversify energy sources and promote energy efficiency and renewable sources, also as a contribution to protecting consumers and fighting against energy poverty and climate change. As regards the EU integration process, they shared the view that the CEI could provide a valuable platform to promote an exchange of expertise with parliaments of the candidate countries, to support them in adapting their national legislation to the EU acquis and accelerating their integration process, by designing new forms of cooperation and promoting citizens' sense of belonging to Europe. Opening remarks were delivered by Igor Grosu, President of the Parliament of Moldova, and Igor Chiriac, President ad interim of the Moldovan Parliamentary Delegation to the CEI Parliamentary Dimension. The agenda of the meeting also included keynote speeches by Dumitru Alaiba, Deputy Prime Minister, Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalization; Mihail Popșoi, Deputy President of the Parliament of Moldova; Doina Gherman, Chairwoman of the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Policy and European Integration; Vladimir Cuc, State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration; Cristina Pereteatcu, State Secretary, Ministry of Energy; and other prominent guests.



CEI-BSEC Troika Meeting (Istanbul, 29 May)

Upon the initiative of the Moldovan CEI Presidency, a Coordination Meeting was held in Istanbul on 29 May at the premises of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) Permanent International Secretariat (PERMIS), and in the presence of the Troikas of both Organisations (for CEI: Moldova, Bulgaria and Albania; for BSEC: Serbia, Moldova and Türkiye). The aim was to present the respective activities of both the Troikas and of the two Secretariats, which aimed at promoting regional dialogue and cooperation in areas of mutual interest and in the countries the two Organisations have in common (i.e., Albania, Bulgaria, Moldova, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine). In this regard, possible complementarities have been identified on topics such as connectivity, climate, environment and energy, culture and cultural tourism. To this end, representatives of both Secretariats presented their respective activities and projects and agreed to continue with consultations among them.



Meeting with the BSEC Secretariat (Istanbul, 30 May)

On the occasion of the CNC Meeting held in Istanbul 30 May, back-to-back with the CEI-BSEC Troika Meeting, kindly hosted by the BSEC PERMIS, the National Coordinators had the opportunity to discuss cooperation between the CEI and other regional organisations. It also touched upon the interaction between the Secretariats for exchanging information on the respective activities. In this regard, the meeting featured presentations from BSEC PERMIS representatives on the project activities of the PERMIS in areas such as environment and transport.

General Committee on Cultural Affairs of CEI Parliamentary Dimension (Łańcut—Poland, 3-4 July)

The General Committee on Cultural Affairs met in Łańcut (Poland) on 3-4 July. The meeting, opened by Tomasz Głogowski, Head of the Polish Parliamentary Delegation to the CEI and Chair of the General Committee on Cultural Affairs, focused on the protection and restoration of Ukrainian cultural heritage destroyed as a consequence of Russia's war of aggression. Several experts from Polish local communities and cultural institutions reported on the activities carried out in the field of preservation and restoration of cultural heritage in Ukraine. The Ukrainian representatives provided comprehensive information about the damages to cultural heritage sites since the beginning of the aggression and some of the actions carried out to protect these sites. All delegations actively contributed to the debate by introducing activities in support of Ukraine. They stressed the importance of cooperation both at governmental and local level, and with the involvement of competent organisations such as UNESCO, regarding issues such as digitalisation, archiving, technical assistance, illegal trafficking of cultural goods, educational activities, professional training. Regional cooperation promoted in the framework of the CEI was referred to as an asset for raising awareness, but also for enhancing the role of local communities and cultural institutions.



CEI Side-event at UN HLPF (New York, 18 July)

The Moldovan CEI Presidency - through the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Moldova and the CEI-ES - organised an official side-event at the UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in New York on 18 July under the topic "Regional cooperation and acceleration of the SDGs implementation: The role of the Central European Initiative (CEI)". The Permanent Missions of Albania, Bulgaria and Italy also co-sponsored the event. The aim of the gathering, moderated by DSG Nina Kodelja (Opening and keynote statements) and Senior Executive Officer Lidija Arsova (Panel), was to share and exchange knowledge and experiences on good practices of regional partnerships, in particular on the SDGs in the focus of attention of the HLPF. Keynote statements were delivered by the Secretary of State of the Government of the Republic of Moldova, Adrian Băluțel; the UN Assistant Secretary General and Director of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the CIS, Ivana Živković; and by the Special Envoy of the WHO Regional Director for Europe for the Western Balkans, Fabio Scano. The event was further enriched by showcasing the CEI's activities aimed at fostering the implementation of the SDGs as well as presenting some of the beneficiaries of the CEI funds and instruments. In this regard, Ambassador Miloš Prica, Chair of the Council for the Implementation of SDGs of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Co-chair of the 2023 UNECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, presented the perspective from the Governmental point of view; Aliona Rotaru, Executive Director, "Dreamups" Innovation and Entrepreneurship Accelerator, granted relevance to the CEI's funds for regional activities focused on innovation; and the Head of International Project Management Unit, Port of Bar, Rade Stanišić presented his experience with the CEI in its EU-funded project ADRIPASS Integrating multimodal connections in the Adriatic-Ionian region, which among other actions focused on the enhancement of the Port Community System. The event was attended by representatives of several Permanent Missions of the CEI and other countries to the UN, as well as other delegates and participants of the HLPF.



Meeting of CEI Youth Reference Points (Bled—Slovenia, 29 August)

The first meeting of CEI Youth Reference Points, in the framework of the CEI Youth Agenda, was organised, opened and moderated by the CEI-ES, DSG Zsuzsanna Király and Senior Executive Officer Slavena Radovanovic, and supported by the Moldovan CEI Presidency. It was held on the sidelines of the 18th Bled Strategic Forum (BSF) in Bled on 29 August. The meeting brought together representatives from CEI Member States responsible for shaping youth policies, education and other vital youth-related matters. Strategically situated within the dynamic and inspiring atmosphere of the Bled high-level international conference and preceded by the 12th Young Bled Strategic Forum, the event aimed to foster discussions on youth-centric agendas of high strategic significance. In this regard, discussions revolved around ways in which the CEI could interpret the specific challenges of the region and address the needs of its youth in a more incisive manner. There was a general agreement on the importance of setting goals that reflect the needs emerging from relevant findings and recommendations collected directly from the youth, yet goals that are realistic and that may be reachable within a reasonably short time frame. The discussions also underlined the need and opportunities to establish close cooperation with other relevant international organisations and actors active in the sector of youth.

Informal Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs (New York, 20 September)

The informal MFA meeting - on the margins of the UN General Assembly (the CEI has had observer status since 2011) - was held in New York on 20 September. At this traditional annual event, hosted by Moldova's Foreign Minister Nicu Popescu, the Ministers openly discussed the most topical international issues and the future directions of the Organisations to address the challenges. In particular, they exchanged views on the progress of the European integration process, especially under the current geopolitical scenario of the region marked by the continuing Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. In this regard, they agreed to further enhance the CEI's role in the European integration process. As for support to Ukraine, they also agreed to continue with initiatives and projects aimed at providing aid to both Ukraine and the countries and sectors affected by the consequences of the war.



Experts Meeting on Health (Brussels, 22 September)

On 22 September, a panel titled "Strengthening Regional Cooperation on Public Health: European Health Union Regulations, Strategies, and Programs - Relevance for CEI Countries" was organised in Brussels under the Moldovan CEI Presidency, together with the WHO Regional Office for Europe, the WHO Office to the EU and the CEI-Executive Secretariat. The gathering brought together high-level officials from Ministries of Health, health attaches from Brussels-based diplomatic missions, WHO representatives, and the representatives of the relevant Directorates-General of the European Commission and EU agencies dealing with health issues. The aim was to foster enhanced regional cooperation, providing CEI member countries with insights into tools made available by the European Union, particularly focusing on CEI countries in the EU accession process. EU representatives elaborated on these aspects, encouraging the sharing of best practices and exploration of improved synergies and regional cooperation on health, presenting the developments of the European Health Union, its key regulations, strategies, programmes and practical instruments as well as its future perspectives. The event also highlighted the lessons learned from COVID-19, underlining the need to reinforce national health systems for future challenges, with the EU actively supporting countries in this regard. Overall, the panel stressed the necessity of enhancing cooperation with WHO for greater synergies with EU priorities, and health diplomacy at global, regional and national level was highlighted as a tool for progress and inclusivity. The event provided an opportunity for engagement with officials from various EU Directorates-General and agencies, further fostering collaboration and shared goals in the realm of public health.



"Enhancing Healthcare Professionals' Capacity for Early Detection and Response to Public Health Emergencies in Central and South-Eastern Europe" (Chisinau, 17-18 October)

The Moldovan CEI Presidency supported the two-day training course held in Chisinau on 17-18 October titled "Enhancing Healthcare Professionals' Capacity for Early Detection and Response to Public Health Emergencies in Central and South-Eastern Europe". The Conference was organised by Nicolae Testemițanu State University of Medicine and Pharmacy, in collaboration with the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB), and was financed by the CEI (through the CEI Cooperation Fund). It was designed to equip healthcare professionals in the region with the necessary skills to detect and respond effectively to public health emergencies. The programme covered a wide range of topics, including pandemics, public health, and biosecurity, along with practical tabletop exercises. The exchange of knowledge and experiences contributed to a deeper understanding of the safe utilisation of biotechnology and the management of human viral diseases with pandemic potential.

Empowering Local Governance (Skopje, 19-20 October)

An international conference on "A Wider European Community: The importance of local governance", organised by the European Association for Local Democracy – ALDA was held in Skopje on 19-20 October. This event was hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of North Macedonia and supported by the CEI and the Moldovan CEI Presidency, and the Council of Europe, along with its Center of Expertise for Local Government Reform. The CEI-ES was represented by DSG Ivana Holoubková. Opened by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia, Fatmire Isaki, the Conference gathered government officials and representatives from local authorities and civil society to discuss and share views on the enlargement process of the Western Balkans, Moldova and Ukraine, with particular focus on the significance of local governance in this endeavour. The role of regional cooperation in the European integration process was also emphasised. During the gathering, the participants discussed how to enhance the understanding of the strategic approach to reforms, design action plans, develop methodologies for planning, implementation, and monitoring. The importance of the citizens' participation in the process was emphasised, with examples of local and regional initiatives and good practices from the wider European community.

Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs (Chisinau, 22 November)

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs from the CEI Member States convened in Chisinau on 22 November, for their annual meeting. The event was hosted by Nicu Popescu, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova. The gathering titled "Vital contribution of the EU integration process to the peace, stability, security, and prosperity in Europe and the role of the Central European Initiative in the process of the EU enlargement", highlighted the pivotal role regional cooperation plays in shaping the future of European integration and in addressing the complex challenges faced by the region and beyond. Crucial decisions were made during the Meeting: on the approval of the CEI Co-operation Fund budget for 2024; on the Albanian CEI Presidency in 2024; and on the revised CEI Guidelines and Rules of Procedure. The meeting also witnessed the adoption of a joint statement reflecting the collective vision and commitments of the Member States and the need for a strengthened CEI. In particular, this significant document - prepared to guide future collaborative endeavours - strongly condemned Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine. It emphasised the commitment to supporting rehabilitation projects for Ukraine and reaffirmed the support for the EU integration process of the CEI non-EU countries, all EU candidates. The Statement also highlighted the importance of knowledge transfer on European integration matters. Furthermore, it called for enhanced cooperation for sustainable development within the CEI framework, addressing economic, environmental, and social challenges. To tackle these issues, they agreed that the new CEI Plan of Action would provide the necessary strategic guidance, and thus endorsed the draft document.



Parliamentary Assembly Meeting (Chisinau, 26-28 November)

The Meeting of the CEI Parliamentary Assembly on 27 November 2023 in Chisinau was attended by Parliamentary Delegations from the CEI Member States. Opening speeches and keynote statements were delivered by prominent personalities from or active in Moldova: Mihail Popșoi, Deputy President of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova; Erika Hasznos, Deputy Head of the EU Delegation to the Republic of Moldova; Vladimir Cuc, State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, and others. Under the topic “Supporting European integration and promoting sustainable development of the CEI region”, the participants highlighted the role of the CEI as an effective forum of regional cooperation combining multilateral diplomacy and project management. They especially underlined the need to provide the Organisation with further political impetus in view of encouraging a renewed multilateral approach throughout the CEI region. Prior to the plenary session, the new Chairpersons and Co-chairpersons of the three General Committees on Political Affairs, Economic Affairs and Cultural Affairs, were elected. The meeting ended with the adoption of a Joint Statement.



Experts Meeting on Connectivity (Trieste, 14 December)

An Expert Panel, under the theme "Transport Facilitation as a Powerful Tool to Boost Connectivity of CEI Region" was held at the CEI Headquarters in Trieste on 14 December. Organised under the Moldovan CEI Presidency and the CEI-ES, in collaboration with the Transport Community's Permanent Secretariat, the panel brought together representatives from governments, businesses and international organisations to conduct an in-depth exploration of challenges, best practices, and potential solutions for improved connectivity. Discussions revolved around two main sessions: in the first, participants set the scene by examining existing challenges in the region and potential perspectives for removing transport and trade barriers. In the second, they provided practical information through best practice presentations, illustrating possible solutions for reducing border waiting times with the EU, focusing on alternative solutions to road traffic (e.g. ports, railways) and necessary investments. Suggestions also included the need for more multilateral dialogue, the realisation of concrete activities at regional level, infrastructure renewals, the identification of steps to be taken in ports, railways and roads, as well as for enhancing people's skills and networking. The overall event was complemented with a field visit to the Port of Trieste.





SECRETARIAT

The CEI-Executive Secretariat (CEI-ES) was established in Trieste in 1996. It operates with the legal status of an International Organisation, based on a Headquarters Agreement concluded between the Italian Government and the CEI Presidency. The CEI-ES provides administrative and conceptual support to the CEI structures. It also manages funds and instruments, financing the CEI Project activities, and takes appropriate initiatives aimed at promoting the realisation of the CEI's mission.

ROLE AND STRUCTURE OF THE CEI-EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT

The seat of the CEI-ES in Trieste (Italy), via Genova 9, was made available to the CEI by the Italian Government through the Friuli Venezia Giulia (FVG) Autonomous Region, free of charge and ties, under terms described in a Protocol concluded between the Secretariat and the FVG Region, signed in Trieste on 20 December 1999.

Role

The overall guidance and orientation for CEI activities in general and for the CEI-ES, in particular, is embodied in the CEI Guidelines and Rules of Procedure. Accordingly, the main role of the CEI-ES is to provide continuous, day-to-day, administrative and conceptual support to the CEI structures through assisting in the organisation of the numerous events and activities in the framework of the annually rotating Presidencies. It also promotes the accomplishment of the CEI mission; safeguards the implementation of the CEI Plan of Action; takes care of the use of the resources - Funds - made available by the CEI Member States and through other resources; and implements projects. The Office of the CEI Fund at the EBRD manages the Technical Cooperation (TC) Programme and the Know-how Exchange Programme (KEP) financed by Italy. The budget of the CEI-ES stemming from various resources is outlined in Annex 2.

Within this mandate, the CEI-ES undertakes proper initiatives at both institutional and project level, by putting forward new ideas and innovative solutions. This way, the CEI has an active role in international relations and multilateral diplomacy, and in programme and project management. As to the first, the CEI-ES develops and maintains relations with other international and regional organisations; develops joint activities with these organisations; maintains contacts with the respective Secretariats; participates in events of other organisations; and other activities.

As to the programme and project management, through this role the CEI-ES not only has developed capacities in the implementation and management of large projects, such as EU-funded projects, but it is gaining an additional role in the transnational and cross-border context. Moreover, it contributes to the CEI's mission by enhancing the involvement of the CEI countries in EU-funded projects. To carry out this task, the CEI-ES has a special office - Project Management Office (PMO) - through which it actively participates in various EU Programmes, both as Lead Partner and Partner. The staff of the PMO is financed out of the budget of the projects funded through EU Programmes and other donors.

Last but not least, the CEI-ES also makes sure that a spillover effect with the CEI project activities is secured, especially in terms of generating further financial resources and contributing to the capacity building and creation of networks. This is done through the multistakeholder approach consisting in bringing in together the CEI activities various actors from the Member States (not only the governmental level, but also other public and private actors, local actors, civil society, academia, youth), through a bottom-up approach. This way these actors take on more responsibility on issues of common regional interest and come up with more innovative activities. This approach is of particular added value for the CEI as it contributes to the promotion of its mission through exchange of experience and knowledge, in particular between EU and non-EU Member States.

Structure

In 2023, the Secretariat was led by a Secretary General (SG), Mr. Roberto Antonione, and three Deputy Secretaries General (DSG/s): Ms. Nina Kodelja, Ms. Ivana Holoubková and Ms. Zsuzsanna Király. They make up the Executive Level of the CEI-ES. The Secretariat is composed of various permanent staff members (Annex 3).

This year, the Secretariat organised and actively participated in numerous institutional events described here-to in chronological order. It also took care of the management and administration of various CEI funds, programmes and instruments, as well as of the implementation of project activities. The CEI Secretariat's staff was also actively involved in the implementation of the CEI Plan of Action 2021-2023, the elaboration of the CEI Plan of Action 2024-2026, and in the activities promoted by the Moldovan CEI Presidency.

INSTITUTIONAL ACTIVITIES OF CEI-ES

The CEI-ES is actively involved in official visits, bilateral meetings and meetings with other international and regional organisations. It also participates in CEI-sponsored events and in various international and regional events.

Trieste Film Festival 2023 (21-28 January)

The CEI is one of the long-standing sponsors of the Trieste Film Festival, held this year on 21-28 January. The Festival is the Italian leading appointment with Central and Eastern European cinema, offering a unique retrospective of quality filmmaking production from the CEI region. In the framework of the Festival, CEI support is given to the co-production forum “When East Meets West” gathering funders, commissioning editors, sales agents, distributors and producers, and it also bestows a CEI Award.

CEI Award 2023 at Trieste Film Festival

The CEI Award 2023 in the framework of the Trieste Film Festival is traditionally assigned to an artist who best interprets the contemporary reality of Europe and dialogue among cultures. This year it was bestowed upon the Moldovan documentary filmmaker Otilia Babara for the film “Love is not an orange”. As stated by the jury committee “Oranges, chocolates, jeans and plastic dolls” arrived in Moldova thanks to all those women who, in the early 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, left their country to come and work in Italy and abroad. In return, their children sent them video-letters. In ‘Love is not an orange’ Otilia Babara carefully and delicately collects private and intimate video material, delivering the portrait of a generation of mothers and children who were forced to love each other at a distance.”



“Italy and the Western Balkans: growth and integration” (Trieste, 24 January)

On 24 January, SG Roberto Antonione took part in the conference “Italy and the Western Balkans: growth and integration”, organised by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and the Ministry of Economy and Finance, aimed at relaunching Italy's central role in the Western Balkans, and at accelerating the EU enlargement process of the region. The event in Trieste witnessed interventions by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Antonio Tajani; a video message from the President of the Council of Ministers, Giorgia Meloni, as well as a speech by the European Commissioner for Neighborhood and Enlargement, Oliver Varhelyi together with many high-level Italian government and parliamentary representatives. Thematic discussions involving Italian diplomatic representatives, several actors from the business community, financial and bank sectors, as well as associations and confederations representing sectoral companies or branches, focused on objectives, instruments and opportunities for the strengthening of the Italy - Western Balkans wider strategic partnership. Special attention was paid to the economic remit, but also to the importance of diplomacy in broader terms, including economic, parliamentary, cultural spheres. The importance of the role Italy intends to pursue in the EU for a credible and dynamic accession process with the region, which must be a priority for the EU, was also in focus.



“Thinking, Debating, and Shaping Science Diplomacy” (Brussels, 25 January 2023)

The conference “Thinking, Debating, and Shaping Science Diplomacy” was organised in the framework of the EU Science Diplomacy Alliance in Brussels on 25 January. Moderated by the European Commission, DG for Research & Innovation, the overall goal was to assess the present state of the art of science diplomacy in Europe around three panels: Thinking Science Diplomacy; Debating Science Diplomacy; and Shaping Science Diplomacy. The CEI-ES, Senior Executive Officer Alessandro Lombardo, was invited to contribute to panel 2, owing to the fact that the CEI had joined the EU Science Diplomacy Alliance back in 2022. The conference allowed for a thorough discussion on science diplomacy and its future prospects in the framework of the EU’s external action.

Meeting with the Permanent Secretariat of the Transport Community (Belgrade, 23 February)

DSG Nina Kodelja and Senior Executive Officer Lidija Arsova met on 23 February in Belgrade, Matej Zakonjšek and Ljupka Siljanoska, respectively the Director and Deputy Director of the TCT Secretariat. Both parties expressed appreciation for the established collaboration through joint activities in the framework of the previous CEI Presidencies and agreed to collaborate on the meeting on connectivity organised during the Moldovan CEI Presidency. They also agreed to continue exchanging information and participating in respective events.

SG Visit to Serbia (Belgrade, 24 February)

A delegation from the CEI-ES, led by SG Roberto Antonione, visited Belgrade on 24 February to meet with the First Deputy Prime Minister responsible for foreign policy and security and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ivica Dačić. Discussions primarily focused on the importance of regional cooperation, and the role regional organisations such as the CEI are playing in the European integration process, especially in supporting the non-EU CEI countries, all of which are EU candidates on their path to the European Union. The European integration of Serbia was also at the centre of discussions. The interlocutors agreed on the importance of the process, contributing to the stability and security of the continent; underlined the importance of enhancement of direct communication and cooperation between the CEI-ES and the CEI Member States, and agreed to continue with periodical meetings of this kind.



SG Visit to Albania (Tirana, 2 February)

A delegation of the CEI-ES, led by SG Roberto Antonione, paid a visit to Tirana on 28 February, to meet the Deputy Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of Albania, Megi Fino. A meeting was also held with the Secretary General of the Ministry, Gazmend Turdiu. The interlocutors debated upon the importance of regional cooperation and the European integration process, especially after the recent opening of the accession talks of Albania. In this regard, while agreeing on the importance of continuing the process, they highlighted that furthering ways to promote the European integration of the non-EU CEI countries, all of which are EU candidates, in the framework of regional organisations such as the CEI was key. The interlocutors also underlined the importance of organising meetings between the CEI-ES and the CEI Member States, as direct communication and cooperation was crucial to better understand the needs of the countries.



High-level policy making event “BUILDING AN IDEAHL EUROPE” at European parliament (Brussels, 7 March)

On 7 March, the CEI-ES, represented by DSG Nina Kodelja and Senior Programme Manager Gian Matteo Apuzzo, organised, at the European Parliament in Brussels, a high-level policy event, “BUILDING AN IDEAHL EUROPE”, focused on digital empowerment and health literacy. The goal was to engage and gain support from the policy-makers for the development of the European digital health literacy (DHL) strategy and its long-term sustainability. This is the main objective of the project IDEAHL (Improving Digital Empowerment for Active Healthy Living), funded under the Horizon Europe programme of the European Commission, of which the CEI-ES is a partner. The event was co-sponsored by the WHO Office for Europe. The event - where the partners (consortium) of the project explained the preliminary findings of the project activities as well as the roadmap for the co-creation of strategy - was attended by around 150 policy-makers, representatives of national and regional authorities, academia, as well as regional organisations, such as the South Eastern Europe Health Network, dealing with health issues. Best practices from institutions, country and regional examples were also presented, in order to foster further exchange of experience in this area.



Western Balkans 6 (WB6)-EU Business Platform (Skopje, 30 March)

On 30 March, the CEI-ES, represented by DSG Zsuzsanna Király, participated in the Western Balkans 6 (WB6)-EU Business Platform in Skopje gathering members of the WB6 CIF Business Council, representatives of the region's private sector, the European Commission and regional stakeholders. The event, under the topic “One region - One economy - the progress towards the EU Single Market for the Western Balkan's businesses”, aimed at ensuring a continued and structured dialogue with EU decision makers.

14th Equal Pay Day conference (Prague, 31 March-2 April)

The 14th Equal Pay Day conference - organised by the non-profit organisation Business and Professional Women CR (BPWCR) in Prague on 31 March-2 April - brought together around 30 speakers, 80 mentors and 600 attendees to debate new trends in women's entrepreneurship and equal opportunities as well as to promote networking opportunities and experience sharing. Major topics relevant to society were discussed with the view that equal opportunities bring economic growth, strengthen democracy and raise welfare of the entire society. Thanks to the CEI's support from the CEI Cooperation Fund, the Equal Pay Day going International! project was promoted within the conference involving 20 professional women from nine CEI countries, namely Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, Poland, North Macedonia, Slovakia, Serbia and Ukraine, in addition to those from the host country (Czechia) and worldwide. The participation of Ukrainian experts enriched the discussion where the often-unexploited potential of migrant women was highlighted with examples and personal stories. The conference included a plenary session and a number of focused mentoring sessions in line with the idea of promoting the UN Women's Empowering Principles, especially the promotion of "role models". The CEI-ES, represented by Senior Executive Officer Barbara Fabro, took part in the conference.



"New vision for the Western Balkans: EU accession and regional security" (Rome, 3 April)

In the framework of the Ministerial meeting on the Western Balkans chaired by the Italian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Antonio Tajani, SG Roberto Antonione participated, on 3 April in Rome, in the conference titled "New vision for the Western Balkans: EU accession and regional security". The event was organised by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation together with the think tanks Istituto Affari Internazionali and the Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso Transeuropa. It was attended by Foreign Ministers from the Western Balkans, high-level representatives from EU institutions, international and regional organisations, policy makers and representatives of civil society. It aimed at promoting an informal exchange of views on the medium-term future of the region and further initiatives for cooperation in the region and with the EU. SG Antonione took part in the panel dedicated to the role of regional organisations, presenting the experience of the regional cooperation within the CEI. On that same day, DSG Nina Kodelja took part in a round table on "Cooperation with the Western Balkans on climate change and preservation of the cultural heritage", also organised on the sidelines of the ministerial meeting. National experts from Italy and the region, representing governments, state institutions and agencies, as well as representatives of international organisations exchanged views and held discussions focused on sharing experiences; mapping ongoing projects and activities in the Western Balkans; and on assessing specific needs in the region through joint initiatives.

CEI Piano Forum 2023 on music competitions, training, careers (Sacile-Italy, 2-6 May)

This year's CEI Piano Forum - organised by the Association Piano FVG - provided a platform for exchanging good practices and experiences, but also ideas and prospects to support the young musicians from the CEI region in their early career. Special attention was paid to the need to strengthen the mobility of musicians; the perspectives offered by the multimedia technologies; the promotion of gender equality and equal opportunities for male and female musicians. The CEI Piano Forum, supported from the CEI Cooperation Fund, was organised in the framework of the International Piano Competition FVG which, among other prizes, also included a Special CEI Prize. The international jury, chaired by the renowned Slovenian pianist Dubravka Tomšič Srebotnjak, decided to assign the CEI Special Prize 2023 to Lukasz Wilga from Poland. The CEI-ES was represented by Senior Executive Officer Barbara Fabro.



"Mid-term Evaluation of the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in All member states" (Banja Luka – Bosnia and Herzegovina, 5 May)

Upon invitation from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina Elmedin Konaković, SG Roberto Antonione participated in the opening of the event "Mid-term Evaluation of the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in All member states", held in Banja Luka (Bosnia and Herzegovina) on 5 May. The meeting was held in the framework of the Bosnia and Herzegovina's Chairmanship of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative (All), and included a regional analysis of the state of play of the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda in the Member States of the All. Governmental representatives from the All countries presented results and challenges regarding the SDGs' implementation process. It also included an experts' panel, with representatives from the EU and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The gathering ended with a round table on the localisation of the SDGs.



SG Visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina (Banja Luka, 5 May)

At the margins of the event “Mid-term Evaluation of the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in All member states”, held in Banja Luka, (Bosnia and Herzegovina), SG Roberto Antonione met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Elmedin Konaković. The interlocutors focused their discussions on the role regional cooperation plays for European integration, in particular, in supporting the EU-candidate countries. With the recent granting of the EU candidate status to Bosnia and Herzegovina, all CEI non-EU countries have become candidates. In this regard, they highlighted the need to further promote the enlargement process, agreeing on the relevance the CEI could have in making a change. They also underlined the importance of the CEI’s role in engaging on topical issues for the countries.



ALDA Secretary General Visit to CEI Secretariat (Trieste, 15 May)

Enhancing cooperation through joint activities between the CEI and ALDA (European Association for Local Democracy) in the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2022, was at the centre of discussions during a meeting at the CEI Headquarters in Trieste on 15 May with Secretary General of ALDA, Antonella Valmorbida. In this regard, the interlocutors exchanged information on respective activities and projects, on the importance of the CEI support to a conference involving local and regional authorities to discuss the EU accession process and on future plans. Both parties underlined the need to ever more join forces to give concrete support to building a strong local good governance expertise empowering the participation of the civil society.



Winners of Call for Ideas for Sustainable Development "IMAGINE"

In May, the CEI-ES announced the winners of the 2022 edition of the Call for Ideas and Award Competition “IMAGINE” Active Young Citizens for Sustainable Development in Central European Initiative (CEI) and Adriatic Ionian Initiative (All) Areas (deadline: 28 February 2023). The overall objective of the initiative was to raise awareness of CEI and All countries’ high school students on the UN Agenda 2030 (UNA2030) and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through a learning process and the participation in this Call, encouraging them to reflect on the contribution they could provide to its implementation at local level. In this particular Competition the collected ideas were to fall into one or more of the three United Nations 2030 Agenda dimensions: social, economic and environmental sustainability. It was open to public and private high schools (secondary education institutions) based and registered in a CEI / All Member State (14-19 years of age). Selected among 60 applications, the first-place winner of the competition is the Montenegrin Public High School “Beco Basic” in Plav, Montenegro with their project idea “Underage marriages, euphemism for a child marriage, a form of gender inequality (social and economic sustainability)”. It was followed by “Trike does the trick” (Technical Education Centre in Ljubljana, Slovenia) and by “IDEE - Integrating Digital and Environmental Education for the twin transition” (European Institute of Superior Studies - IESS in Reggio Emilia, Italy). The three winning schools will use their prize either for the implementation of idea itself; to take their students to the UN Headquarters in New York; or for institutional purposes linked to the implementation of the SDGs.



Visit to ALDA Office in Chisinau (24 May)

DSG Ivana Holoubková and Senior Executive Officer Barbara Fabro visited the office of ALDA - European Association for Local Democracy in Moldova on 24 May, and met with Alexandru Coica, Head of Unit. The information exchange especially focused on activities which provide assistance and support to Ukrainian communities and refugees inside Ukraine itself, as well as in the host countries; on the situation in Moldova as well as on support to local democracy in general. It also focused on the overall cooperation between the CEI and ALDA, implemented in the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding, which aims at joining forces to support the building of a strong local good governance expertise empowering the participation of the civil society.

Meeting of Foreign Ministers and Ministers of European Affairs of the South-East Europe Cooperation Process – SEECP (Budva, 5 June)

Upon the invitation by the Montenegrin Prime Minister and Coordinator of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dritan Abazović, SG Roberto Antonione took part in the Meeting of Foreign Ministers and Ministers of European Affairs of the South-East Europe Cooperation Process (SEECP) in Budva, Montenegro, on 5 June. The event was organised by the SEECP Chairmanship-in-Office of Montenegro. It aimed to discuss the achievements to date and further requirements for continuous progress in regional cooperation in South-East Europe, with a focus on: European integration; strengthening security; economic cooperation & connectivity; promoting sustainable development; and addressing the challenges linked to the Russian aggression against Ukraine. During the discussion, the interventions also focused on international development cooperation and humanitarian aid, as well as energy and food security and diversification, especially in response to the disruptions caused by the war in Ukraine. Moreover, safety and stability in the Western Balkans were debated.



46th Plenary Session of SEEHN (Tirana, 5-6 June 2024)

The event hosted by the Government of the Republic of Albania, brought together high-level representatives from the Member States of the South-eastern Europe Health Network (SEEHN), national health coordinators and directors from the Regional Health Development Centers and partners representatives. The aim was to promote public health and strengthen regional partnerships. Focus was placed on the improvement of vaccine acceptance, starting from COVID-19 experience to the general immunisation system in the countries. Partners presented their current state of the art, addressed misinformation, their own solutions applied and proposed new ideas for synergies to overcome the lack of trust and drop-out from the immunisation practices. The CEI-ES was represented by Project Manager Ana Sinkovic.

ALDA General Assembly Meeting (Brussels, 8 June)

The CEI-ES participated in the General Assembly meeting of ALDA, held in Brussels on 8 June. The event, under the title "Local Democracy will save Democracy", was organised in the framework of the ALDA FESTIVAL, also featuring workshops and celebrations of the birth of the first Local Democracy Agency (LDA) in Subotica, Serbia, in 1993. It was also an opportunity to praise ALDA's presence in the Balkans since 1998. In particular, the Festival and the General Assembly aimed at connecting the recent past with the present and future work of ALDA in the Balkans, recalling the history of its origin and development, emphasising the goals achieved as well as the progress toward future ones. The CEI-ES was represented by Project Manager Ugo Poli.



Italian Delegation to CEI Parliamentary Assembly Visit to CEI Secretariat (Trieste, 8 June)

On 8 June, the President of the Italian Delegation to the CEI Parliamentary Assembly, Salvatore Caiata, visited the CEI-ES in Trieste, together with Senators Raffaele De Rosa and Roberto Menia, and with Isabella De Monte from the Italian Chamber of Deputies. They met with the Executive Level of the Secretariat and the Senior Officers of the Secretariat. The Secretariat presented the major instruments, funds, projects and activities, through which the CEI fulfills its mission. Particular attention was paid to the actions undertaken by the Organisation to deal with the current challenges of the consequences of the war in Ukraine and the recent pandemic. In this framework, cooperation activated with other international and regional organisations was highlighted as an added value to be pursued further. The role of the Executive Secretariat as an instrument providing support to the CEI Dimensions - Governmental, Parliamentary, Economic and Local - was particularly emphasised. Appreciation was expressed by all members of the Italian Delegation for the overall activities of the CEI-ES and the beneficial exchange of information.



18th RAI Summer School (Sarajevo, 3-7 July)

The 18th edition of Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative (RAI) Summer School for Junior Anti-Corruption Professionals in South East Europe was held in Sarajevo on 3-7 July. The general objective of the Summer School is to provide a platform for young practitioners to learn new practices and to exchange experiences. The 18th Edition (supported through the CEI Cooperation Fund) aimed to enable the participants, junior representatives of anti-corruption agencies and ministries of justice, to obtain advanced knowledge on the latest developments and practice in the field of corruption risk assessment and corruption proofing of legislation as corruption prevention mechanisms and use gained knowledge in their daily work. The CEI-ES was represented (online) by Project Manager Ugo Poli.



Mittelfest (Udine, 26 July)

On 26 July the CEI-ES, represented by DSG Zsuzsanna Király, took part in a roundtable organised in Udine within the Mittelfest – a renowned cultural festival in the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region, which confirms the special relations of this Region with neighbouring countries in geographical, historical and cultural terms. The event was organised by the Cultural Association Mitteleuropa, a CEI long-standing partner who has taken on the task of organising, on a yearly basis, an important moment of institutional friendship on a specific theme of international significance. This year, it has dedicated this special occasion to Hungary, especially considering that the city of Veszprém (Hungary) is the European Capital of Culture in 2023, as introduced by the Hungarian Minister for Regional Development, Tibor Navracsics. During the gathering, various panels were held to discuss topics such as economic, business and cultural relations between the FVG Region and Hungary, projects and collaboration protocols between the regions.



Young Bled Strategic Forum (Ljubljana and Bled, 25-28 August)

The CEI-ES participated in the Young Bled Strategic Forum, held on 25-28 August. The event, among others also supported through the CEI Cooperation Fund, saw over 40 young leaders from diverse backgrounds convene in a spirit of cooperation, dialogue, and empowerment. It brought together experts from the public administration, academia, the private sector, media, civil society, and youth organisations, all working collectively to address pressing global challenges. Under the theme of "Mitigating our Butterfly Effect," the 12th edition of the Young Bled Strategic Forum celebrated the extraordinary power each individual and stakeholder possesses to catalyse positive change at local, regional, and global levels. It vividly portrayed how our world, interconnected and interdependent, can be shaped for the better or worse by the smallest actions, emphasising the urgent need for collective action in sustainability, security, technological advancement, geopolitical harmony, and other critical domains. The forum's activities extended beyond the initial three days, as participants transitioned into the Bled Strategic Forum conference, taking place on 28-29 August. The latter brought together participants from diverse fields to exchange ideas and address current and future challenges and provided a unique platform for tailored meetings and networking with regional and global stakeholders.



CEI Round Table at Vilenica International Literary Festival (Ljubljana, 6 September)

The CEI Roundtable at Vilenica International Literary Festival was held in Slovenia on 6 September. The CEI is one of its long-standing sponsors of the Festival through its CEI Cooperation Fund. The gathering featured numerous literary and cultural events such as roundtable discussions, readings, presentation of contemporary literature and symposia. It also featured the CEI Roundtable discussion on "The Diverse Face of Europe" with the participation of prominent authors and experts and an awarding ceremony of the CEI Award for Young Writers.

CEI Award for Young Writers 2023

The CEI has been presenting awards for young writers, as part of the Vilenica International Literary Festival, since 2006. Since 2021, the CEI Award - in cooperation with the Slovene Writers' Association – is meant to support the circulation of literary works in the CEI region through the translation in various languages. This year the CEI Award for Young Writer was bestowed upon Tijana Rakočević from Montenegro, a poet, playwright, and writer of fiction as well as a doctoral student at the Faculty of Philology in Nikšić and a member of the editorial board of the literary and cultural newspaper Fokalizator. She has published the poetry collection Sve blistavi quanti (RVP, 2018) and the short story collection Intimus (Fokalizator, 2023). The awarding ceremony was held on 6 September in Ljubljana. Tijana Rakočević presented some excerpts from her work in Trieste, at the historical Caffè San Marco, on 7 September, together with the authors Barbara Korun (Slovenia) and Ottó Tolnai (Hungary/Serbia).



Final Conference of ANETREC Project (Maribor – Slovenia, 11-12 September)

Key stakeholders, policymakers, and experts gathered in Maribor (Slovenia) on 11-12 September to attend the Final Conference of the ANETREC Project (Academic network supporting EU policies towards Western Balkans with emphasis on regional cooperation based on reconciliation). The Conference, actively attended by DSG Nina Kodelja, touched upon regional cooperation and reconciliation and upon assessing the current state of affairs, challenges, and future prospects in the region. Overall, the event provided a platform for stakeholders to exchange insights and recommendations to ensure stability, reconciliation, and progress in the region.

“Science Diplomacy: Foundations and Practice”

The CEI’s continuous commitment to exploring foundations and practice of Science Diplomacy was confirmed through the CEI-ES contribution, in particular of Senior Executive Officer Alessandro Lombardo, to the handbook “Science Diplomacy: Foundations and Practice” with a Chapter on “Science diplomacy through the lens of regional cooperation: the experience of the Central European Initiative”. The Chapter demonstrates the mutually reinforcing connection between Science Diplomacy and regional cooperation. The handbook was published by EUT – Edizioni Università di Trieste in September 2023 and is available for open access download in both English and Italian. This work was supported by the CEI in collaboration with the Autonomous Region of Friuli Venezia Giulia. It has also benefitted from the scientific guidance of the Department of Political and Social Sciences of the University of Trieste. It was designed as a comprehensive introduction to Science Diplomacy for both students and practitioners, with contributions from international experts that combine analyses of the main conceptualizations with descriptions of case studies of “Science Diplomacy in action”.



Barcolana Sea Summit (Trieste, 4 October)

In a significant gathering of maritime experts and policy leaders, the CEI-ES organised the roundtable "From the Barcelona Convention to an operational strategy for the safeguard of the Adriatic Sea" during the Barcolana Sea Summit. The event, held in Trieste on 4 October, brought together the representatives of the Harbour Master Office in Trieste (Italy), the Ministry of Natural Resources and Spatial Planning (Slovenia), the Ministry of Sea, Transport and Infrastructure (Croatia) and researchers from the National Institute of Oceanography and Applied Geophysics - OGS. On this occasion, DSG Nina Kodelja addressed the participants on critical need for governmental cooperation at cross-border-level to address the issues of climate change and protection of marine resources and the role the CEI-led NAMIRS project. At the same time, in a session on "Energy & Climate 2023: Electrify Everything!" DSG Zsuzsanna Király introduced the CEI's initiative, the "Imagine" Call for Ideas Award Competition, a CEI Youth Agenda activity.



XIX Central-European Forum of the Aquileia Euroregion – History and Memory: Capitals of Culture in Mitteleuropa (Udine, 6 October)

On 6 October the CEI-ES, represented by DSG Zsuzsanna Király, took part in the XIX Central-European Forum of the Aquileia Euroregion – History and Memory: Capitals of Culture in Mitteleuropa organised in Udine within the GO! 2025 Nova Gorica – Gorizia. The event, supported by the CEI Cooperation Fund and organised by the Cultural Association Mitteleuropa, is focused each year on a specific theme of international significance. This year representatives from Mitteleuropa celebrated the natural and spontaneous connections between their countries, reinforcing bonds in history, economy, culture, and lifestyle. The occasion also aimed to reclaim the extraordinary role of unity embedded in the region's roots. In this regard, the gathering in Udine reaffirmed the belief that "together we can."

Trieste CEI Platform (Trieste, 13 October)

Promoted by the Italian Parliament, in particular by Stefania Craxi, President of the Committee for Foreign Affairs and Salvatore Caiata, President of the Italian Delegation to the CEI Parliamentary Dimension, and organised by the CEI-ES, the Trieste CEI Platform - Conference of the Chairpersons of the Foreign Affairs Committees and National Delegations to the Parliamentary Dimension of the CEI Member States - was held on 13 October. It was attended by Parliamentary Delegations from CEI countries, while the Italian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Antonio Tajani, delivered a video message. The main objective of the Trieste CEI Platform was to initiate a discussion on strengthening the CEI as a valuable instrument of multilateral cooperation, enabling EU Member States and countries that are not yet EU members to interact and cooperate. The gathering also highlighted the importance of parliamentary diplomacy within the CEI in view of fostering collaborative efforts with its governmental dimension, especially under the current political and economic challenges confronting Central and Eastern Europe, notably in the wake of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. In this setting, the final document of the meeting outlined a collective vision to invigorate the CEI's actions and better represent shared political objectives. Through A Convention for the strengthening of the Central European Initiative, involving Parliament and Government representatives from CEI countries. The Convention, to be operative in 2024, will draft a proposal for the reinforcement of the CEI in order to encourage cooperation and a renewed multilateral approach in Central and Eastern Europe.



Gender Responsive Budgeting Forum (Skopje, 19-20 October)

90 representatives from international organisations, NGOs, government representatives and other stakeholders from the region gathered in Skopje on 19-20 October for a two-day Gender Responsive Budgeting FORUM – “Going Global: Gender Responsive Budgeting in the Western Balkans & Moldova: advancing good governance through empowering CSOs to use GRB tools”. The CEI-ES was represented by Senior Executive Officer Lidija Arsova. Discussions referred to the development aid provided by the international community and the current methodologies for monitoring funding for gender equality. The strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for improvement of the gender markers used by the OECD, the EU, UN agencies and IFIs were also touched upon. Attention was also paid to the development of methodological ideas for gender-responsive budgeting for better information on climate-change mitigation and adaptation activities, as well as to the importance of including gender equality in policies and budgeting for national, regional and local development. The event was supported by the EU, the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), and the CEI, through the CEI Cooperation Fund.



Preparatory Meeting on Albanian CEI Presidency (Tirana, 24 October)

A delegation from the CEI-ES, led by SG Roberto Antonione, visited Tirana on 24 October for consultations on the 2024 CEI Presidency under the Republic of Albania. During their visit, the delegation was received by the Deputy Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs of Albania, Besart Kadia, and by the team responsible for overseeing the country's CEI Presidency 2024. Discussions primarily centred on the political focus and priorities for the upcoming year. The European integration process was highlighted as the main political goal in today's complex international context marked by manifold challenges impacting peace and security. In this regard, the enhancement of the CEI's support towards Ukraine was underlined as a key element in promoting solidarity, as well as in addressing the regional consequences stemming from the war through regional cooperation, while strengthening the overall work of the Organisation. The CEI-ES, among other things, provided information on the necessary activities for a tangible cooperation and information exchange between the Secretariat and Albania for a successful outcome of the Presidency.



Meeting between AVSI FOR COMMUNITY and Network of Ukrainian Educational Hubs (Milano, 7 November)

AVSI FOR COMMUNITY multi-service center (addressing the needs of migrants in Italy) organised a meeting in Milano on 7 November with the participation of Mariya Boguslav, Coordinator of the Network of Ukrainian Educational Hubs, Executive Director of the Association of Innovative, Digital Education; Tetiana Suchodolska, Coordinator of the Ukrainian Educational Hub in Poland and Barbara Fabro CEI-ES Senior Executive Officer, in the framework of the CEI-supported Ukrainian Educational Hubs. The meeting provided the opportunity for a fruitful exchange of experiences and good practices between AVSI and the Network of Ukrainian EduHubs, under the guidance of the CEI-ES. The presentation of the respective organisations, activities and methodologies as regards the assistance provided to the Ukrainian refugees was very helpful in view of designing a possible CEI action in the FVG Region.

Meeting in the framework of RESILIENHANCE Project (Udine—Italy, 9 November)

On 9 November in Udine (Italy), a multidisciplinary group of experts from the CEI, UNESCO, UNDRR (UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction) and UNECSO Chairs of CEI countries met at the CISM (International Centre for Mechanical Sciences), to analyse and exchange views and expertise regarding a case study of the reconstruction after the 1976 Friuli Venezia Giulia's Earthquake and the related disaster governance cases. The gathering was held in the framework of the RESILIENHANCE project, which is a collaborative effort jointly implemented by the CEI-ES and the UNESCO Chair in Intersectoral Security for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience at the University of Udine. The primary goal was to promote territorial resilience for supporting the achievement of the UN 2030 Agenda through various initiatives elaborated within a "RESILIENHANCE platform". At the event in Udine, the CEI-ES was represented by DSG Nina Kodelja and Programme Manager Carlo Fortuna, who moderated the event. On that occasion, the participants discussed the next steps to apply the expert recommendations for strengthening territorial resilience to adverse events and critical situations. Among these, the creation of an open science-policy-society interface that allows interdisciplinary and intersectoral exchanges through policy briefings, scientific papers, discussion forums.



XVII South East Europe Media Forum (Tirana, 14-15 November)

More than 200 participants attended the XVII South East Europe Media Forum (SEEMF) held in Tirana on 14-15 November under the title “Journalism Will Survive! Risks and Opportunities for the Future”. Journalists, media experts, politicians, representatives of international organisations and academia debated topical issues for the future of journalism in lively panel discussions. The Prime Minister of Albania Edi Rama gave a welcome address and participated in a lively debate with some journalists. Throughout the Forum, special focus was given to climate journalism and the need for bridging the communication gap between science and society. The impact of artificial intelligence on modern journalism was also discussed with captivating examples and practices while the relationship between media regulation and media freedom was deepened from different angles, with references to the debate at the EU level about setting rules to protect media pluralism and independence. A wake-up talk focused on disinformation in the new digital world. The SEEMF is organised annually by the South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), in partnership with the KAS Media Program South East Europe and the CEI (supported through the CEI Cooperation Fund). The CEI-ES was represented by Deputy Secretary General Nina Kodelja and Senior Executive Officer Barbara Fabro.



CEI SEEMO Award 2023

At a ceremony held in Tirana, on 14 November, during the XVII South East Europe Media Forum (SEEMF), the CEI presented the winners of the CEI SEEMO Award for Outstanding Merits in Investigative Journalism, a prize seeking to promote achievements in investigative journalism as well as to improve the visibility of quality journalism as a contribution to safeguarding media freedom and pluralism. This year, the focus was put on the role of journalists in connection with major crises and emergencies, such as Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine, and the challenges they face to provide accurate and reliable information, often working under difficult conditions and personal risks. Jure Tepina, journalist and editor-in-chief of digital assets at PRO PLUS, a leading Slovenian multimedia company, was the winner in the “Professional Journalists” category (Tepina has a long-standing experience as a defense and war reporter, covering wars in the Middle East, Afghanistan and Ukraine. In particular, he was the first Slovenian reporter to reach besieged Kyiv in the first week of the Russian invasion. He visited the crime scenes in Borodyanka, Bucha, Irpin and traveled to Kherson where he reported on the stories of the Russian torture chambers and methods of interrogating innocent civilians). Azra Husarić Omerović, a graduate in Journalism at the University of Tuzla, and currently a journalist at BIRN BiH, won with the “Young Professional Journalists” category (her journalistic work primarily focuses on human rights protection, the rights of children with developmental difficulties, but also on hate speech, discrimination, and electoral irregularities). Notably, the CEI SEEMO Award also granted special mentions to Ukrainian journalist Taras Zozulinsky, Chairman of the Board Bureau of journalistic investigations “Detectives,” for his extensive documentation of war crimes during the Russian aggression in Ukraine. The team of Slidstvo.Info, represented by Anastasiia Stanko, was also commended for their outstanding investigative documentaries exposing corruption in Ukraine.



Balkan Economic Forum (Tirana, 17 November)

With the overall purpose of creating a more sustainable impact on the promotion of economic growth, regional collaboration, peace and security throughout the Balkan countries, the Balkan Economic Forum was held in Tirana on 17 November, under the auspices of the CEI. The event – gathering actors of the public and private sector – focused on the development and implementation of innovative strategies and creative solutions to the current economic challenges facing the Balkan countries to stimulate economic growth through regional cooperation. Sustainable financing in the Balkans, the importance of deep and liquid secondary markets for Non-Performing Loan (NPL) transactions, corporate policy development and agrotech in the Balkans – were the other topics of discussion of the event. The official welcome was delivered by Mr. Olivér Várhelyi, European Commissioner for Neighborhood and Enlargement. The CEI-ES was represented by DSG Zsuzsanna Király.



NAMIRS Transnational Anti-pollution Exercise in Northern Adriatic (Trieste, 20 November)

On 20 November in Trieste, the Maritime Directorate of Trieste, in collaboration with Slovenian and Croatian partners, successfully concluded a groundbreaking transnational anti-pollution exercise in the Northern Adriatic. The activity, a crucial component of the EU-cofunded NAMIRS project – Response System to Accidents at Sea in North Adriatic, coordinated by the CEI-ES, Senior Project Manager Anna Marconato – witnessed a strengthened cooperation among Italy, Slovenia and Croatia in responding to marine pollution incidents. The carefully crafted scenario, rooted in a risk analysis conducted within the project by the National Institute of Oceanography and Experimental Geophysics (OGS) and the University of Ljubljana – Faculty of Maritime Studies of Portorož, aimed to test response capabilities in a realistic setting. The analysis highlighted the Gulf of Trieste as a high-risk area for collision and subsequent pollution in the upper Adriatic. This risk zone, situated at the convergence point of exit-entry routes from the ports of Koper, Trieste, and Monfalcone, was central to the exercise. Coast Guard and firefighting teams, thus, engaged in a comprehensive testing of communication and operational protocols to improve response efficiency in addressing potential hydrocarbon spills. Distinguished attendees of the exercise included Italy's Deputy Minister of the Environment, Hon. Vannia Gava, and notable local and regional authorities also from Slovenia and Croatia.



"Italy and EBRD support Moldovan SMEs and start-ups through the Central European Initiative" (Chisinau, 22 November)

In the framework of the CEI Technical Cooperation Programme, Italy – (through the CEI Fund at the EBRD) is financing a 500,000 EUR project to support micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and start-ups in Moldova in boosting their digitalisation, unlocking financing opportunities and enhancing their competitiveness. The launch event, organised by the EBRD Office in Chisinau in cooperation with the Italian Embassy in Chisinau and the Office of the CEI Fund at the EBRD, was held in Chisinau on 22 November before the target local business community, and was supported by the Moldovan CEI Presidency. Small businesses, including youth-led enterprises and innovative start-ups, will benefit from targeted advisory support, expertise, training and access to finance aimed at helping them address challenges, and strengthening their economic resilience. Italy's contribution will also enable the rollout of the EBRD's Star Venture programme, a flagship initiative that helps innovative and high-tech start-ups scale their business with dedicated mentoring, consulting and access to financing. Support will be offered to Moldovan businesses through the EBRD's Advice for Small Businesses programme to help them boost their digitalisation efforts and equip them with tools to mitigate potential cyber threats. The CEI-ES was represented by DSG Zsuzsanna Király.

“International Conference on Decentralised support to Ukrainian communities: the role of medium-sized municipalities and the territorial approach” (Vicenza-Italy, 23-24 November)

The “International Conference on Decentralised support to Ukrainian communities: the role of medium-sized municipalities and the territorial approach”, organised by ALDA, in cooperation with the Municipality of Vicenza and with the support of U-LEAD with Europe and the CEI (supported through the CEI Cooperation Fund), was held in Vicenza (Italy) on 23-24 November. The event was attended by over 50 international participants, namely Italian, European and Ukrainian local authorities, and other local and national participants, who took part in debates. Among the topics covered: the role and action of local and regional communities in Ukraine’s reconstruction; support, solidarity and cooperation between territories; the establishment of seven new Local Democracy Agencies (LDAs) in the country as tools for community cohesion and development as part of ALDA’s Flagship Initiative for the Reconstruction of Ukraine; and cooperation between medium-sized cities for sustainable recovery. The CEI-ES was represented by Project Manager Ugo Poli.



“World Sustainable Transport Day” (Geneva, 24 November)

To celebrate the first World Sustainable Transport Day in Geneva, UNECE acting as a platform for all aspects of inland transport development and cooperation and interregional and intraregional regulatory governance through the United Nations transport conventions, organised a high-level gathering in Geneva on 24 November. The event organised in collaboration with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the UN, aimed to provide a platform for countries, organisations and industry leaders to exchange knowledge and best practices of sustainable transport, and to share their visions on how it will evolve in the future. The CEI-ES was represented by Project Manager Paolo Dileo.

“Strengthening Primary Health Care models and family medicine in the Western Balkans” (Trieste, 28-30 November)

The CEI-ES and the World Health Organization for Europe (WHO/Europe) organised an event under the title “Strengthening Primary Health Care models and family medicine in the Western Balkans” in Trieste on 28-30 November, with the support of FVG Region. The activity is related to the WHO Roadmap for Health and Well-being in the Western Balkans (2021–2025) endorsed during the CEI summit in 2021, which aims at bridging the gap between the EU and the Western Balkans addressing emerging health challenges, accentuated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the course of three days, the workshop focused on primary health care models, family medicine and challenges related to the healthcare workforce. Key objectives - including the presentation of regional models, discussions on current challenges and the identification of practical approaches - were accomplished. Among the 30 participants were representatives from the health authorities of the Western Balkans, primary health experts, and officials from WHO Europe and the CEI. The CEI-ES was represented by DSG Nina Kodolja.



High-level Meeting on Strengthening the Healthcare Systems in South-east Europe (Ljubljana, 4-5 December)

The meeting co-organised by the Slovene Ministry of Health and the SEEHN and in cooperation with the National Institute of Public Health and WHO/Europe aimed at presenting and discussing how to further strengthen the healthcare systems withing South-eastern Europe and beyond, to make them more resilient and better prepared for possible future shocks and crisis, how to tackle persistent health workforce shortages and recover trust among various stakeholders in healthcare systems in SEE. The event gathered high-level representatives of the governmental sector and public health professional, both at political level and from the medical health sector. It was also attended online by the representatives of the European Commission, OECD and Council of Europe. The CEI-ES was represented by Project Manager Ana Sinkovic.



MARRI Regional Conference (Skopje, 5 December)

The MARRI Regional Conference “Inclusive Border Security: The Perspectives of Female Police Officers in the Western Balkans” took place in Skopje on 5 December. The representation and status of women in Border Police in the Western Balkans, the challenges as well as the professional opportunities, were the main topics of discussion. The Conference was a closing event of the regional project – a research - on “Strengthening the capacities of the border police by empowering female police officers in the Western Balkans”, co-financed by the CEI Cooperation Fund and implemented by MARRI Regional Centre (the CEI contribution was used to help in the definition of the EU benchmark by organizing a study visit of police women from the Balkans in the Italian State Police). The conference was organised as a panel discussion where representatives of Border Police authorities, policymakers from MARRI Participants’ administrations and the international community debated the current practices as presented in the findings of the research. The conference also promoted synergies among the stakeholders for future projects and activities that will contribute to closing of the identified gaps. The long-term vision is to mainstream gender in the border and migration management and build strong, resilient, and accountable institutions which pursue people empowerment, to the benefit of all categories of people on move. The CEI-ES was represented at the Conference by Project Manager Ugo Poli.



23rd Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention - COP 23 (Portorož - Slovenia, 5-8 December)

The 23rd Meeting (COP 23) of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention) and its Protocols took place in Portorož (Slovenia) on 5-8 December. The main aim of the event was “Moving from plans and programmes to concrete actions to ensure a prosperous and sustainable Mediterranean.” Several side events were organised in order to present to the plenary other tangible actions ongoing in the Mediterranean. Specifically, the CEI-ES, Senior Project Manager Anna Marconato, has been invited to present the results and the exercise at sea organized in the framework of the NAMIRS project during the side event 1 “Pollution, including marine litter” – part 2, focused on combating marine pollution.



Coordination Meeting of Regional Organisations (Ancona-Italy, 5 December)

The 17th Coordination Meeting of Regional Organizations took place in Ancona (Italy) on 5 December, hosted by the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative (AII) Permanent Secretariat. The annual included the presence of representatives from regional organisations, such as the CEI-ES represented by DSG Nina Kodolja, the Permanent International Secretariat of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC PERMIS) and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). Special guests of the meeting were the Fora of Chambers of Commerce, Universities and Cities of the Adriatic an Ionian areas. The meeting confirmed the will to further seek and work on opportunities for enhanced cooperation to amplify the result of respective actions, both through the exchange of ideas as through joint actions. Looking ahead, it was confirmed that next year's meeting will be hosted by the CEI-ES in Trieste.



FUNDS, PROGRAMME AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES OF CEI-ES

The CEI-Executive Secretariat continued to provide administration and management to the CEI funds and programmes and to follow the implementation of the supported project activities, as well as to design and implement projects in the framework of its instruments for cooperation.

CEI Cooperation Fund

The multilateral CEI Cooperation Fund is provided by all Member States on an annual basis, according to an agreed scale of contributions. It supports Cooperation Activities and activities of the CEI Presidency.

Cooperation Activities

The CEI Cooperation Activities are multilateral small-scale projects such as seminars, workshops, training courses or other kinds of meetings focusing on mobility and networking. In some cases they can be linked to larger projects. They are co-financed by the CEI Cooperation Fund to which all Member States contribute annually. The Fund operates through annual Calls for Proposals. Since the start of its operations in 2002, the CEI Cooperation Fund has co-financed - with an amount of about 12,5 million EUR around 1,300 Cooperation Activities for a total value of the activities amounting to more than 70 million EUR. In 2023, 33 activities were implemented (approved in 2022) and are outlined below, including 7 activities supported in the framework of the Presidency. Furthermore, 37 were approved to be implemented in 2024 (Annex 4) with around 460,000 EUR and an overall total cost of projects of over 2.5 EUR.

activity name	country	applicant	total estimated cost	approved CEI contribution	PoA 2021-2023	SDG
The emerging need for nature-based solutions in urban and rural areas of south-eastern CEI countries (NbS-SEE)	Serbia	University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Agriculture, Department of Water Management	29.215,00 €	10.500,00 €	1.3.	13
The Eleventh International Conference on Radiation, Natural Sciences, Medicine, Engineering, Technology and Ecology (RAD 2023 Conference)	Serbia	RAD Centre	53.000,00 €	11.000,00 €	2.2	3
Community Mental Health Services in the SEEHN MSs - WBs and beyond: challenges, progress and boost-up policies	other	South-eastern Europe Health Network Secretariat (SEEHN Secretariat)	47.810,00 €	11.000,00 €	2.2	3
International Conference "A Wider European Community: The importance of local governance "	North Macedonia	Branch of ALDA Association of Local Democracy Agencies in Republic of North Macedonia Skopje	23.350,00 €	11.000,00 €	2.1	16
XI Spring School on "IoT, economic and management challenges for e-health integration in the enlarged Europe"	Italy	SSIC-HECE (Higher Education in Clinical Engineering) of the University of Trieste	21.462,00 €	8.000,00 €	2.2	3
Equal Pay Day conference going international! II.	Czech Republic	Business & Professional Women CR z.s.	136.668,00 €	11.000,00 €	2.5.	4,8,14
The Central-European Forum of the Aquileia Euroregion – "History and Memory: Capitals of Culture in Mitteleurope"	Italy	Mitteleuropa Cultural Association	44.100,00 €	10.000,00 €	2.3	n/a
Enhancing Climate Resilience: Linking the European Green Deal and the Green Agenda for Western Balkans through the UN SDGs and their Indicators	Montenegro	Montenegrin Pan-European Union (MPEU)	23.640,34 €	11.000,00 €	1.3	13

activity name	country	applicant	total estimated cost	approved CEI contribution	PoA 2021-2023	SDG
Support to the organisation of the Final Conference of the ANETREC (Academic Network supporting regional cooperation based on reconciliation in WB6 countries) project.	Slovenia	ISCOMET Institute for Ethnic and Regional Studies	27.100,00 €	10.500,00 €	2.5	4,5,16
Conference “DANUBEPARKS New Conservation Partnership & Climate Changes”	Croatia	Public Institution Nature Park Kopački rit	26.230,00 €	11.000,00 €	1.3	6,10,12,13,15,17
Circular economy accelerator for start-ups	North Macedonia	Youth Entrepreneurial Service Foundation	32.836,00 €	9.000,00 €	1.5	6,8,11,12
Women and Political Influence: Mastering Advocacy (Building Successful Advocacy Campaigns)	Hungary	Union of the Robert Schuman Institute for Developing Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe	31.989,50 €	11.000,00 €	2.5	4,5,8,10
CEI Piano Forum 2023: Music Competitions, Training and Careers	Italy	PIANO FVG	28.330,00 €	6.000,00 €	2.3	4
18th Summer School for Junior Anti-Corruption Practitioners from South East Europe in Moldova, June 2023: Building Integrity by using anti-corruption tools	other	Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative Secretariat	33.037,00 €	11.000,00 €	2.1	16
Original Boost	Serbia	Original Magazine	47.350,00 €	11.000,00 €	2.5	
EYE 2023 ; European Youth Leaders Empowered	Slovakia	EDU4U	44.730,00 €	10.500,00 €	2.5	4,5,8,11,16
Strengthening Border Police Capacities through Empowerment of Policewomen in the Western Balkans	other	Migration, Asylum, Refugee Regional Initiative (MARRI)	24.910,00 €	10.000,00 €	2.1	5,16
CEI Round-Table Discussions at Vilenica and CEI Award for Young Writers	Slovenia	Slovene Writers' Association	68.015,00 €	11.000,00 €	2.3	n/a
Training Ukrainian firefighters - saving Ukrainian lives.	Poland	Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship (acting by Marshal's Office of Warmińsko-Mazurskie Voivodeship)	17.380,00 €	9.500,00 €	2.1	16
INTERFACE - Towards a regional Partnership Facility for solid earth science in the Central and south-eastern European area	Italy	National Institute of Oceanography and Applied Geophysics – OGS	32.912,00 €	11.000,00 €	2.6	15
Regional GRB Forum “Advancing good governance through empowering CSOs to use GRB tools”	North Macedonia	Center for Research and Policy Making	54.315,27 €	10.500,00 €	2.1	5,16
International migration of health professionals in Western Balkans and role of Diasporas	Albania	Center for Economic and Social Studies (CESS)	27.730,00 €	9.000,00 €	2.2	3
XXIII Summer Seminar for Young Public Policy Professionals “Future Scenarios for Central and Eastern Europe in Times of Uncertainty”	Bulgaria	Economic Policy Institute	82.740,00 €	11.000,00 €	2.1	16
Ukrainian Education Hub in Poland 2023	Poland	Pro Futuro Foundation	29.400,00 €	11.000,00 €	2.5	1,4,8
Ohrid Blue Economy Summit 2023	North Macedonia	PrimePoint DOO Skopje	38.020,00 €	11.000,00 €	1.2	2,3,6,7,9,12,13,14,15,17
Clean energy Advocacy Network towards climate-neutral Europe - Clean energy ROADMAP	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Center for Energy, Energy Efficiency and Environment	19.905,00 €	9.000,00 €	1.4	5,10,17

activity name	country	applicant	total estimated cost	approved CEI contribution	PoA 2021-2023	SDG
Enabling Ukrainian Geography Teachers in Higher Education: a Summer School to Create Virtual Field Trips for Inclusive Field Skill Training	Romania	Stefan cel Mare University of Suceava	25.640,00 €	11.000,00 €	2.6	10
Institute of Supportive Communication - Effective methods and case studies of psychosocial support for displaced Ukrainians	Bulgaria	Foundation Situational Center Open Doors	19.925,00 €	10.500,00 €	2.5	3
Educational Support for Ukrainian refugees in CEI countries	Ukraine	Association of innovative and digital education	25.970,00 €	11.000,00 €	2.5	8
XVII South East Europe Media Forum (SEEMF)	Serbia	South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO)	109.647,60 €	11.000,00 €	2.4	n/a
Health care professional's Capacity Building Course on early detection and response to public health emergencies in the Central and South-Eastern Europe	Moldova	Nicolae Testemitanu State University of Medicine and Pharmacy of the Republic of	20.000,00 €	11.000,00 €	2.2	3,4,9,17
The International Conference on Decentralized Support for Ukrainian Communities	Italy	ALDA Italy	24.680,00 €	11.000,00 €	2.1	11,17
Young Bled Strategic Forum 2023	Slovenia	Centre for European		11.000,00 €	2.5	4

Activities of the CEI Presidency

With the aim to facilitate the CEI Presidency to implement its priorities as outlined in its Programme, the CEI Cooperation Fund dedicates a specific stream to this purpose. In 2023, the following activities of the Moldovan CEI Presidency have been supported through this stream, and are outlined in the table below:

activity name	CEI contribution (excluding bank fees)
Cooperation with EU, networking on the occasion of the 2nd CNC Meeting	612,00
Cooperation with BSEC Secretariat, networking on the occasion of the 3rd CNC Meeting	1.583,71
Organisation of CEI side-event on the occasion of UN HLPF (networking, speakers, conference services)	6.912,61
Organisation of the informal meeting in New York at UNGA	3.271,19
Organisation of the MFA Meeting in Chisinau	9.341,61
Organisation of the CEI Parliamentary Assembly	4.980,22
Organisation of Experts Meeting on Connectivity (networking, speakers)	5.238,99
	31.940,33

CEI Fund at the EBRD

Established in 1992 and financed by Italy with a total contribution amounting to 57 million EUR, the CEI Fund at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) mainly provides grants for the Technical Cooperation Programme in support of investments and operations of the EBRD. The Fund also supports the CEI Know-how Exchange Programme which fosters capacity building and transfer of good practices from EU to non-EU CEI Member States. Both Programmes are managed by the Office of the CEI Fund at the EBRD.

Technical Cooperation Programme

The Technical Cooperation (TC) projects constitute the largest part of the activity funded by the CEI Fund at the EBRD. TC is traditionally offered in the form of grant type assistance. Operations include support for feasibility and pre-feasibility studies, project implementation, management training, capacity building and pre-loan audits. These activities target a number of priority areas, including agribusiness, business and finance, energy, institutional development, municipal infrastructure and services, SME support, and transport. Since its inception, the CEI Fund at the EBRD has committed about 35.3 million EUR towards 202 TC assignments. These projects have been coherent with the framework and general objectives of the EBRD and other international financial institutions and have represented a fundamental mean of development for the countries of operations of the CEI Fund that are non-EU CEI Member States. One of the objectives of TC projects is to support the Bank's investments and loans either at the project preparation or at the project implementation phase. It should be underlined that the CEI has undertaken projects which yield high co-financing ratios. Indeed, these projects are expected to mobilise over 8.6 billion EUR of international investments. The EBRD alone is expected to contribute to those investments with around 6.5 billion EUR. A Total Investment Ratio (TIR) can be calculated to show how many euros the international community is expected to invest for each euro granted by the CEI Fund for TC projects. Between 1993 and 2023, the TIR is estimated to be 1:259. The EBRD's share, alone, is expected to reach approximately 197 EUR for each euro of the CEI Fund dedicated to TC projects: this represents the EBRD Investment Ratio (EIR). In 2023, the CEI Fund at the EBRD committed 1,925,000 EUR for 6 new TC assignments (the full list of the TC projects approved in 2023 is attached as Annex 5). In addition, 35 TC projects were implemented and 10 closed throughout the year, as outlined in the table below:

project name	committed €	country of operation	sector of operation	commitment stage	PoA objectives	SDGs
North Macedonia: Railway Corridor VIII - Energy Management System for PERI	175.000	North Macedonia	Transport	closed	1.1	11
Moldova Railways: Assistance in preparation and implementation of tender for rolling stock rehabilitation	250.000	Moldova	Transport	disbursing	1.1	11
North Macedonia: National Roads Programme - Project Implementation Unit support	450.000	North Macedonia	Transport	closed	1.1	11
North Macedonia: Railway Corridor VIII (second phase): PIU Support	350.000	North Macedonia	Transport	disbursing	1.1	11
Project Preparation along the Silk Road in CSEE: Assessing and Tackling Policy Obstacles to Infrastructure Investment in the Region	90.000	Regional	Transport	disbursing	1.1	11
Implementation of the Corporate Governance Action Plan (CGAP) for "Korporate Elektroenergjitike Shqiptare Sh.A"	300.000	Albania	Energy/ Climate	disbursing	1.1	7
Albania Secretariat to the Investment Council	175.000	Albania	Institutional Development	disbursing	2.1	8
Green Economy Transition (GET) Project Preparation and Implementation Framework	52.000	Regional	Energy/ Climate	closed	1.1	7
Corridor Vc in Republika Srpska - Quality Management System and obtaining ISO Standards	70.000	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Transport	closed	1.1	11
Moldova Railways - Fleet Renewal Project	50.000	Moldova	Transport	committed	1.1	11

project name	committed €	country of operation	sector of operation	commitment stage	PoA objectives	SDGs
Green Economy Transition - Project Preparation and Implementation Framework	185.000	Regional	Energy/ Climate	disbursing	1.1	11
Albanian Railways - Assistance with Civil Society Engagement	120.000	Albania	Transport	disbursing	1.1	11
Preparation of the Study on improvement of public transportation and preparation of tender for a multi-year public lines distribution	150.000	Montenegro	Transport	disbursing	1.1	11
FBIH Roads: Flood Repair and Upgrade - Introduction of Quality Management Systems and obtaining the ISO 9001 standard	70.000	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Transport	closed	1.1	11
Serbia Route 7 Highway - Lender's Monitor	125.000	Serbia	Transport	disbursing	1.1	11
Serbia Voz Rolling Stock Acquisition	75.000	Serbia	Transport	disbursing	1.1	7
Moldova: Support for the Competitive Procurement of Renewable Energy	200.000	Moldova	Energy/ Climate	committed	1.1	7
Analysis of Climate Change Risks to Critical Transport Infrastructure Networks in Ukraine	149.910	Ukraine	Transport	closed	1.1	7
Investment Climate and Governance Expert for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro	145.000	Regional	Institutional Development	disbursing	2.1	13
Advice for Small Businesses in Moldova (Youth and Skills)	300.000	Moldova	SME support	disbursing	1.2	8
Serbian Climate Resilience and Irrigation Project (SCRIP) - Development of irrigation strategy	149.190	Serbia	Agribusiness	committed	1.3	13
Increasing market opportunities for high-quality food products	120.661	Regional	Agribusiness	disbursing	1.2	8
COVID-19 Crisis Response: Environmental & Social Contractor Management	120.000	Regional	Transport	closed	2.1	8
Methane Emissions Reduction Programme in Gas Supply Chains	110.200	Ukraine	Energy/ Climate	disbursing	1.4	7
Corridor Vc - Tunnel Prenj: Corporate Governance Action Plan	150.000	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Transport	committed	1.1	11
Market readiness for a low-carbon hydrogen economy in the Western Balkans	150.000	Regional	Energy/ Climate	closed	1.3, 1.4	7
Green City Action Plan for Brcko District	275.000	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Municipal infrastructure	disbursing	1.6	8
Green Cities Framework 2 Window 2 (GrCFW2) Sarajevo Public Transport e-Mobility – Project Implementation Support	430.000	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Transport	disbursing	1.1	11, 13
Green Cities Framework 2 Window 2 (GrCFW2) Sarajevo Public Transport e-Mobility – Project Design	70.000	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Transport	disbursing	1.1	11, 13
Chisinau Solid Waste – Project Implementation Support Services	300.000	Moldova	Municipal infrastructure	disbursing	1.6	8
Port of Brcko – Corporate Development Plan	250.000	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Transport	disbursing	1.1	11
Improving Corporate Governance in Family-Owned Enterprises	40.000	Serbia	SME support	disbursing	1.2	8
OSHEE COVID-19 Response - Smart Grid Development Roadmap	220.000	Albania	Energy/ Climate	closed	1.4	7
Support for the Implementation of Renewable Energy Auctions in Montenegro	250.000	Montenegro	Energy/ Climate	disbursing	1.4	7

project name	committed €	country of operation	sector of op- eration	commitment stage	PoA objecti- ves	SDGs
Brcko District: Electrical Grid Expansion - Due Diligence & Advance Procurement	150.000	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Energy/ Climate	committed	1.4	7
Youth in Business Programme in the Western Balkans	1.500.000	Regional	SME support	committed	1.2	8
Serbia: High Speed Rail Belgrade to Nis - Serbian Railways Infrastructure: Corporate Governance Action Plan	150.000	Serbia	Transport	disbursing	1.1	11
Serbian Rail Sector Reform and Regulatory Capacity	400.000	Serbia	Transport	committed	1.1	11
North Macedonia: Rail Corridor VIII, Phase 3 - E&S Support and Gender Due Diligence	74.900	North Macedonia	Transport	closed	1.1	11
North Macedonia: Rail Corridor VIII, Phase 3 - Supplementary Environmental and Social Due Diligence and Monitoring Programme	70.000	North Macedonia	Transport	committed	1.1	11
Feasibility study for Albania-Montenegro 110 kV overhead transmission line connection Dajc	250.000	Regional	Energy/ Climate	committed	1.4	7

Know-how Exchange Programme (KEP)

Launched in 2004, the KEP is a development instrument aimed at supporting the transfer of expertise from institutions in the EU to peers in the non-EU countries within the CEI region. By co-financing capacity building and technical assistance projects, the KEP offers grants to institutions willing to share their experience with their partners in the non-EU CEI Member States, thus helping non-members to advance on their path towards EU standards and policies. The Programme operates through calls for proposals. Since its establishment, 149 projects have been financed through the KEP for a total CEI Fund contribution of over 4.5 million EUR with an overall project value amounting to over 17 million EUR. In 2023, the KEP co-financed 12 new projects with around 460,000 EUR and an overall total cost of projects of over 950,000 EUR (the full list of the KEP projects approved in 2023 is attached as Annex 6). In addition, 7 KEP projects were implemented and 10 closed throughout the year, as outlined in the table below:

project name	country of know-how provider institution	country of know-how recipient institution	total project cost (€)	CEI co- financing (€)	implemen- tation stage	PoA objec- tives	SDGs
Meat Biological Hazards	Italy	Serbia	92.481,93	40.000,00	implemen- ted and closed	2.6	4
Capacity Support of Regional Cooperation in Mine Action - SEEMACC	Slovenia	Regional	35.000,00	17.500,00	under im- plementati- on	2.1	11
Improving Occupational Health and Safety System in Republic of Moldova	Italy, Hunga- ry	Moldova	53.230,83	25.937,93	implemen- ted and closed	2.2	3
An Evolution of the Automotive Training Centre Serbia toward the Concepts of Light and Sustainable Mobility	Italy, Croatia, Slovenia	Serbia	85.954,60	39.960,00	implemen- ted and closed	2.5	4
Sustainability of the Platforms for Monitoring Population Food Consumption Habits and Pilot Study on Web - and Computer-based 24-h Dietary Recall Tools	Italy	Serbia	78.159,00	31.577,00	implemen- ted and closed	2.2	3

project name	country of know-how provider institution	country of know-how recipient institution	total project cost (€)	CEI co-financing (€)	implemen- tation stage	PoA objectives	SDGs
To Enhance the Institutional and Regulatory Framework for Organic Food Production in Albania	Italy	Albania	80.000,00	40.000,00	implemen- ted and closed	2.1	8
Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Constitution and EU Accession, An Academic Platform for Discussing the Options	Italy	Bosnia and Herzegovina	80.658,00	37.500,00	implemen- ted and closed	2.1	16
Italy-North Macedonia Knowledge Exchange in Conservation and Innovative Management of Cultural Heritage	Italy	North Macedonia	50.524,00	25.020,00	implemen- ted and closed	2.3	11
MArteFund: developing cooperation in the creative sector in the Western Balkans through replication of an Italian expertise in project design and fundraising	Italy	Regional	79.920,00	39.960,00	under im- plementati on	2.5	8
North Macedonia: Advisory Support for Strengthening the Capacities for Diaspora Engagement and Evidence-Based Migration Policy Planning	IOM	North Macedonia	80.000,00	40.000,00	implemen- ted and closed	2.1	8
Programming the EU Cohesion Policy: Exchange Programme on Chapter 22 in Serbia and Montenegro	Italy	Regional	79.718,00	39.808,00	under im- plementati on	2.1	16
Assessing the effectiveness and affordability of tariff-setting methodologies in covering drinking water and wastewater services costs in the Western Balkans	Italy	Regional	121.800,00	39.400,00	under im- plementati on	2.1	6
Reducing the impact of earthquakes in Albania through collaboration: Computing seismic hazard to support the update of Albania's building code	Italy	Albania	66.698,00	26.698,00	under im- plementati on	2.1	16
Executive Program "Countering Corruption within Public Administration Through Transparency"	Italy	North Macedonia	82.820,00	39.820,00	under im- plementati on	2.1	16
Harmonising the Regulatory FRAMEwork for the OR-Ganic food production in Montenegro with the Regulation (EU) 2018/848 - FRAME.ORG MONTENEGRO	Italy	Montenegro	74.700,00	37.350,00	under im- plementati on	2.1	12
Strengthening ties and learning between the twinned municipalities of Centar Sarajevo and Reggio Emilia	Italy	Bosnia and Herzegovina	80.000,00	40.000,00	implemen- ted and closed	1.6	11
HABI.tat, LAND.scape, forest and WATER managemet: experiences in the mirror between from Italy to Moldova	Italy	Moldova	90.474,00	39.175,00	implemen- ted and closed	1.3	15

Project Management Office

The design and implementation of projects and activities, of either cross-border or transnational nature, is a powerful tool for the attainment of the goals and objectives included in the CEI Plan of Action, as well as for fostering the CEI's main mission: European integration and sustainable development. Within the CEI-Executive Secretariat, the Project Management Office (PMO) is the structure responsible for the implementation of projects and activities funded by external sources, in particular by the European Union and the Autonomous Region of Friuli Venezia Giulia - ARFVG. The PMO takes care of the whole project cycle, from fundraising to networking and partnership building, from project design and drafting to implementation, from reporting to follow-up and capitalisation. So far, the PMO has contributed to the realisation of more than 60 regional projects, acting both as Lead Partner and Partner, in fields such as transport, energy, circular bioeconomy, blue economy, research & innovation, culture, environmental protection, social innovation, economic development and health and, more often in recent years, across one or more of these fields in a multi-disciplinary approach. This has enabled to turn shared priorities into concrete regional events and actions and to establish a broad cooperative network with hundreds of stakeholders throughout the CEI area and beyond, for the ultimate benefit of our Member States and their citizens. The full list of events under projects and initiatives funded by the EU and the Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia 2023 is attached as Annex 7.

EU-funded projects

Since 2004, the CEI-ES has been developing specific expertise in the design, management and implementation of projects co-financed by the European Union under its sectoral, structural and external programmes. EU projects represent an important tool for attaining the goals outlined in the CEI Plan of Action. Partners from CEI Member States benefit from further progress and expansion of this field of work, which proves to be a strategic instrument to fulfil the CEI core mission of promoting "regional cooperation for European integration". Indeed, numerous workshops, conferences, trainings, as well as experimental/pilot actions are organised in the framework of these projects, with the aim to share experience and elaborate joint solutions with relevant local, regional and national stakeholders and explore further opportunities for mutual development and growth. Furthermore, scientific research and data collection are often undertaken as well as development of strategies aimed at supporting the elaboration of joint actions on shared priorities. Between 2004 and 2023, the CEI participated in the successful implementation of 56 projects (both as Lead Partner - LP and Project Partner - PP), with a total budget of about 100 million EUR, of which about 11 million EUR were directly managed by the CEI-ES. In 2023 alone, 10 projects were under implementation (3 were closed in the course of the year) with a total budget of about 25 million EUR, of which over 2.6 million EUR were administered by the CEI-ES. The following projects were implemented throughout 2023:

project name	implemen- tation date	EU Pro- gramme	area	role	total cost (€)	CEI budget (€)	PoA ob- jective/s	SDGs
IDEAHL Improving Digital Em- powerment for Active Healthy Living	05/2022 - 04/2024	Horizon Europe	Health	PP	2.791.350,0 0	204.000,00	2.3	3, 17
NAMIRS North Adriatic Maritime Incident Response Sys- tem	03/2022 - 02/2024	DG ECHO/ European Union Civil Protection Mecha- nism	Civil/ Environ- mental protection	LP	950.398,00	175.913,00	1.3	3,8,1 2, 14
ACSELL Accelerating SME inno- vation capacities with a Living Lab approach	08/2019 - 07/2023	Interreg Europe	Innovation	PP	1,726,686.0 0	161,600.00	1.2, 1.6	8, 17
PROCAREFUL Proactive care for users life	03/2023 - 02/2025	Interreg Central Europe	Social Inno- vation	PP	2.285,500,0 0	226.400,00	2.3	3
SUSTOURISMO Sustainable Tourism & Mobility Hand by Hand Development	02/2020 - 01/2023	Interreg ADRION	Mobility	PP	1,798,950.0 0	228,750.00	1.1, 1.6	3, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15

project name	implemen- tation date	EU Pro- gramme	area	role	total cost (€)	CEI budget (€)	PoA ob- jective/s	SDGs
MIMOSA Maritime and Multimodal Sustainable Passenger transport solutions and services	01/2020 - 06/2023	Interreg Italy Croatia	Mobility	LP	7.140.000,00	514.427,00	1.1 1.6	9, 11
SUSTANCE Sustainable public transport solutions and innovative governance schemes for improving connectivity in Central Europe	04/2023 - 03/2026	Interreg Central Europe	Mobility	LP	2.013.259,00	314.130,00	1.1 1.6	9, 11
GRETA Greening Regional Freight Transport in functional urban Areas	04/2023 - 03/2026	Interreg Central Europe	Mobility	PP	2.554.540,00	268.890,00	1.1 1.6	9, 11
GreenMeUp Green Bio-methane Market Uptake	08/2022 - 07/2025	Horizon Europe	Renewable Energy / Bioeconomy	PP	1.999.071,25	137.812,50	1.4 1.5 1.2	7, 9, 11, 12, 13
BIOLOC Biobased and Social Innovation to revitalize European local communities	10/2022 - 09/2025	Horizon Europe	Bioeconomy / Social Innovation	LP	2.499.637,50	428.750,00	1.2 1.5 2.1 2.5	1, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13

Projects financed by ARFVG

The CEI-ES has established a close cooperation with the ARFVG with the aim to develop relations between the Region and the countries of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, also in line with the scope of the CEI Local Dimension. Through this enhanced partnership, the CEI contributes to increasing the ARFVG international links and reinforcing the role of the Region in the Adriatic-Ionian macro-regional strategy. It also develops new economic relations with the Balkans and the Danube area, and the countries bordering the Black and Baltic Seas. In this regard, various activities implemented or promoted by the CEI-ES, including at institutional level and in cooperation with other international and regional organisations (e.g. WHO/Europe, ALDA), are financed out of the budget provided by the Region. The CEI's longstanding experience in promoting regional cooperation as well as the solid expertise in managing EU projects especially serve this purpose. In this framework, the CEI-ES has developed a structured cooperation through the realisation of a number of projects and cooperative actions, the latter are included in agreed Joint Work Programmes (JWPs), with a total value of about 700.000 EUR in 2023. The projects and cooperative actions implemented in 2023 are outlined below:

project name	CEI-ES role	implementa- tion date	PoA objective/s	SDGs
Project SILK2FVG plus	CEI-ES Implementing partner	May 2018 – April 2023	1.1, 1.2, 2.1	8, 9, 17
Joint Work Programme 2021-2022	CEI-ES Implementing partner	January 2022 – April 2023	1.1, 1.5, 2.2, 2.5, 2.6	3, 8, 12, 17
Joint Work Programme 2022-2023	CEI-ES Implementing partner	April 2022 – December 2023	1.1, 1.5, 2.2, 2.5, 2.6	3, 8, 12, 17



ANNEXES

ANNEX 1

Calendar of Events of the Moldovan CEI Presidency 2023

Date	Place	Event
14 February	Trieste	1 st CNC Meeting
20 April	Brussels	2 nd CNC Meeting Cooperation with EU (EC; EEAS)
22-23 May	Chisinau	Parliamentary Committee Meeting
29 May	Istanbul	CEI-BSEC Troika Meeting
30 May	Istanbul	3 rd CNC Meeting Cooperation with BSEC PERMIS
18 July	New York	Side-event on the occasion of UN HLPF 2023 Cooperation with UN and presentation of CEI activities on SDGs in focus
28-29 August 2023	Bled, Slovenia	Meeting of the CEI Youth Reference Points on Youth Agenda – side event of the Bled Strategic Forum
20 September	New York	Informal MFA Meeting
22 September	Brussels	Experts meeting on Health
17-18 October 2023	Chisinau	Enhancing healthcare professionals' capacity for early detection and response to public health emergencies
19-20 October 2023	Skopje	Empowering local governance: advancing EU accession path for Western Balkans, Moldova, and Ukraine
21 November	Chisinau	4 th CNC Meeting
22 November	Chisinau	MFA Meeting
26-28 November	Chisinau	CEI Parliamentary Assembly
14 December	Trieste	Experts Meeting on Connectivity
15 December	Trieste	5 th CNC Meeting Conclusion of the Moldovan CEI Presidency

ANNEX 2

Budget 2023 of the CEI-ES

Revenues		€
Balance carried forward from previous year		1.694.939,92
Contribution from Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Coop. Laws 286/1997 and 142/2003		1.169.053,00
Contribution from Adriatic-Ionian Initiative (<i>Active Young Citizen project</i>)		17.073,36
Contribution from Member States to CEI Cooperation Fund	CEI MFA decision New York, 22/6/22	474.000,00
EU Grants and Refunds		727.739,69
SUSTANCE	subsidy contract CE0100054	154.681,73
GRETA	subsidy contract CE0100118	1.000,00
PRO.CARE.FULL	subsidy contract CE0100187	800,00
ICARUS	subsidy contract 10043644	9.535,75
ACSELL	subsidy contract PGI05966	82.663,30
SUSTOURISMO	subsidy contract 1135	81.160,44
PRE-RIGHTS	grant agreement 831616	52.431,46
TAAFE	subsidy contract 845	44.028,75
FORTIS	subsidy contract 31750	51.388,93
MIMOSA	subsidy contract 10249002	194.616,95
ADRIPASS PLUS	subsidy contract 1271	31.748,95
INTERCONNECT PLUS	subsidy contract 1272	23.683,43
NAMIRS	grant agreement 101048578	0
IDEAHL	grant agreement 101057477	0
BIOLOC	grant agreement 101060558	0
GREEN ME UP	grant agreement 101075676	0
Other projects	-	0
Contribution from Friuli Venezia Giulia Autonomous Region		440.500,00
LR 18/2011, DGR 267, JWP 2021-2022 (final payment)		117.500,00
LR 18/2011, DGR 592, JWP 2022-2023 (advance payment)		150.000,00
LR 19/2000, Silk2FVG Plus project (final payment)		88.000,00
LR 11/1996		85.000,00
Reimbursement from CEI Fund at EBRD		65.000,07
Reimbursement from CEI Cooperation Fund		6.509,48
Loans and transfers		0
Total revenues		4.594.815,52
Expenditures		€
EU projects (activities and events)		276.001,06
SUSTANCE	subsidy contract CE0100054	10.977,38
GRETA	subsidy contract CE0100118	13.467,05
PRO.CARE.FULL	subsidy contract CE0100187	1.516,56
ICARUS	subsidy contract 10043644	0
ACSELL	subsidy contract PGI05966	4.818,13
SUSTOURISMO	subsidy contract 1135	10.507,90
PRE-RIGHTS	grant agreement 831616	364,60
TAAFE	subsidy contract 845	0
FORTIS	subsidy contract 31750	0
MIMOSA	subsidy contract 10249002	20.510,45
ADRIPASS PLUS	subsidy contract 1271	0
INTERCONNECT PLUS	subsidy contract 1272	0
NAMIRS	grant agreement 101048578	153.266,41
IDEAHL	grant agreement 101057477	9.630,70
BIOLOC	grant agreement 101060558	9.800,00
GREEN ME UP	grant agreement 101075676	41.141,88
Friuli Venezia Giulia Autonomous Region Joint Work Programmes and International Cooperation Projects		247.409,98
LR 18/2011, DGR 267, JWP 2021-2022		33.133,25
LR 18/2011, DGR 592, JWP 2022-2023		111.969,93
LR 18/2011, DGR 384, JWP 2023-2024		7.500,00
LR 19/2000, Silk2FVG Plus project		94.806,80
Cooperation Fund activities		355.313,65
Duty travels		119.776,08
Events, meetings, sponsorships		112.057,68
Active Young Citizens project		45.000,00
Active Young Citizens 2021/2022 project (unspent quote refunded to Italian Foreign Ministry)		8.458,71
Sponsorships/awards/contributions in line with PoA		31.680,00
Institutional meetings/hospitality		26.918,97
Human resources		1.588.566,60
Infrastructural costs (headquarters)*		63.517,69
Running costs**		167.024,65
Total expenditures		2.929.667,39
Balance carried forward to 2024		1.665.148,13

* utilities (electricity, water, heating)

** subcontracts/services, headquarters' maintenance, insurance, equipment (IT), official car, telephone/connectivity, postage, stationery, bank expenses

ANNEX 3

Staff of the CEI-ES

CEI-Executive Secretariat

Executive level

Roberto Antonione

Secretary General

Nina Kodelja

Deputy Secretary General

Ivana Holoubková

Deputy Secretary General

Zsuzsanna Király

Deputy Secretary General

Executive staff

Lidija Arsova

Senior Executive Officer

Barbara Fabro

Senior Executive Officer

Alessandro Lombardo

Senior Executive Officer

Tania Pibernik

Senior Executive Officer

Paola Plancher

Senior Executive Officer

Slavena Radovanovic

Senior Executive Officer

Office of the CEI Fund at the EBRD

Elisabetta Dovier

Programme Manager

Administrative staff

Loretta Brcic

Senior Administrative Officer

Frida Cottic

Junior Administrative Officer

Roberta Milano

Senior Administrative Officer

Antonio Monteduro

Senior Administrative Officer

ANNEX 3

Staff of the CEI-ES

Project Management Office

Anna Marconato

Senior Programme Manager

Gian Matteo Apuzzo

Senior Programme Manager (until April 2023)

Peter Canciani

Project Manager

Paolo Dileo

Project Manager

Ana Sinkovic

Project Manager (as of April 2023)

Ana Aligrudić

Project Officer

Alice Pappas

Project Officer (on maternity leave from August 2023)

Sheila Perosa

Project Officer (as of July 2023)

Stefania Silvestri

Project Officer

Gabriele Mingolla

Project Assistant

Cooperation with ARFVG

Carlo Fortuna

Programme Manager

Consultant (Volunteer)

Ugo Poli

Consultant

ANNEX 4

Cooperation Activities approved in 2023

no.	reference No.	title	country	institution	total cost (€)	CEI grant (€)
1	302.5.2024.002	Nature based solutions to tackle biodiversity loss and increase climate resilience (NATUREBES)	North Macedonia	NGO Stena Stenae	25.480,00 €	7.462,50 €
2	302.5.2024.004	Balkan Economic Forum 2024	North Macedonia	Association for regional development Balkan Economic Forum	26.805,00 €	13.300,00 €
3	302.5.2024.006	XII Spring School on "IoT, economic and management challenges for e-health integration in the enlarged Europe"	Italy	SSIC-HECE (Higher Education in Clinical Engineering) of the University of Trieste	21.980,00 €	8.175,75 €
4	302.5.2024.007	The Twelfth International Conference on Radiation, Natural Sciences, Medicine, Engineering, Technology and Ecology (RAD 2024 Conference)	Serbia	RAD Centre	63.750,00 €	11.250,00 €
5	302.5.2024.008	Horizons of Sustainability: The Power of Creative Innovation for Transformation of Rural and Non-Urban Futures	Croatia	Kultura Nova Foundation	104.795,86 €	11.250,00 €
6	302.5.2024.010	12th edition of the "European Remembrance Symposium" organised in Warsaw, Poland	Poland	Institute of European Network Remembrance and Solidarity	167.700,00 €	11.250,00 €
7	302.5.2024.012	International conference: The future of cycling in Albania	Albania	Active Mobility	36.671,00 €	11.078,25 €
8	302.5.2024.013	Young Bled Strategic Forum 2024	Slovenia	Centre for European Perspective	77.706,24 €	11.225,79 €
9	302.5.2024.014	CEI Round-Table Discussion at Vilenica and CEI Award for Young Writers	Slovenia	SLOVENE WRITERS' ASSOCIATION	67.590,00 €	11.250,00 €
10	302.5.2024.015	19th Summer School for Junior Anti-Corruption Practitioners from South-Eastern Europe	other	Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative Secretariat	34.301,82 €	11.250,00 €
11	302.5.2024.016	TRIESTE FILM FESTIVAL: TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS FOR YOUNG TALENTS	Italy	Alpe Adria Cinema	521.700,00 €	11.250,00 €
12	302.5.2024.017	54th NSC of EYP Italy Milan 2024 - Let's melt the pot: keep stirring that cosmopolitan	Italy	European Youth Parliament Italy	47.018,00 €	11.250,00 €
13	302.5.2024.021	DisCo 2024: Empowering Digital Entrepreneurial, and Sustainable Competencies Development in the Age of AI	Czech Republic	Centre for Higher Education Studies	29.159,00 €	7.332,75 €
14	302.5.2024.022	XX Central European Forum: 50° Anniversary "A dream without borders"	Italy	Mitteuropa Cultural Association	49.760,00 €	11.250,00 €
15	302.5.2024.023	Fight against hidden discrimination towards people with sensory disabilities (HiDis)	Italy	EUROPEAN NETWORK FOR INCLUSION BEYOND THE BORDERS (E.N.I.B.B.) – ETS	30.000,00 €	11.250,00 €
16	302.5.2024.027	International workshop: Promoting an AI supported eco-activism in the Western Balkans	North Macedonia	Association Center for innovation and development INOS Prilep	14.850,00 €	5.509,50 €

ANNEX 4

Cooperation Activities approved in 2023

no.	reference No.	title	country	institution	total cost (€)	CEI grant (€)
17	302.5.2024.028	Capacity Building Training and Exchange Visits for Rural, Grassroots, Minority Organizations in the CEI region	Hungary	Minority Rights Group Europe Service Providing Non-profit Private Limited- liability Company	31.295,00 €	11.250,00 €
18	302.5.2024.029	Bakan Young Talents	Serbia	International Documentary Film Festival Beldocs	47.493,00 €	11.250,00 €
19	302.5.2024.030	6th SEE MOSAICS MEETING "MOSAICS FROM 1900's MODERN MATERIALS, NEW PROBLEMS IN FOCUS"	Hungary	Hungarian University of Fine Arts	20.000,00 €	7.500,00 €
20	302.5.2024.034	Upcelerator fully remote idea stage accelerator for startups in Eastern Europe	Moldova	"Dreamups" Innovation and Entrepreneurship Accelerator	92.831,19 €	11.250,00 €
21	302.5.2024.035	Hop On: Youth empowerment for the future of Europe	Hungary	European House	24.000,00 €	9.000,00 €
22	302.5.2024.036	Original Boost - Youngerpreneur	Serbia	Original	41.900,00 €	11.250,00 €
23	302.5.2024.037	CET (CERIC-CEI Clean Energy Training)	other	CERIC-ERIC (Central European Research Infrastructure Consortium)	37.105,00 €	11.250,00 €
24	302.5.2024.038	XVIII South East Europe Media Forum (SEEMF)	Serbia	South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO)	114.647,00 €	19.990,00 €
25	302.5.2024.039	Role of diasporas in the socio-economic development of Western Balkan countries	Albania	Center for Economic and Social Studies (CESS)	25.290,00 €	9.172,50 €
26	302.5.2024.040	The 6th International Congress on Rural Tourism: Rural Tourism: Sustainable, Digital and Inclusive	Croatia	Croatian Association for Tourism and Rural Development "The Village Membership Club"	73.035,00 €	11.250,00 €
27	302.5.2024.042	Social and labour integration of Ukrainian refugees in 4 CEI countries	Ukraine	Association of innovative and digital education	52.580,00 €	39.100,00 €
28	302.5.2024.043	EYP Action for CEI Youth: Strengthening Participation, Activism and Media Literacy among Youth in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe	other	Schwarzkopf Foundation Young Europe (European Youth Parliament)	36.105,00 €	11.131,88 €
29	302.5.2024.044	Energy Security as the Basis for Just Transition in Post- industrial Areas. Countering Disinformation — Warsaw Security Forum 2024	Poland	Casimir Pulaski Foundation	84.800,00 €	11.250,00 €

ANNEX 4

Cooperation Activities approved in 2023

no.	reference No.	title	country	institution	total cost (€)	CEI grant (€)
30	302.5.2024.045	Eleventh CEI Venice Forum for Contemporary Art Curators	Italy	Trieste Contemporanea. Dialogues with the Art of Central Eastern Europe. (Trieste Contemporanea Committee)	36.870,00 €	11.250,00 €
31	302.5.2024.046	XXIV Summer Seminar for Young Public Policy Professionals "Future Scenarios for Central and Eastern Europe in Times of Continuous Uncertainty"	Bulgaria	Economic Policy Institute	91.085,00 €	11.175,00 €
32	302.5.2024.049	Equal Pay Day conference going international! III.	Czech Republic	Business & Professional Women CR z.s.	166.926,00 €	14.498,00 €
33	302.5.2024.051	Interaction Teen Doc Workshop 2024	Serbia	Independent Film Centre Filmart	33.855,00 €	10.578,75 €
34	302.5.2024.053	Intercultural dialog - through networking and collaboration	Slovenia	GO! 2025 - European Capital of Culture, Nova Gorica	35.470,00 €	10.755,00 €
35	302.5.2024.054	Blue Danube Film Festival – CEI young filmmaker's forum	Hungary	Blue Danube Cinewave Ltd.	29.900,00 €	8.025,00 €
36	302.5.2024.055	Spring General Assembly of Board of European students of technology 2024	Serbia	Board of European students of technology - Belgrade	72.419,00 €	11.248,40 €
37	302.5.2024.056	Capacity building in war related eye care in Ukraine, Moldova and Romania	Moldova	Association for the Study of Chronic Diseases	64.900,00 €	39.900,00 €
					2.531.773,11 €	457.409,07 €

ANNEX 5

TC Projects approved in 2023

n.	earmark document number	project name	country of operation	sector of operation	committed €	expected related investment (€ million)
1	50009636	Advisory to MSMEs and Start-Ups in Moldova	Moldova	SME support	500.000	n/a
2	50009654	Rail Corridor VIII - Phase 2 - Lender's Monitor Advisor	North Macedonia	Transport	500.000	145
3	To be assigned	Decarbonisation and Action Plan for Javno Preduzeće Elektroprivreda Srbije (EPS)	Serbia	Energy/ Climate	350.000	300
4	50009637	International master's in public Procurement Management (10th edition Rome and 6th edition Belgrade)	Regional	Institutional Development	75.000	n/a
5	To be assigned	Ukrenergo Transmission Network Emergency Restoration - Gender and Inclusion TC support	Ukraine	Energy/ Climate	200.000	300
6	To be assigned	FINTECC (Finance and Technology Transfer Centre for Climate Change) in the WB	Regional	Energy/ Climate	300.000	10
					1.925.000	755

ANNEX 6

KEP Projects approved in 2023

n.	reference number	project name	country of know-how provider	country of know-how recipient	total project cost (€)	CEI co-financing (€)
1	304.4.2023.001	Supporting the Albanian Regulatory Authority to Improve the Efficiency of the Wholesale Electricity Market	Italy	Albania	84.980,00	39.905,00
2	304.4.2023.004	Promoting Capacity Building in Serbia through the Transfer of Technical Knowledge and Environmental Protection Measures in Beekeeping Sector	Italy	Serbia	78.093,60	39.046,80
3	304.4.2023.018	CEI Support for Increasing Capacity of Research and Action in Occupational and Environmental Health in Republic of Moldova	Italy	Moldova	79.951,37	39.970,90
4	304.4.2023.029	CEI Support to the Implementation of the New Electricity Package adopted by the Energy Community Ministerial Council incorporating EU acquis on Market Integration with Western Balkans	Italy	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia	83.200,00	40.000,00
5	304.4.2023.030	Assessment of Air and Water Quality Laboratories' Capacities in Albania	Italy	Albania	57.411,00	28.411,00
6	304.4.2023.031	CEI Support to DATA ROL (Data Protection and the Rule of Law) in Bosnia and Herzegovina	Croatia	Bosnia and Herzegovina	80.000,00	40.000,00
7	304.4.2023.034	Executive Program "Effective Management and Anti-Fraud Controls in the Use of EU Funding Instruments"	Italy	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia	82.030,00	39.780,00
8	304.4.2023.039	Territorial Cohesion and Place-based Policies: an Exchange Programme on Chapter 22 (COPE22)	Italy	Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia	79.472,00	39.700,00
9	304.4.2023.045	CEI Support to Circular Economy in the Skopje Planning Region by Promoting Waste Processing Innovations and Increased Recycling Across Key Waste Streams	Italy	North Macedonia	74.000,00	34.600,00
10	304.4.2023.051	EU-SEE Forum for Intercultural Exchange on Sustainable Management of Cultural Heritage (SMACH Forum)	Italy, Slovenia	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia	82.720,00	40.000,00
11	304.4.2023.060	CEI Support to Strengthen Institutional Capacity and Performance of Ukrainian Agri-Food Sector and Rural Development through Application of EU Policy Tools and Good Practices	Poland	Ukraine	95.530,00	38.380,00

ANNEX 6

KEP Projects approved in 2023

12	304.4.2023.064	CEI Support to Training and Research to Unlock and Enhance the Potential of Sustainable Blue Economy for Regional Cooperation and EE Integration	Croatia, Italy, Slovenia	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro	80.000,00	40.000,00
					957.387,97	459.793,70

ANNEX 7

Events under projects and initiatives funded by the EU and the Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia 2023

Date	Place	Event
16 January	Online	GRETA Project - consortium coordination meeting
19 January	Online	ACSELL Project - ACSELL Digital Innovation Hub Demonstration
26 January	Online	MIMOSA Project – Coordination meeting on institutional cooperation (activities 6.1 and 6.2)
31 January	Online	IDEAHL Project – 9 th Steering Committee meeting
1 February	Online	ACSELL Project – Online consortium meeting
14 February	Online	SUSTANCE Project – Participation to the Lead Partners seminar
14 February	Online	FVG International Project SILK2FVGPlus – Webinar on FVG export potential in the agrifood sector
28 February -1 March	Trieste	MIMOSA Project – Steering Committee meeting
1 March	Online	FVG International Project SILK2FVGPlus – Webinar on FVG export potential in the mechanical sector
7 March	Brussels	IDEAHL Project - BUILDING AN IDEAHL EUROPE High-Level Policy-making Event to Develop a European (Digital) Health Literacy Strategy
8 March	Brussels	IDEAHL Project – 10 th Consortium meeting and General Assembly
14-15 March	Treviso	PROCAREFUL Project – Kick off meeting
15-16 March	Turin	GreenMeUp Project – 2 nd General Assembly meeting
21-22 March	Vienna	SUSTANCE Project – Participation in Interreg Central Europe Conference and Thematic round tables
22 March	Online	FVG International Project SILK2FVGPlus – Webinar “China 2023”
24 March	Online	FVG International Project SILK2FVGPlus – Webinar on FVG export potential in the maritime and nautical sector
29 March	Rijeka	NAMIRS Project: 2 nd Project and Steering Committee meeting
30 March	Trieste	CEI-FVG JWP 2021-2022 – Workshop on cross-border judicial cooperation with the participation of the prosecutor’s offices of Trieste, Udine, Koper, Zagreb and Klagenfurt
4-5 April	Trieste	SUSTANCE Project – Kick off meeting
4-5 April	Trieste, Udine	CEI-FVG JWP 2021-2022 – Study visit organised in cooperation with the University of Trieste, open to haematological centres based in the Western Balkans
12 April	Online	PROCAREFUL Project – Consortium meeting
16 May	Online	PROCAREFUL Project – Consortium meeting
17 May	Opatija	NAMIRS Project – Presentation at the ADRIASPIR event & participation in the REMPEC event on the cooperation and synergies among Mediterranean Sub-Regional Contingency Plans
18 April	Online	GRETA Project – Kick-off meeting
26 April	Online	BIOLOC project – 2 nd General Assembly meeting
16-17 May	Tubingen	ACSELL Project – Final Conference
30 May	Udine	FVG International Project SILK2FVGPlus – Presentation of the Report “Cooperazione accademica e scientifica in Cina: sfide, opportunità ed elementi di mediazione culturale”

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Events under projects and initiatives funded by the EU and the Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia 2023

Date	Place	Event
31 May	Ljubljana	SUSTANCE and GRETA Projects - Presentation at Priority Area 1b meeting of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)
31 May	Online	IDEAHL Project – 11 th Steering Committee meeting
5 June	Online	IDEAHL Project - Co-creation workshop with policymakers on the elaboration of future digital health literacy strategy
12 June	Online	IDEAHL Project - Co-creation workshop with policymakers on the elaboration of future digital health literacy strategy
13-14 June	Rijeka	MIMOSA Project – Steering Committee meeting and Final conference
20 June	Online	PROCAREFUL Project – Consortium meeting
26 June	Trieste	CEI-FVG JWP 2022-2023 - Public event for the dissemination of the Study on the potential passenger transport demand along the route Trieste-Rijeka
27 June	Online	IDEAHL Project – General Assembly meeting
18 July	Online	PROCAREFUL Project – Consortium meeting
18 July	Online	SUSTANCE Project – Technical Coordination Meeting
26 July	Online	GRETA Project – Communication Workshop
1 August	Online	IDEAHL Project – 13 th Steering Committee meeting
5 September	Online	IDEAHL Project – 14 th Steering Committee meeting
6 September	Online	SUSTANCE - Technical coordination meeting
5-7 September	Ljubljana	PROCAREFUL – Consortium and Steering Committee meeting
13-14 September	Riga	GreenMeUp Project – 3 rd General Assembly meeting
19-20 September	Zagreb	SUSTANCE Project – 2 nd Steering Committee meeting
26 September	Zagreb	NAMIRS Project – 3 rd Project and Steering Committee meeting
26-27 September	Vienna	SUSTANCE and GRETA Projects – Communication and Synergies Seminar
27 September	Online	IDEAHL Project: WHO webinar “Primary Health Care Policy and Practice: Implementing for Better Results” - parallel session 2 “Enhancing health literacy & digital health literacy”
27 September	Online	NAMIRS Project – participation in the meeting of the IRA-MAR Advisory Board
27 September	Online	BIOLOC Project – 3 rd General Assembly meeting
28 September	Online	PROCAREFUL Project - WEBINAR: Towards a Hybrid Home Care Model - PROCAREFUL project experience
29 September	Online	SUSTANCE Project – Challenges and opportunities for public transport stakeholders in rural, peripheral and cross-border areas – online conference
4 October	Trieste	NAMIRS Project - organisation of the session: “From the Barcelona Convention to an operational strategy for the safeguard of the North Adriatic Sea”, during the Barcolana Sea Summit

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Events under projects and initiatives funded by the EU and the Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia 2023

Date	Place	Event
4 October	Online	IDEAHL Project – 15 th Steering committee meeting
13 October	Treviso	PROCAREFUL Project – Local event “50 Sfumature di Cura”
17 October	Online	PROCAREFUL Project – Consortium meeting
24 October	Rijeka	SUSTANCE Project - Presentation at the conference “The identity of Rijeka: economic, historical, linguistic and cultural echoes on the 150 th anniversary of the construction of the Rijeka - Karlovac and Rijeka - Pivka railways”
24-25 October	Ronchi dei Legionari	NAMIRS Project: Training on the use of aircraft
31 October	Online	IDEAHL Project – 16 th Steering Committee meeting
6-7 November	Udine	CEI-FVG JWP 2022-2023 – RESILIENCE Project, Field trip in the Region FVG
7 November	Milano	CEI-FVG JWP 2022-2023 – Field trip and meeting between representatives of Ukrainian Educational Hub Warsaw and the hub AVSI for Community based in Milano
13-15 November	Napoli	IDEAHL Project - IDEAHL (d)HL Strategy presented at the AHL Event in Naples: Empowering Citizens for a Healthier Digital Future
15 November	Online	SUSTANCE Project – Technical Coordination meeting
20 November	Trieste	NAMIRS Project: Anti-pollution exercise at sea
21 November	Online	PROCAREFUL Project – Consortium meeting
28 November	Online	IDEAHL Project – 17 th Steering Committee Meeting
28-30 November	Trieste	CEI-FVG JWP 2022-2023 – 3 rd Western Balkans Inter-country/area meeting, in cooperation with the WHO European Centre for Primary Health Care (PHC)
5 December	Portorož	NAMIRS Project - Presentation at the 23 rd Meeting (COP 23) of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention) and its Protocols
6 December	Roma	SUSTANCE Project - Presentation at the workshop organized by the Interreg EMBRACER project
7 December	Online	SUSTANCE Project – Co-design meeting for Pilot actions
7 December	Brussels	NAMIRS Project – Presentation at the annual CERIS-DRS (Disaster-Resilient Societies area) event
13 December	Udine	CEI-FVG JWP 2022-2023 – Presentation of the “Comparative study on the cross-border potential of the circular bioeconomy systems of Friuli Venezia Giulia and Slovenia” at the conference “La Bioeconomia a Nord Est” organized by Fondazione Agrifood and Bioeconomy FVG
18 December	Online	NAMIRS Project - Virtual Project and Steering Committee meeting
19 December	Online	IDEAHL Project – 18 th Steering Committee meeting
19 December	Online	PROCAREFUL Project – Consortium meeting



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