



Gender Equality Plan 2024-2026

Central European Initiative – Executive Secretariat

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Foreword by the CEI Secretary General

It is a great pleasure to introduce you to the Gender Equality Plan 2024 – 2026 of the Central European Initiative-Executive Secretariat (CEI-ES GEP).

Gender equality has been a core value of our Organisation since its establishment more than three decades ago, as well as an overarching goal of all regional cooperation initiatives promoted by the CEI.

On such basis, the first CEI-ES GEP was implemented in 2022 and 2023 and helped us promote gender equality not only within the Executive Secretariat, but also within the broader CEI community. This phase was preceded by a thorough assessment of the state-of-play, which was carried out by the Secretariat's top management and senior staff in 2021. Through this joint effort, it was possible to identify the existing gaps in the field of gender equality, as well as to design specific measures meant to address these gaps effectively.

Therefore, during the last two years, the CEI-ES GEP has represented an essential tool to steer our action in support of gender equality. The implementation of its roadmap allowed us to update our policies and practices and to improve our understanding of gender issues, as a precondition for an organisational and cultural change. Moreover, the CEI-ES GEP provided us with the appropriate framework to promote gender mainstreaming in projects and initiatives financed or implemented by the CEI, thus increasing their gender responsiveness.

The lessons learned and the achievements of the past two years were fundamental to draft the new CEI-ES GEP, which will cover the three-year period 2024 – 2026, aligned with the duration of the current Plan of Action (PoA). The PoA, adopted by CEI Heads of Government in late 2023, expresses the common vision of our Member States on all topics, sectors and areas of cooperation that compose the CEI Thematic Agenda. Regarding gender issues, the PoA clearly indicates that “regional sustainable development requires gender equality through women empowerment and meaningful participation in all levels of society and the policy-making process. Restricted opportunities for women to access education, employment, political participation and leisure activities, reinforce gender-based social and economic inequalities”.

Against this background, and by optimising the synergies between the PoA and the CEI-ES GEP 2024 – 2026, I am confident that the CEI will make a valuable contribution to strengthen the impact of gender responsive regional cooperation in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe.



Roberto Antonione
CEI Secretary General

1. The overall context

The Central European Initiative (CEI) is a regional forum for cooperation and consultation among and between 17 Member States of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe¹. As specified in article 2 of the CEI Guidelines and Rules of Procedures, “the Member States of the CEI are guided by the principles of the UN Charter, of all the documents of the Helsinki process/OSCE. They are guided as well by final declarations and documents of the meetings of the Heads of Government and the Foreign Ministers of the CEI [...]”.

The mission of the CEI is to work towards European integration and sustainable development through regional cooperation. Indeed, two strategic goals were set by the CEI Member States. First, to work for cohesion of a united Europe, without dividing lines, a Europe with shared values, embracing all countries, regions, peoples and citizens of the continent. Second, to strengthen the capacities of the Member States towards good governance, rule of law and sustainable economic development as key prerequisites for stability, social cohesion, security and prosperity in the CEI region.

As an intergovernmental body, the CEI activities are led and endorsed by Prime Ministers’ summits and Foreign Ministers’ meetings. Yet, in addition to the leading intergovernmental component, three other dimensions (parliamentary, economic and local) provide further areas to promote multilateral policy dialogue and opportunities for co-creation of regional and cross-border projects. This makes of the CEI a resource not only for the governments of its Member States, but also for people, businesses and communities through a strong, result-oriented and multi-partnership approach.

A pivotal role within the CEI governance is played by the CEI-Executive Secretariat (CEI-ES). According to the CEI Guidelines and Rules of Procedure (article 19), “the CEI-ES, as permanent CEI body, shall provide continuous administrative and conceptual support to both the decision-making and operational structures of the CEI and shall take any appropriate initiative aimed at promoting the realisation of the CEI co-operation objectives”. This is carried out by performing multiple tasks, such as information and documentation; organisation, preparation and follow-up of meetings; participation in CEI meetings and other CEI-related events; design and implementation of CEI programmes and projects, including EU-funded ones.

CEI countries’ shared priorities are included in a triannual Plan of Action, endorsed at Prime Minister level. The current CEI Plan of Action covers the period 2024-2026 and is built around two main interconnected and mutually reinforcing pillars: 1. CEI Political Agenda, defining in particular the joint line of action among the Member States, and 2. CEI Thematic Agenda, identifying the objectives in various areas of cooperation. Therefore, the CEI Plan of Action steers the entire work of the CEI, and ensures coherence between:

- the activities included in the annual calendar of the rotating CEI Presidency,
- the activities promoted by the CEI-Executive Secretariat,
- the projects and initiatives implemented by third parties and financed by the CEI through its spending programmes (CEI Cooperation Fund and CEI Fund at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development - EBRD),
- the projects implemented by the CEI-Executive Secretariat and financed by external donors (e.g., the European Union).

¹ Republic of Albania, Republic of Belarus* (suspended of its rights of representation in the CEI “as a consequence of the country's actions in support of the aggression against Ukraine”, Statement by the Bulgarian CEI Presidency and the CEI-Executive Secretariat on the suspension of the Republic of Belarus from the Central European Initiative, 25 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.

Overall, regional cooperation promoted by the CEI takes various forms. Its objectives can be grouped into the following macro-areas:

- sustaining policy dialogue on topics of common interest through regular diplomatic exchange,
- promoting the establishment of multi-lateral, multi-level and multi-stakeholder platforms to address common challenges,
- facilitating people-to-people contacts by funding training and capacity building through mobility and networking,
- supporting investments and operations of the EBRD in CEI Member States,
- fostering transfer of know-how and good practices from EU to non-EU countries of the CEI membership,
- contributing to the implementation of EU policies through the design, participation and administration of EU-funded projects.

2. The Gender Equality Plan of the CEI-Executive Secretariat

The brief overview of the Central European Initiative (CEI) under [chapter 1](#) highlights that gender equality related to the CEI implies two dimensions. First, an internal one connected to the CEI-Executive Secretariat (CEI-ES), with specific reference to the administration of human resources (CEI-ES staff) and the implementation of recruitment processes. Second, an external dimension, which refers to the activities financed by the CEI and implemented by third parties.

Based on this assumption, the previous Gender Equality Plan 2022-2023 of the CEI-Executive Secretariat (CEI-ES GEP) had been elaborated bearing in mind the Overall Objective *to enhance the impact of the CEI in the field of gender equality*, plus two Specific Objectives, namely:

- to promote gender equality in the institutional and individual culture, processes and practices of the CEI-ES,
- to ensure CEI-supported actions implemented by third parties are gender responsive.

Over the past two years, the CEI-ES GEP 2022-2023 has been implemented along these lines, thus aiming to promote an internal change, both cultural and structural, as well as to streamline processes and procedures towards gender responsive actions.

The experience and lessons learned through the implementation of the CEI-ES GEP 2022-2023 were particularly useful for drafting the CEI-ES GEP 2024-2026. Indeed, they laid the groundwork for carrying out the first step in the lifecycle of GEPs², namely Phase 1 (audit), which is presented in [chapter 3](#). This accurate review of the state-of-play has allowed for the identification of a set of measures included in a roadmap presented in [chapter 4](#), which covers Phase 2 (planning). This roadmap has been elaborated starting from the two “building blocks” to be included in any GEP, namely:

- the four mandatory process-related requirements (publication, dedicated resources, data collection and monitoring, training),
- the five recommended thematic areas (work-life balance, leadership and decision-making, recruitment and career progression, gender dimension, gender-based violence).

It shall be emphasised that the Central European Initiative, as well as its Executive Secretariat, are not higher education institutions, nor are they involved in research activities. Therefore, the elaboration of the CEI-ES GEP has been tailored to the specific features, needs and goals of the Organisation.

The execution of the CEI-ES GEP will take place in the timeframe 2024-2026, thus covering the remaining two steps of the GEPs’ lifecycle, namely Phase 3 (implementation) and Phase 4 (monitoring and evaluation), which will help collect useful information and data in view of the elaboration of the future CEI-ES GEPs.

² According to the Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans (issued by the European Commission – Directorate – General for Research and Innovation in September 2021), the lifecycle of GEPs typically include four steps: 1) an audit phase; 2) a planning phase; 3) an implementation phase; 4) a monitoring and evaluation phase.

3. Phase 1 – Audit: implementation of GEP 2022 – 2023

The Gender Equality Plan 2022-2023 of the CEI-Executive Secretariat (CEI-ES GEP) encompassed a set of 12 Measures, with related targets and monitoring indicators. These were designed in line with the mandatory and recommended “building blocks” of GEPs, namely:

1. publication (mandatory),
2. dedicated resources (mandatory),
3. data collection and monitoring (mandatory),
4. training (mandatory),
5. work-life balance and organisational culture (recommended),
6. gender balance in leadership and decision-making (recommended),
7. gender equality in recruitment and career progression (recommended),
8. integration of the gender dimension (recommended),
9. measures against gender-based violence (recommended).

Against this backdrop, several initiatives were undertaken, finalised and duly monitored during the period 2022-2023, providing the basis for the elaboration of CEI-ES GEP 2024-2026. The initiatives implemented to address the abovementioned 12 Measures (ME) are listed in the tables below.

Table 1 – Audit of implemented Measures vis-à-vis the 4 mandatory “building blocks”

MANDATORY BUILDING BLOCKS	Measure (what to do)	Implemented action(s)
1. <i>Publication</i>	ME1 – Publishing the GEP, signed by the CEI-ES Executive Level, on the website	A dedicated webpage on gender equality has been created on the official website of the Central European Initiative, where the CEI-ES GEP is available for download. This webpage is easily accessible from the homepage (www.cei.int). The CEI-ES GEP was signed by the CEI Secretary General, i.e., the head of the CEI-Executive Secretariat, and actively disseminated within the Organisation, thus ensuring broad awareness and common understanding of its objectives and support to its implementation.
2. <i>Dedicated resources</i>	ME2 – Establishing the Gender Equality Team (GET)	A Gender Equality Team (GET) has been established within the CEI-ES by means of an internal note signed by the CEI Secretary General. Its main task is the implementation of the Measures included in the CEI-ES GEP, in particular with regard to a) monitoring and administration (focus on the internal dimension of gender equality, i.e., data collection and monitoring; training; work-life balance and organisational culture; gender balance in recruitment and career progression; measures against gender-based violence); b) gender mainstreaming (focus on the external dimension of gender equality, i.e., the integration of the gender dimension into CEI-supported actions implemented by third parties, with the final goal to increase the number of actions addressing gender issues and, more generally, to ensure that supported actions are gender responsive).
	ME3 – Allocating resources for training on gender equality	During 2022-2023, no financial resources were allocated for training on gender equality out of the CEI budget. Nevertheless, resources in terms of work time were allocated for the participation of 1 Senior staff member in training activities on gender equality (see point 4 below).
3.	ME4 –	Gender-disaggregated data related to CEI-ES staff ³ were monitored during 2022 and 2023 vis-à-vis the following set of indicators:

³ For the purpose of this document, the CEI-ES staff is considered as a unique group of human resources composed of two categories: 1) Employees, where an Employee is “a person performing permanent or temporary work for the CEI-ES on the basis of either an Open-Ended or a Fixed-Term contract” i.e., a subordinate contract; 2) Collaborators, where a Collaborator is a person performing work for the CEI-ES based on a “para-subordinate” contract (so called “Co.Co.Co.”, according to the legislation of CEI-ES’ host country). Employees and Collaborators are recruited to fill in two kinds of Positions: 1) Professional Service Positions (PSP), which “are of executive nature requiring specific educational background and job qualifications”; General Service Positions (GSP), which “cover administration, accounting, secretarial and other office work” (All quotes from the CEI-ES Rules and Regulations in their latest version of November 2022).

<i>Data collection and monitoring</i>	Monitoring data on gender equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - staff distribution by gender, - wage distribution by gender, - gender distribution by type of contract and type of position, - number of female and male candidates applying for job positions and training opportunities, - share of men and women in recruitment committees. Collected data 2022-2023 are reported in Box 1 below.
	ME5 – Expanding the data baseline	Additional data were collected regarding maternity leave (and return from) of both employees and collaborators of the CEI-Executive Secretariat in the timeframe 2003-2023. Collected data are reported in Box 2 below.
4. <i>Training</i>	ME6 – Developing expertise on gender equality	A thorough assessment of training opportunities on gender equality has been carried out. Considering the status of international organisation of the CEI-ES, as well as CEI’s observer status at the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN), specific attention was paid to the courses provided by the UN Women Training Centre.
	ME7 – Ensuring knowledge circulation	As mentioned under point 2 above, 1 Senior staff member engaged in training activities focused on topics such as general gender concepts, international frameworks for gender equality, promoting gender equality throughout the UN System. The knowledge acquired was duly transferred to the whole CEI staff through internal training sessions.

Box 1 – Collected data 2022 – 2023

Indicator	2022		2023	
	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
Staff distribution by gender	33.3	66.7	31.8	68.2
Wage distribution by gender	33.4	66.6	32.4	67.6
Gender distribution by type of contract (Employees)	35.3	64.7	35.3	64.7
Gender distribution by type of contract (Collaborators)	25	75	20	80
Gender distribution by type of position (Professional Service Positions)	35.3	64.7	33.3	66.7
Gender distribution by type of position (General Service Positions)	25	75	25	75
Number of female and male candidates applying for job positions and training opportunities (2017 onwards)	34	66	32.9	67.1
Share of men and women in recruitment committees (2017 onwards)	44.2	55.8	45.6	54.5

Box 2 – Data on maternity/paternity leave 2003 – 2023

Number of maternity/paternity leaves	19
Number of working units on maternity/paternity leave	13
Total months of maternity leave (compulsory according to the relevant legislations)	85
Total months of maternity leave (facultative, up to 6 months, according to the relevant legislation)	42
Number of working units returned from maternity/paternity leave	13

Table 2 – Audit of implemented Measures vis-à-vis the 5 recommended “building blocks”

RECOMMENDED BUILDING BLOCKS	Measure (what to do)	Implemented action(s)
1. <i>Work-life balance and organisational culture</i>	ME8 – Updating the CEI-ES Staff Rules and Regulations	Article 3.5.2 of the CEI-ES Staff Rules and Regulations modified. Although the CEI-ES Staff Rules and Regulations had already envisaged a “flexible working time” arrangement, this aspect was made more explicit in article 3.5.2, aimed at stressing that the CEI-

		ES policy is meant to support employees in achieving a satisfactory work-life balance.
2. <i>Gender balance in leadership and decision-making</i>	ME9 – Encouraging a reflection on gender equality within the CEI Committee of National Coordinators (CNC)	A reflection has been encouraged on gender balance in leadership and decision-making, involving both the CEI-ES and the Member States. This has led to an important decision reached by consensus in April 2022, i.e., the revision of the CEI Guidelines and Rules of Procedures. A new article 22 has been added, focused on the criteria for the selection of decision-making positions within the CEI-ES Executive Level: “[...] The procedures will take into account the following aspects: rotation of Member States on the relevant positions in the Executive Level of the CEI-ES; candidates’ professional experience in multilateral affairs and its relevance in regard to the vacant position; geographical balance (presence of representatives of EU and non-EU CEI Member States); gender balance”.
3. <i>Gender equality in recruitment and career progression</i>	ME10 – Developing an internal policy to ensure gender balance in recruitment	Article 3.1 of the CEI-ES Staff Rules and Regulations integrated. To express more explicitly that gender equality principles are taken in serious consideration in any recruitment process carried out by the CEI-ES, article 3.1 of the CEI-ES Staff Rules and Regulations has been integrated with the following sentence: “In line with the CEI-ES GEP, any recruitment, selection and career progression measure undertaken at the CEI-ES will comply with the principles of gender equality, thus ensuring that women and men Employees enjoy equal opportunities and get equal chances to develop and advance their careers”. In 2022-2023, the CEI-ES carried out one recruitment process for hiring a Project Officer (maternity leave replacement). An open call was issued, which received 25 applications (21 female; 4 male). The CEI-ES Recruitment Committee was composed of 3 members (1 female; 2 male). Winning candidate: female.
4. <i>Integration of the gender dimension</i>	ME11 – Gender mainstreaming in CEI-supported actions	This ME aimed at pursuing the integration of a gender dimension into CEI-supported actions implemented by third parties, at increasing the number of actions addressing gender issues and, more generally, at ensuring that these actions are gender responsive. As a first step in this direction, a clearer reference to gender equality was included in the text of the Call for Proposals 2022 of the CEI Cooperation Fund. Under the eligibility criteria, more specifically under criterion “participation of CEI Member States”, the following instructions to applicants were added: “Please note that the CEI is encouraging gender responsive conduct and gender equality awareness and representation in the activities co-financed with its Funds and Instruments. Applicants are requested to implement gender responsive measures in their proposals. If being awarded of a CEI contribution, as Organisers, they are kindly requested to embrace this CEI policy and apply it to the maximum extent possible in the implementation of the CEI Cooperation Activity, i.e., by trying to include a gender perspective in the concept and outlines of meetings and panels and by encouraging an inclusive participation of attendees. The CEI Gender Equality Plan 2022-2023 is available for consultation on the CEI website at [...]”. Furthermore, a section entitled “Gender responsive actions taken with respect to participation” was included in the template of the Final Narrative Report drafted by the beneficiaries of CEI grants under the CEI Cooperation Fund. Its scope was to acquire information and data with regard to any gender responsive action carried out during the organisation and implementation of CEI-funded initiatives. Data collected from the Final Narrative Reports related to initiatives supported by the CEI Cooperation Fund in 2022 and 2023 are reported in Box 3 below. It shall be emphasised that, based on these preliminary steps, an explicit reference to gender responsiveness in the implementation of CEI-funded initiatives was inserted in the CEI Plan of Action 2024

		<p>– 2026 (drafted in 2023): “[...] the CEI systematically recommends a gender responsive conduct in the management and implementation of activities supported through CEI funds and instruments”.</p> <p>Finally, specific attention was paid to CEI-funded initiatives addressing gender issues (see Box 4 below), which contributed to raising awareness on gender equality in CEI Member States.</p>
5. <i>Measures against gender-based violence</i>	M12 – Developing an internal policy to prevent gender-based violence	<p>Article 3.7.1 of the CEI-ES Staff Rules and Regulations integrated. Article 3.7 of the CEI-ES Staff Rules and Regulations specifies the disciplinary measures that can be put in place in case of Employees’ misconduct or failure in duty. Article 3.7.1 was integrated with an explicit reference to gender-based violence: “The measures set out below may be imposed with respect to any misconduct or failure in duty by the Employee, including any form of gender-based violence”.</p>

Box 3 – Gender responsiveness in CEI Cooperation Activities 2022 – 2023

Number of initiatives co-financed by the CEI Cooperation Fund	42
Total number of reported speakers/panellists and participants	3.323
% of reported female speakers/panellists and participants	56
% of reported male speakers/panellists and participants	44
% of reported female speakers/panellists	50.2
% of reported male speaker/panellists	49.8
% of reported female participants	57.5
% of reported male participants	42.5

Box 4 – CEI-funded initiatives addressing gender issues 2022 – 2023

Title, year, country	Short description and beneficiaries	Implementing institution and CEI grant
Equal Pay Day conference going international! (2022, Czech Republic)	<p>Conference aimed to gain information on new trends in women's entrepreneurship, equal opportunities, mentoring and international dimension of equal pay, as well as enrich participants through the impact of educational and mentoring activities led by leading women empowerment organizations from CEI regions.</p> <p><i>Participants from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, North Macedonia, Poland, Serbia, Slovakia.</i></p>	Business & Professional Women CR z.s. Prague (Czech Republic) €10.000
Strengthening Women Entrepreneurs in Rural Tourism for post COVID-19 period (2022, Serbia)	<p>The Conference aimed to provide a platform for transfer of knowledge and know-how in digital marketing to women entrepreneurs in rural tourism of Central Europe.</p> <p><i>Participants from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia.</i></p>	Center for Tourism Research and Studies Novi Sad (Serbia) €8.000
Equal Pay Day conference going international! (2023, Czech Republic)	<p>Promoting the UN Women's Empowering Principles, especially the promotion of “role models”, i.e., successful women who can become models for less experienced participants and can transfer their experience and recommendations for their own professional and personal development.</p> <p><i>Participants from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy,</i></p>	Business & Professional Women CR z.s. Prague (Czech Republic) €11.000

	<i>Poland, North Macedonia, Slovakia, Serbia and Ukraine.</i>	
Educational Support for Ukrainian refugees in CEI countries (EduHub) – Budapest (2023, Hungary)	Online and offline training activities to support refugees’ everyday life and their possible participation in the labour market, especially in favour of women who had to move abroad together with their children. <i>Displaced Ukrainian women and children in Hungary.</i>	Association of innovative and digital education Kyiv (Ukraine) €11.000
Educational Support for Ukrainian refugees in CEI countries (EduHub) - Warsaw (2023, Poland)	Online and offline training activities to support refugees’ everyday life and their possible participation in the labour market, especially in favour of women who had to move abroad together with their children. <i>Displaced Ukrainian women and children in Poland.</i>	Pro Futuro Foundation Warsaw (Poland) €11.000
Women and Political Influence: Mastering Advocacy (Building Successful Advocacy Campaigns) (2023, Hungary)	Designed to strengthen advocacy skills and concepts, learn about campaign development, regional and international programmes for women's empowerment, educational equity, digital skills, engaging vulnerable groups, and the role of advocacy in decision making and economic development. <i>Participants from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Moldova, Montenegro, N. Macedonia, and Serbia.</i>	Robert Schuman Institute Budapest (Hungary) €11.000
Going Global: Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) in the Western Balkans & Moldova: advancing good governance through empowering CSOs to use GRB tools (2023, North Macedonia)	The GRB Forum enabled the exchange of experiences between CSOs, experts and municipal practitioners in the CEI region, while presenting best practices in using GRB tools to advance good governance, from both North Macedonia and other CEI Member States. <i>Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and government representatives from CEI Member States.</i>	Center for Research and Policy Making Skopje (North Macedonia) €10.500
Original Boost (2023, Serbia)	The boot camp focused on promoting gender equality and female empowerment; raising awareness of the challenges faced by women in various spheres of life; encouraging networking and collaboration among women from diverse backgrounds; inspiring and motivating women to pursue their dreams and overcome barriers and identifying actionable strategies and initiatives to foster women's empowerment. <i>Participants from Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro, Hungary, Bulgaria and North Macedonia.</i>	Novak Djokovic Foundation Belgrade (Serbia) €11.000
Strengthening Border Police Capacities through Empowerment of Policewomen in the Western Balkans (2023, North Macedonia)	Research aimed to support strengthening of institutional capacities within the Western Balkans' border authorities, with a specific focus on empowering policewomen in border structures. <i>Participants from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Italy, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia.</i>	Migration, Asylum, Refugee Regional Initiative (MARRI) €10.000
North Macedonia: Rail Corridor VIII, Phase 3 - E&S Support and Gender Due Diligence	The EBRD is considering providing a sovereign loan of up to €94 million to the Republic of North Macedonia for the	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

(2023-2024, North Macedonia)	<p>benefit of the Public Enterprise for Railways Infrastructure (PERI) for completion of the last section of rail infrastructure on the eastern end of the Rail Corridor VIII. The Technical Cooperation assignment will provide: i) support in the implementation of the bank's environmental and social policy connected to the investment; ii) support to the Company to integrate universal and gender-responsive access standards into the current and future railway infrastructure investments.</p> <p><i>Beneficiary: Public Enterprise for Railways Infrastructure (PERI), North Macedonia.</i></p>	€70.000
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4. Phase 2 – Planning: roadmap of the CEI-ES GEP 2024 – 2026

The Gender Equality Plan of the CEI-Executive Secretariat (CEI-ES GEP) will cover a three-year period from January 2024 (Month 1) to December 2026 (Month 36). In line with previous CEI-ES GEP 2022 – 2023, its Overall Objective is to enhance the impact of the CEI in the field of gender equality. Moreover, the CEI-ES will keep on working towards two Specific Objectives (SO), namely:

1. SO1 – to promote gender equality in the institutional and individual culture, processes and practices of the CEI-ES,
2. SO2 – to ensure CEI-supported actions implemented by third parties are gender responsive.

To attain the above-listed Specific Objectives, the CEI-ES GEP will envisage a set of Measures (ME) with related targets and monitoring indicators, as well as a precise timeline.

4.1 Measures vis-à-vis the 4 mandatory process-related requirements

SO	Mandatory Requirement	Measure (what to do)	How	By whom	When	Target	Indicator
1,2	Publication	ME1 – Publishing the GEP, signed by the CEI-ES Executive Level, on the website	Uploading the CEI-ES GEP 2024 – 2026 on the dedicated webpage on gender equality in the CEI website	GET, CEI-ES communication manager, IT company	M5	GEP published on the CEI website	Dedicated webpage on gender equality, with GEP available for download, is in place
1,2	Dedicated resources	ME2 – Establishing the Gender Equality Team (GET)	Establishing the GET with CEI-ES staff members having clear tasks and division of responsibilities in view of GEP implementation	CEI-ES Executive Level	M6	A dedicated gender equality structure is established within the CEI-ES	Internal note on the establishment of the GET is signed by the CEI-ES Executive Level
1	Dedicated resources	ME3 – Allocating resources for training on gender equality	Exploring the possibility of allocating resources for training on gender equality (both human and financial)	CEI-ES Executive Level, GET	M12, M24	Resources for training on gender equality are allocated	CEI-ES budget, CEI-ES staff structure
1	Data collection and monitoring	ME4 – Monitoring data on gender equality	Monitoring data on gender equality according to pre-identified indicators	GET	M18, M36	Data on gender equality are monitored regularly	Mid-term report on GEP implementation; Final report on GEP implementation
2	Data collection and monitoring	ME5 – Expanding the data baseline	Expanding the data baseline by identifying additional indicators on gender responsiveness of CEI-supported actions	GET	M18, M36	Additional indicators on gender equality are identified	Mid-term report on GEP implementation; Final report on GEP implementation
1,2	Training	ME6 – Developing expertise on gender equality	Identify training opportunities on gender equality to increase the internal knowledge	GET	M6-M36	Knowledge on gender equality within GET is increased	Mid-term report on GEP implementation; Final report on GEP implementation
1,2	Training	ME7 – Ensuring knowledge circulation	Expertise acquired by GET members through training is transferred to the whole CEI-ES staff	GET, CEI-ES staff	M6-M36	Knowledge on gender equality is transferred to CEI-ES staff	Mid-term report on GEP implementation; Final report on GEP implementation

4.2 Measures vis-à-vis the 5 recommended content-related (thematic) areas

Out of the 5 recommended content-related (thematic) areas, the CEI-ES GEP 2024 – 2026 will focus in particular on the topic of gender mainstreaming in CEI-supported actions (“Integration of the gender dimension”), where room for improvement exists, as highlighted during Phase 1 – Audit. Indeed, the remaining 4 recommended thematic areas (work-life balance and organisational culture; gender balance in leadership and decision-making; gender balance in recruitment and career progression; measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment) were duly addressed in the CEI-ES GEP 2022 – 2023.

<i>SO</i>	<i>Thematic area</i>	<i>Measure (what to do)</i>	<i>How</i>	<i>By whom</i>	<i>When</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Indicator</i>
2	Integration of the gender dimension	ME8 – Gender mainstreaming in CEI-supported actions	Improving the collection of gender-disaggregated data from beneficiaries of CEI funds	GET	M6-M36	More awareness on gender issues: gender responsiveness of CEI-supported actions is increased	Mid-term report on GEP implementation; Final report on GEP implementation; text of the calls; application packages; templates for reporting; procurement notices
2	Integration of the gender dimension	ME9 – Supporting a CEI flagship event addressing gender issues	Reviewing CEI-financed initiatives addressing gender issues	GET, CEI Cooperation Fund manager	M6-M36	At least 1 activity financed by the CEI to be considered as “CEI flagship event”	Mid-term report on GEP implementation; Final report on GEP implementation
2	Integration of the gender dimension	ME10 – Increasing the visibility of CEI’s action in support of gender equality	Developing a standard procedure to communicate on gender-related initiatives promoted/financed by CEI	GET, CEI communication manager	M6-M36	More visibility of CEI’s action in support of gender equality	Mid-term report on GEP implementation; Final report on GEP implementation; CEI website; CEI social media