Advanced training course
Challenges and perspectives of Science Diplomacy in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe

Terms of Reference

1. Background

The rising influence of Science & Technology (S&T) in public policy and international affairs and the quest for international collaborations in this domain have drawn increasing attention to the interdependence between science and diplomacy. For the modern sovereign state, increased international interconnections represent both a challenge and an opportunity to tackle ever more pressing common global challenges. This has accelerated the convergence of science and diplomacy, and the emergence of Science Diplomacy (SD) as a policy field of international relations where the interests of science and foreign policy intersect.

SD has become an important new area of research and practice that recognises diplomacy as an essential asset to advance international scientific cooperation in research and technology (*diplomacy for science)*, acknowledges the potential of scientific cooperation to overcome deadlocks in traditional diplomatic relations (s*cience for diplomacy)*, supports evidence-based policymaking in complex areas such as agriculture and food security, public health, biodiversity loss, climate change and energy (s*cience in diplomacy*), sees the widespread use of diplomatic skills and tools in and by science so that scientific institutions become diplomatic players in their own right (*diplomacy in science*).

In times of geopolitical turmoil, understanding the impact of science on diplomacy, and *vice versa* that of diplomacy on science, is necessary to optimise the use of SD. Indeed, SD may represent a valuable tool to balance national priorities and global goals through building partnerships around shared needs and challenges. Broad consensus on this view has been growing over the last years, thus SD is currently high in the agenda of several countries and international organisations. This is proved *inter alia* by the recently published report "A European Framework for Science Diplomacy" (European Commission, February 2025), and by the "Global Ministerial Dialogue on Science Diplomacy", organised by UNESCO in the framework of the "International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development" (Paris, 25-26 March 2025).

The Central European Initiative (CEI) acknowledged the importance of SD in its Plan of Action 2024-2026 under goal 2.10 "Boosting research and innovation through science diplomacy". CEI intends to act "as a facilitator of science diplomacy, based on the assumption that this policy tool is fundamental to help find science-based solutions to complex, transboundary challenges, as well as to connect

co-financed under the CEI-FVG Joint Work Programme 2024-2025

in cooperation with

research infrastructures and optimise their synergies [...]". Training and capacity building activities are identified among the instruments to be used to elevate the role of science in foreign policy, so that each CEI Member State can draw benefit from this emerging tool and use it to multiply its opportunities and enhance its impact in the field of international cooperation.

2. Focus of the Advanced training course

While the interest in Science Diplomacy (SD) has rapidly grown over the last years, both at EU and global level, its potential in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe received more limited attention.

Therefore, the Advanced training course "Challenges and perspectives of Science Diplomacy in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe" aims at contributing to fill in this gap, based on the assumption that this region, which combines EU members and EU candidates, is of strategic importance for the future of Europe. By encouraging a stronger involvement of this broad portion of Europe in the debate on SD, the target countries will acquire useful competences and capacities to take full advantage from a smart use of SD.

Content-wise, this training project will introduce the basic notions of SD, and its applications to real-world examples and case studies in the current geopolitical context. In doing so, the course will examine the potential and challenges for SD in fostering international cooperation and effective actions in fields as different as sustainable development and development cooperation, cultural heritage and agriculture, energy and research security.

As the world order becomes ever more fragmented and multipolar, SD needs to evolve and adapt to new roles to face environmental, demographic, technological and geopolitical challenges, and to keep pace with emerging dimensions such as research security, technological sovereignty, competition over the global commons, and the increasing involvement of non-state actors, including large tech companies, in international relations.

Based on the above, the Advanced training course will seek to equip a multidisciplinary audience with a set of instruments helpful to understand the role and potential of SD in the current geopolitical context, ultimately encouraging a more efficient use of SD across the target region.

3. Learning outcomes

The composite, hybrid, and articulated nature of Science Diplomacy (SD) requires roles, organisational configurations, and professional profiles that do not align with traditional scientific careers or the typical training path of diplomacy and international relations. The emerging profile of the "science diplomat" works to align scientific information with values and interests, to clarify which options can be adopted to achieve which objectives, and ultimately to reach consensus decisions through compromises based on solid scientific knowledge. The "science diplomat" mediates between science and diplomacy, crossing the boundaries between these two fields and different (but complementary) types of knowledge. Above all, for science diplomats to effectively carry out their action at the interface of science and diplomacy, it is necessary to provide training opportunities able to establish a common knowledge base for professionals, current and future, coming from different and distinct specialist contexts and educational paths.

This feature of the science diplomat, as well as the tasks it is supposed to perform, requires an original set of skills, including, among others, the ability to quickly acquire sufficient knowledge in different scientific fields, the ability to synthesize and communicate complex information, the ability to listen to counterparts and understand their expertise, goals and needs.

Accordingly, the learning outcomes of the Advanced training course "Challenges and perspectives of Science Diplomacy in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe" address three crucial knowledge areas that are instrumental to provide diplomats and civil servants - but also those individuals and groups who professionally engage with diplomats, or seek to enhance their comprehension of topics related to diplomacy - with the ability to cross the boundaries between science and diplomacy. These areas are:

- the knowledge of the theory, practice and institutions of Science Diplomacy.
- The relation between scientific knowledge and policy, with a specific view to international relations.
- The application of scientific knowledge to international policymaking, including a privileged perspective on a set of major challenges affecting the current geopolitical context.

4. Contents and study programme

The course has five parts:

1. an introduction to Science Diplomacy (SD): the module will introduce SD as a field of policy and study, presenting a comparison of main national approaches to SD in Europe, as well as the evolution of SD in the EU and global context.
2. An overview on the knowledge and skills needed in SD: the module will focus on skills' development for training the new generation of "science diplomats", as also envisaged in the recent report "A European Framework for Science Diplomacy". It will also examine training needs and knowledge gaps to be addressed for fostering SD in CEI Member States. Finally, it will illustrate how research can feed science advice in international policymaking.
3. A focus on SD in the current geopolitical context: the module will cover a set of policy areas which are impacted by SD and which SD can help manage. Topics discussed in the module will include disaster management, cultural heritage, sustainable agriculture, energy transitions, research security, international development.
4. A visit to research infrastructures: the module will be dedicated to the connections between SD and research infrastructures as key actors in the domain of international scientific cooperation.
5. An Italian perspective on SD in the target region, featuring panellists from key government offices and research institutions on Italian strategies for engaging partners from Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe in this field of activities.

Overall, the course will include 16 teaching modules, 3 interactive workshops, 1 study visit and 1 panel discussion, for a total of 25 hours.

For each module, an indicative title is proposed.

DAY 1 (7 hours)	
PART	***MODULE***
Part 1 – Fundamentals of Science Diplomacy and its evolution in the European and global context	• *Fundamentals of Science Diplomacy* • *A European Framework for Science Diplomacy*
Part 2 – Knowledge and skills in Science Diplomacy	• *Knowledge, skills and training in the European Science Diplomacy Framework* • *Knowledge and skills for Science Diplomacy in Eastern*

	and Southeastern Europe • *Scientific Advice and international policymaking: the case of IPCC* ➢ *Interactive session: What are the training priorities in Science Diplomacy for your Country?*

DAY 2 (6 hours)	
PART	***MODULE***
Part 3 – Science Diplomacy: thematic perspectives and actions	• *Science Diplomacy and the UN Agenda 2030 for sustainable development* • *Science Diplomacy and development cooperation from the perspectives of higher education institutions* • *Science Diplomacy and Art, Culture, and Cultural Heritage Protection* • *Demographic trends, climate change and sustainable agriculture* • *Increasing the participation of women in S&T research through effective Science Diplomacy* ➢ *Interactive session: How have the views of Science Diplomacy changed in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe?*

DAY 3 (6 hours)	
PART	***MODULE***
Part 3 – Science Diplomacy: thematic perspectives and actions	• *Science Diplomacy and the energy transition* • *Research Security and Science Diplomacy* • *Science Diplomacy and sustainable development in the Mediterranean* • *Enhancing the resilience to disasters for sustainable development through stronger science-policy interactions* • *UNESCO global vision and regional approaches to Science Diplomacy* • *Using Science Diplomacy for effective water governance in Europe* ➢ *Interactive session: What policy fields can benefit from Science Diplomacy actions in your country?*

DAY 4 (6 hours)	
PART	***MODULE***
Part 4 – Science Diplomacy and research infrastructures	• *Study visits to research infrastructures of the Friuli Venezia Giulia Scientific and Innovation System*
Part 5 – An Italian perspective on Science Diplomacy in Eastern and	• *The Italian science system and Science Diplomacy in Eastern and Southeastern Europe*

Southeastern Europe (closing roundtable)	• *Italian Higher Education institutions and Science Diplomacy in Eastern and Southeastern Europe* • *Future prospects for Science Diplomacy in Eastern and Southeastern Europe: an Italian perspective* • *The role of science attachés for effective Science Diplomacy*

5. Teaching modalities and practical information

The lessons will take place for 4 consecutive days from 25.11.2025 to 28.11.2025.

The teaching methods will include:

- introductory lectures for various teaching modules.
- Interactive sessions and open discussions with professionals and practitioners in the field of Science Diplomacy.
- Analysis of case studies.

The course will be conducted in English, exclusively in person, in different venues located in the cities of Trieste and Gorizia (transfer between the two cities will be arranged by the organisers). In addition to mobility grants (see point 6 below), the organisers will cover participants' meals (lunch and coffee breaks plus two networking dinners).

Participants will receive a certificate of attendance.

6. Application process and mobility grants

The course is seeking applications from the following applicants who are affiliated to organisations based in the Member States of the Central European Initiative (CEI)[1]:

- diplomats and other civil servants working in international relations who want to explore Science Diplomacy (SD) as a field of professional practice.
- Scientific officers and administrators in research institutions who have a role in developing the international portfolio of their organisations.
- Journalists, non-governmental organisations' employees, business professionals, graduate students, and anyone else who professionally engage with diplomats, or seek to enhance their comprehension of topics related to SD.

Applications must be submitted via email by the deadline set on 30 June 2025, at 5 PM CET, to the following address: sciencediplomacy@cei.int.They must include:

1. the Application Form, using the template prepared by the organisers, which can be downloaded from the CEI website at www.cei.int.
2. A CV in English (in .PDF format).
3. A motivation letter in English of max 4.000 characters including spaces (in .PDF format). Motivation letters should include a short presentation of the applicant's career path and its connection with the topics of the course.

[1] https://www.cei.int/member-states

Possible guiding questions: What is your experience in the domain of Science Diplomacy and your knowledge of the Science Diplomacy landscape in your country? Would your professional career benefit from building stronger capacities in the domain of Science Diplomacy? If yes, how?

Although not mandatory, candidates may attach to the application package a reference letter (in .PDF format) signed by their employers or supervisors.

Important: applicants are kindly requested to avoid last minute submissions, as technical issues or different time zones could prevent from meeting the deadline indicated above.

All candidates will be notified via email by 20 July 2025. Moreover, a reserve list will be established, which will be referred to in case of withdrawal of selected candidates.

Applicants from CEI Member States, excluding the host country, are eligible for a mobility grant in the form of reimbursement of travel and accommodation costs up to €600. Admission to the course and award of mobility grants will prioritise applicants currently serving in the diplomatic service of CEI Member States. In particular, mobility grant priority will be given to applicants from non-EU CEI Member States. Moreover, among all applicants, preference will be given to junior professionals.

The course will admit a maximum of 25 participants.

7. Use of Personal Information and contacts

During the course, photos may be taken, and videos may be recorded solely for educational, promotional, and documentation purposes, in accordance with the CEI Privacy Policy.

Should you need additional information, do not hesitate to contact the organisers by writing an email to Mr Alessandro Lombardo (lombardo@cei.int).