

CEI Know-how Exchange Programme (KEP)

KEP AUSTRIA

Financed by the Austrian Development
Cooperation

Call for Proposals 2015

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Applicants are to observe the criteria and obligations set by this Call before submitting their proposals. Rejection clauses will apply automatically.

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Introduction

The Central European Initiative (CEI) is glad to announce a new Call for Proposals for the CEI Know-How Exchange Programme (KEP) - AUSTRIA. The projects will be co-financed by the *Austrian Development Cooperation* through an agreement between the CEI and the *Austrian Development Agency (ADA)*.

1. Background information

1.1 The Central European Initiative and the CEI Know-how Exchange Programme (KEP)

The *Central European Initiative (CEI)* is a regional forum for intergovernmental cooperation in Central-, Eastern- and South-Eastern Europe. It was established in 1989 and is currently composed of 18 Member States: Albania, Austria, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine. The CEI aims to promote a cohesive and united Europe and in particular to assist its non-EU Member States in order to strengthen their capacities by promoting their socio-economic structures.

The *CEI Know-how Exchange Programme (KEP)* was launched in 2004 as a CEI cooperation instrument to provide capacity building, technical assistance and know-how transfer from EU-CEI countries to non-EU CEI countries.

1.2. KEP AUSTRIA

KEP AUSTRIA represents a specific component of the KEP. The Austrian Government has supported it since 2008 with resources made available by the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC), based on a Grant Agreement between the CEI and the Austrian Development Agency (ADA). KEP AUSTRIA is managed by and based in the CEI Executive Secretariat in Trieste (Italy), which provides administrative and conceptual support to the CEI structures. KEP AUSTRIA offers grants to projects where know-how providers from EU-CEI Member States transfer specific experience, best practices and knowledge to know-how recipients from non-EU CEI Member States.

KEP AUSTRIA shall support non-EU CEI Member States in getting closer to EU standards by providing effective assistance to organisations at national, subnational and local level and by improving their functioning through adequate expertise and consulting services. In order to reach this goal KEP AUSTRIA will:

- Promote economic, social and educational as well as training standards;
- Support transfer from EU- CEI Member States to non-EU CEI Member States of knowledge, best practices and specific expertise accumulated during the EU accession process;
- Promote cooperation among organisations in CEI Member States.

As outlined in the Plan of Action, the CEI is supporting the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies within its territory. The CEI is also supporting its Member States targeted by the Eastern Partnership (EAP) to bring them closer to the EU as well as the SEE 2020 Strategy. Proposals reflecting those objectives are welcome.¹

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- EUSBSR at <http://www.balticsea-region-strategy.eu/>
- EUSDR at <http://www.danube-region.eu/>
- EUSAIR at <http://www.adriatic-ionician.eu/>
- SEE 2020 at <http://www.rcc.int/pages/62/south-east-europe-2020-strategy>
- EAP at http://eeas.europa.eu/eastern/index_en.htm

2. Priority areas

Priority Areas have been identified by taking into account the country and sector strategies of the EU, the CEI Plan of Action, specific programmes of International Organisations and International Financial Institutions operating in the region (such as EBRD, OECD, UNECE, the World Bank), complying with development assistance objectives pursued in most of EU-CEI Member States.

KEP AUSTRIA Priority Areas for 2014-2016:

1. European Integration and related capacity building

- European integration (preparing for EU accession including assistance in setting up documents; improving skills of public administration; assistance when filing laws in accordance with EU requirements);
- Strengthening the rule of law through the introduction of European standards;
- Strengthening capacities of central administration (including institution building, improvement of efficiency and performance of State administration, application of high standards and transparency in civil service and training for civil servants);
- Strengthening administrative and educational structures at regional and local levels (including assistance when preparing development strategies, implementation of transparency measures for local government finance systems and human resources development with regard to local civil servants). Support to schools and universities (modern learning, necessary educational strategies in order to improve general living conditions).

2. Social and Economic Development, Inclusion and Equality

- Improvement of local labour market conditions and development of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprise sectors (including support to start-up SMEs, promotion of spin-offs and innovative enterprises, development of micro-credit schemes and SME financing);
- Addressing social inclusion, social dialogue; tackling gender inequalities, social exclusion and vulnerabilities; support to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, ethnic minorities and youth; support youth participation in the economy and job creation;
- Strengthening the social advancement of recipient countries (support civil society structures and build capacities to act towards social inclusion, fighting poverty, promoting good governance, accountability, transparency; human rights-based approach and promotion of corporate responsibility).

3. Agriculture, Environment and Climate Change

- Sustainable agriculture and rural development (food safety and food quality, regulatory standards, farm development plans, development of infrastructure for wholesale trade of agricultural products, training of specialists in farming-related areas; promotion of rural and environmentally sensitive tourism).
- Environment (protection of the environment, waste management, water management and water resource development).
- Energy (energy efficiency, renewable energy, clean energy and climate change).

3. Rules for this Call for Proposals

3.1. Available amount and general rules

The indicative amount for this Call for Proposals is one hundred and seventy thousand Euros (EUR 170,000), made available by the *Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC)* entirely financed by the Austrian Government.

The receipt of project proposals is subject to the availability of funds and can be suspended at any time. The acceptance of proposals and approval of grants would resume only after the replenishment of funds from the sources stipulated by the ADC. The CEI reserves the right not to award all available funds, to annul a Call for Proposals and reject all proposals at any time prior to the awarding of grants, without thereby incurring any liability.

3.2. Eligibility criteria

Any Project Proposal shall fully satisfy the following eligibility criteria:

- Compliance with the CEI Plan of Action and with the KEP AUSTRIA priorities
- Eligibility of partnership: know-how provider/s and know-how beneficiary/ies
- Eligibility of the activities
- Grant ceiling and eligibility of costs

3.2.1. Compliant objectives and priorities

The overall objective of the Know-how Exchange Programme (KEP) is to contribute to the development of the CEI region, bolstering social cohesion and economic dynamism, while strengthening cooperation between the CEI Member States. The KEP focuses on areas of intervention where EU-CEI countries have demonstrated strong-rooted experience, and where beneficiary countries have shown the strongest need for assistance. Project Proposals are required to address at least one of the KEP Priority Areas and be in line with the [CEI Plan of Action](#).

Eligible projects are required to show an economic rationale, cover investment aspects, economic transition, capacity building, or the business environment, in areas related to general development and European economic integration.

When drafting proposals, Applicants shall also pay special attention to:

- Social development and social inclusion and removal of barriers to vulnerable social groups as well as to people with disabilities;
- Environmental impact in order not to pose any threat to the environment;
- Gender issues in order to counter barriers to participation of women.

3.2.2. Eligible partnership: know-how provider/s and know-how beneficiary/ies

KEP AUSTRIA is open to all public and private companies and organisations, PPPs, international organisations and NGOs operating in the public interest, e.g. national, regional and local authorities, education/research institutions, and environmental organisations. Individuals cannot apply.

The minimum eligible partnership is composed of one subject from an EU-CEI Member State² (know-how provider) and one from an ODA-eligible non-EU CEI Member State³ (know-how beneficiary). The partnership is structured around these two subjects, one acting as “Applicant” and the other as “Main Partner”. Additional partners may also be included. Small and well-focused partnerships are to be preferred to larger ones.

² Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

³ Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia and Ukraine.

As a rule, a project co-financed under KEP AUSTRIA must be implemented by the Applicant, directly responsible for the preparation and management of the project for all its duration. When an International Organisation facilitates cooperation between the know-how provider and the know-how recipient, the KEP grant shall be transferred to and managed by this international body.

Project Applicant

The role of the Applicant can be performed both by the know-how provider/s and the know-how beneficiary/ies. The Applicant is responsible for the project implementation and for the management of the KEP grant. A know-how provider can submit two distinct project proposals within the same Call, provided beneficiaries are different. An Applicant can cooperate with one or more know-how provider organisation(s) registered in CEI Member States.

Preference will be given to projects, where the Applicant(s) demonstrates to be able to integrate or align the proposed KEP assignment into wider frameworks of related interventions. The CEI's experience in managing the KEP has also shown that projects reach higher levels of impact when the Applicant has had previous experience in the beneficiary countries. Applicants are to demonstrate clear knowledge of the beneficiary(ies), of the beneficiary(s)' countries, and of the specific targeted region.

NOTE: in order to give an equal treatment to all applicants, the CEI Executive Secretariat does not provide any support and/or assistance for the creation of the project partnership, nor can it give prior opinion on the eligibility of an applicant, a partner or an action.

3.2.3. Eligible activities

Projects should not promote general cooperation. Applicants should propose activities addressing specific problems and needs. This prerequisite also goes for national, European or International Financial Institutions in preparing projects constituting the basis for further investments.

Applicants should suggest a clear set of activities to the benefit of the recipient, which in the future could serve as a best practice for similar organisations.

Project proposals are to aim at creating impact through multiple activities and instruments, and by combining theoretical training (workshops, conferences, etc.) and more practical activities (site visits, on-the-job training, etc.). Proposals are also to motivate the potential use of innovative and experimental means of capacity building.

All project activities shall take place in the CEI region and any exceptions to this rule shall formally requested to and approved by the CEI Executive Secretariat.

Eligible activities include: capacity building, technology transfer, training and education of staff, consultancy services, assistance in the preparation of strategic documents, institution building, improvement of procedures and services, feasibility studies, technical assistance, academic and professional education and other interventions ensuring efficient and effective know-how transfer.

3.2.4. Grant ceiling and eligibility of costs

KEP AUSTRIA grants shall not exceed 50% of the total value of a project. The maximum grant amount allocated to a single project cannot exceed fifty thousand EUR 50,000. Any exception to this rule shall be recommended by the CEI Executive Secretariat and is subject to the approval of the Committee of National Coordinators (CNC).

The budget shall be outlined in Euro-denominated amounts. In principle, a KEP grant can be used towards any type of cost linked to the project implementation. The main budget lines are outlined in the *application guidelines of this Call for Proposals (Annex II)*.

Exchange rate fluctuations and national fiscal regulations

The Applicant is entirely responsible for the calculations leading to the outlined budget estimates including currency conversions and local taxes and levies. The CEI is not responsible for and will not reimburse currency rate variations, nor can the CEI be charged with potential shortages or financial consequences of exchange rate fluctuations and underestimation or disregard of national fiscal regulations by the Applicant.

Budget calculations in countries not using the EUR currency can refer to the exchange rate of the National Bank of their country on the day the Application is submitted. The KEP grant will be transferred in EUR. The CEI will not be responsible for any depreciation of the transferred amounts of the KEP grant.

More information on how to outline the budget and on project financing can be found in *Annex II Application Guidelines*.

3.3. Project duration

The project implementation can start at any time after approval. For this Call a project should end by December 2016. Whenever possible, the proposed project should also include post-implementation evaluation activities. Exceptions to this rule shall be made on a case-by-case basis.

4. Application, evaluation and selection procedure

KEP AUSTRIA Call 2015 is made up of a two-step application procedure:

The Applicant, in cooperation with the Main Partner, shall complete the KEP AUSTRIA *Expression of Interest Form (Annex I)* according to the *Application Guidelines (Annex II)* and Rules outlined in this Call. The Applicant is requested to complete the documents carefully and as clearly as possible.

The Applicant is committed to implementing the project and bears the responsibility for the management of the KEP grant.

Expressions of Interest submitted within the deadline will be evaluated by the CEI Executive Secretariat according to the following criteria: Fulfilment of administrative requirements (deadline; correct form completion; grant ceiling); Compatibility with KEP Priority Areas and CEI Plan of Action; Eligibility of partnership, activities and costs; Project design and cost-efficiency.

Each criterion will be marked with a 0-5 score: *Expressions of Interest* crossing a threshold of 15/20 will be short-listed (see Annex III, Evaluation Grid, Step 1). Short-listed Applicants (maximum 25) will be invited to submit a *Full Application* (the application form will be provided via e-mail by the CEI Executive Secretariat) and will be evaluated on the basis of the criteria listed in the Evaluation Grid (see Annex III, Step 2). A list of fundable projects will then be drawn up by the CEI Executive Secretariat and submitted to the Committee of CEI National Coordinators for final approval.

During the project evaluation, the CEI Executive Secretariat may request additional documentation, amendments and/or any other document to be submitted by the Applicant. Clarifications and/or amendments

must be carried out by the Applicant in writing through standard electronic means. Any clarification submitted by an Applicant that does not satisfy the request, will be rejected. If an Applicant does not provide clarifications of his/her Project Proposal by the date and time set in the request for clarification submitted by the CEI Executive Secretariat, his/her Project Proposal may be rejected.

5. How to apply

Submission

Expressions of Interest shall be submitted in electronic format (Subject: KEP AUSTRIA Call 2015 – APPLICANT’S COUNTRY – PROJECT NAME) to the CEI Executive Secretariat (kep.austria@cei.int). A copy (Cc) shall also be sent to CEI National Coordinator in the Applicant’s country. Contact details of the CEI National Coordinators are available at <http://www.cei.int/contacts/National%2BCo-ordinators>.

Applications originating from International Organisations and other trans-national bodies may be submitted directly to the CEI Executive Secretariat.

The Project Proposal to be sent electronically shall be both a PDF and a WORD copy of the *Expression of Interest*. The former is to be with legible applicant and beneficiary(ies) signatures and stamps on the last page of the form.

NOTE: For technical reasons the Application Package (via e-mail) shall not exceed the size limit of 6 MB.

Deadline

The deadline for the submission of Project Proposals is **Monday, 01 June 2015, 17:00:00 CEST (GMT+2) Trieste time.**

Any Expressions of Interest submitted after the deadline will automatically be rejected.

Up to fifteen (15) days before the deadline for submission of Project Proposals, the CEI reserves the right to amend the Call for Proposals through addenda. Any addendum published at the following link: <http://www.cei.int/KEP?tab=2> will become an integral part of the Call for Proposals.

If a Project Proposal has been submitted before the issuing of addenda, the Applicant has the right to substitute or modify his/her Project Proposal by sending - within the deadline for the submission of the Project Proposals - a written notice duly signed by the Applicant and the amended Project Proposal duly signed by all Project Partners.

Questions & Answers

Questions shall be sent via e-mail in English no later than fifteen (15) days before the deadline for submitting proposals to the following email address: kep.austria@cei.int. The CEI Executive Secretariat will reply no later than ten (10) days before the deadline for the submission of proposals. All questions received by the CEI Executive Secretariat and their related answers will be published on the CEI website.

Validity of Project Proposals

Project Proposals shall remain valid for one hundred and eighty (180) calendar days after the deadline for submitting proposals. A Project Proposal valid for a shorter period shall be rejected by the CEI Executive Secretariat as non-responsive.

6. Approval/rejection procedure

The approval/rejection of a proposed project is taken by the Committee of CEI National Coordinators (CNC) at its first upcoming meeting or through written/silent procedure.

After CNC approval, the Applicant will be informed by the CEI Executive Secretariat on the amount of the approved KEP grant and conditions. The Applicant will be requested to sign a Grant Agreement on the terms of the project implementation and management of the CEI grant.

7. Timetable

Activity	Date
Publication of Call 2015	31.03.2015
Deadline for submission of Expressions of Interest	01.06.2015, 17:00:00 CEST (GMT+2) Trieste time.
Communication to short-listed Applicants and invitation to submit the Application Form	End of June
Deadline for submission of Application Forms by short-listed Applicants	End of July
Evaluation of Application Forms, selection and CNC approval	August
Communication to successful Applicants and start of project implementation	End of September/beginning of October

8. Debriefings

Any requests for clarifications regarding discarded project proposals are to be addressed to the CEI Executive Secretariat (kep.austria@cei.int).

A formal debriefing meeting at the appropriate level and with the relevant staff and the project Applicant, will be organised as appropriate. The CEI Executive Secretariat shall take into account relative strengths and weaknesses of the project proposal submitted and any other appropriate information necessary for the Applicant to explore how it can improve its future chances of success.

9. Contacts

For more information on KEP grants to be financed by this Call for Proposals please contact:

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