

Annual Report of the Secretary General 2021

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



2021 was a challenging year for our region. As the COVID-19 pandemic persisted on one side, with enduring consequences to health and the socio-economic sphere of society, an increased number of pressing issues linked in particular to European integration and sustainable development, continued on the other. Despite the difficulties, the CEI remained committed to fostering positive perspectives by creating opportunities, thus working extensively in various fields and seeking new partnerships with other relevant actors to promote multistakeholder activities.

The Montenegrin CEI Presidency, together with the CEI-Executive Secretariat (CEI-ES), was fully committed to adequately meeting the established priorities and tackling the challenges, especially those linked to the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and all its implications, as well as to thoroughly pursuing the CEI Plan of Action (PoA) for the triennium 2021-2023.

Indeed, as the past year marked the start of the implementation of the PoA, the CEI worked to foster the established goals and objectives. A particular focus was dedicated to intensified political dialogue to tackle its mission promoting both European integration and sustainable development.

Furthermore, the two main goals of the PoA, i.e. green growth and just societies, were met through activities fostering sustainable economies, enhancing climate awareness and overall connectivity as well as those tackling the reduction of inequalities and social inclusion.

In this regard, alongside our traditional initiatives in 2021, new ones were launched within the CEI framework. A rich number of noteworthy projects and meetings were carried out, involving fundamental spheres as politics, economics and health. We also achieved objectives through partnerships. For instance, regarding the economic recovery from the pandemic, we cooperated with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the European Investment Bank (EIB).

In our efforts to align our operations with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN 2030 Agenda) and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at both institutional and project level, I am also very proud of the interaction between the CEI and the UN focused on sharing experiences and exchange of knowledge about its implementation at both country and regional level.

With regard to the latter, a tailor-made initiative was launched in cooperation with the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative (All), and with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy: *Active Young Citizens for Sustainable Development in CEI and All Areas*. The overall objective of the activity, also assisting the advancement of the *CEI Youth Agenda*, is to raise awareness of CEI and All countries' high school students on the UN 2030 Agenda and the SDGs through a learning process and participation in a Call for Ideas and Award Competition. This, in order to stimulate the contribution of young people, as future citizens of the world, towards its implementation.

As for the Economic Dimension, in the CEI's efforts to keeping pace with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, a Dialogue Forum composed of a series of events was launched. In this regard, the CEI-ES organised several online conferences, in cooperation with the Montenegrin CEI Presidency, including various stakeholders from governmental institutions to international financial institutions, development banks and think tanks, such as the OECD, the EIB and Bruegel.

The Parliamentary Dimension also carried out its activities, and the Parliament of Montenegro organised both the Parliamentary Committee and Assembly meetings.

Furthermore, the Montenegrin CEI Presidency, through the Union of Municipalities of Montenegro, organised a kick-off meeting launching the Local Dimension. The event gathered representatives of national associations of local and regional players as well as international and regional CEI partners to discuss possibilities for cooperation including these actors.

As to health, special attention was paid to the collaboration with the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe (WHO/Europe), that worked in synergy with the CEI also in 2021. Among the results achieved, a special event dedicated to the endorsement of the “Roadmap for Health and Well-being in the Western Balkans (2021–2025)”, was jointly organised on the occasion of the CEI Summit in Budva in December. For this purpose, a considerable amount of key partners were included, such as the European Commission, the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and the South-Eastern Europe Health Network (SEEHN).

At the same time, the CEI, especially the CEI-ES, amply continued its project-based cooperation through its traditional funds and instruments. Overall, in 2021, we managed to organise, implement and support around 100 projects and activities, contributing to the tangible implementation of the PoA 2021-2023. Likewise, a number of new projects and activities were approved.

Below I am mentioning only some of the achievements:

- *Cooperation Fund*: 22 Cooperation Activities to be implemented in the first semester of 2022 were approved, for a CEI co-financing of 209,950 EUR. Furthermore, several Cooperation Activities originally planned to be held in 2020, were postponed to 2021 because of the pandemic and took place this year, alongside the continuation of the implementation of a few activities in the framework of the COVID-19 Extraordinary Call.
- *Active Young Citizens for Sustainable Development in CEI and All Areas*: the initiative recognised the remarkable proposals of three winning high schools, selected among more than 70 applications. The prizes will be utilised either for the implementation of the idea itself or for other institutional purposes of the schools, contributing to the UN 2030 Agenda and its SDGs.
- *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 multilateral projects involving EU and non-EU CEI Member States and focusing on the transfer of know-how. As an outcome of the 2021 Call for Proposals, 7 new projects amounting to around 200,000 EUR were approved and will bring together know-how providers and beneficiaries from 11 CEI countries. Moreover, throughout 2021, over 10 KEP projects were concluded and over 10 proceeded with their implementation.
- *Technical Cooperation (TC) Programme*: financed out of the CEI Fund at the EBRD funded by Italy, through which the CEI offers grant-type assistance in support of specific components of investments and operations of the EBRD. In 2021, the CEI Fund at the EBRD provided financing for 7 new TC assignments for a total cumulative value of 1,515,000 EUR. The beneficiaries are the CEI Western Balkan countries and Moldova in priority sectors linked to planned EBRD investments for over 60 million EUR. In addition, around 30 TC projects proceeded with their implementation during 2021.
- *EU-funded Projects*: funded by several EU Programmes, they represent a valuable tool for the attainment of the CEI strategic objectives, such as the promotion of regional cooperation for European integration and sustainable development. The CEI-ES is currently involved in 12 EU projects with a total value of about 27 million EUR of which about 2.3 million EUR are administered by the CEI-ES in areas such as transport, energy, circular bioeconomy, research and innovation, environmental protection, social innovation, health and justice.

Last but not least, I want to thank the High Representatives of the CEI Member States, the CEI National Coordinators and partners, as well as the whole Executive Secretariat staff for their precious help.

To conclude, I want to express my gratitude to the Montenegrin Presidency for all its efforts to achieve the CEI goals and face new challenges during its mandate.

Finally, I wish the Bulgarian CEI Presidency 2022 the best of luck.



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 of the Heads of Government, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, the Committee of National Coordinators and other meetings of interest for the Organisation.

PRIORITIES AND PROGRAMME

In the spirit of its excellent leadership in 2020, the Member States agreed that Montenegro would hold the CEI Presidency again in 2021, to give the country the possibility to fully implement its priorities, affected by the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Willing to build on the achieved progress, Montenegro tackled the challenges by providing an effective response to the ongoing pandemic, while pursuing the CEI's core mission, aimed at promoting European integration and sustainable development.

The Montenegrin CEI Presidency focused on highlighting the CEI's role as a fast responder to the pandemic outbreak, while maintaining its traditional role as facilitator of political dialogue and an accelerator of reforms, both at EU level and in the framework of multilateral international cooperation. This was done especially by building on the CEI Observer Status in the United Nations General Assembly.

In 2021, the Montenegrin CEI Presidency, supported by the CEI-Executive Secretariat (CEI-ES), continued to build upon the Organisation's comparative advantage and comprehensive approach, promoting multilateral diplomacy and project management.



Overall, the Montenegrin CEI Presidency tackled pressing challenges with an increased focus on the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic from the health, economic and social aspect. It also focused on enhanced connectivity and environmental protection, in the framework of activities that combine intensified political dialogue and cooperation with other international and regional players and relevant stakeholders, as well as through its project-oriented approach.

In particular, the Montenegrin CEI Presidency intended to offer immediate response to the challenges and strengthen regional dialogue mainly in the established priorities. In this context, high-level meetings, expert forums, and other events were organised on these topics. These events and activities were implemented within the rich programme of the Montenegrin CEI Presidency (*the Calendar of the Montenegrin CEI Presidency 2021 is attached as Annex 1*).

Through the implementation of concrete activities in strategic areas of regional interest, Montenegro was committed to strengthening good-neighbourly relations and encouraging constructive exchange of views and ideas. In this regard, the Presidency further promoted regional cooperation as a key factor for strengthening stability, security and competitiveness, and for tackling political challenges as well as defining new opportunities.

In line with the objective of affirming the CEI as a relevant regional actor in the international arena, the Montenegrin CEI Presidency focused on meeting the priorities and challenges by pursuing traditional initiatives and launching new ones in the framework of the Governmental, Parliamentary and Economic Dimensions. It also supported the launch of the Local Dimension.

PRIORITIES OF THE MONTENGRIN PRESIDENCY 2021:

- Recovery from the pandemic (health, economic and social)
- Strengthened connectivity
- Scientific cooperation
- Environmental protection

GOVERNMENTAL DIMENSION

Composed of Heads of Government, Foreign Ministers, National Coordinators, which provide an overall guidance to the Organisation, as well as other government representatives. Annually rotating CEI Presidency.

CNC MEETINGS

The CEI Committee of National Coordinators (CNC) met five times in 2021, with two hybrid meetings: in Trieste (11 October) and Budva (2 December), while the rest were carried out virtually (24 February, 27 May and 22 June). The CNC was committed to coordinating the CEI areas of cooperation. Furthermore, it was involved in drafting and negotiating various documents for adoption at the high-level meetings as well as in the strengthened relationship with the EU and other relevant stakeholders. It also approved a number of projects and launched a number of ideas and proposals, tackled by the CEI-ES throughout the year.



MFA MEETING

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the CEI Member States (MFA Meeting) converged in an online meeting on 23 June under the topic "Shaping Europe's Future, Building Prosperous Region: Enlargement, Rapprochement, Recovery". The meeting was opened and chaired by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro, Đorđe Radulović, alongside Roberto Antonione, CEI Secretary General. All participants agreed on the need for a constructive dialogue, solidarity and re-engagement to address the challenges and the European perspective of the region. In this regard, the Ministers touched upon the key steps and processes with a potential to speed up the EU accession of the Western Balkans, and on the need to increase relations with the Eastern European countries, based on shared values and standards. They welcomed, to this end, a constructive exchange between EU and non-EU CEI Member States, appreciating, in particular, the strong support provided by the EU CEI countries to their non-EU fellows. In this context, there were high expectations for the results of upcoming EU-Western Balkans summit and the Eastern Partnership summit taking place in October and December 2021 respectively. In light of the ongoing challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, participants also stated that working together to better respond to threats through reinvigorated and effective multilateralism, also at the regional level, was crucial. The CEI - WHO/EUROPE cooperation was particularly praised as a tool capable of stepping up regional coordination and thus mitigating the impact of the pandemic; the overall CEI activities towards tackling current challenges were also strongly appreciated.

DECISIONS AND DECLARATIONS ADOPTED:

- Decision on the CEI Cooperation Fund budget for 2022
- Communiqué

CEI SUMMIT

Upon the invitation by the Prime Minister of Montenegro, Zdravko Krivokapić, the Heads of Government of the CEI Member States and other distinguished guests met in Budva on 3 December for their meeting (CEI Summit). The high-level discussions focused on: reflecting on the state of play of the European integration process with the CEI Western Balkan countries and enhancing cooperation with the CEI Eastern European countries; tackling the current challenges by providing regional responses to sustainable development, including international scientific cooperation; enhancing resilience in health and socio-economic areas with regard to the COVID-19 recovery - joint initiatives, actions and partnerships; and looking ahead taking into consideration the CEI assets. A Joint Statement was adopted by the participants.

DECISIONS AND DECLARATIONS ADOPTED:

- Joint Statement



Endorsement of the WHO Roadmap for Health and Well-being in the Western Balkans

On the margins of the CEI Summit on 3 December, organised by the Montenegrin CEI Presidency and the CEI-ES, a special event dedicated to the endorsement of the WHO “Roadmap for Health and Well-being in the Western Balkans (2021-2025)” took place with the participation of the Prime Ministers or their representatives of the CEI Member States of the Western Balkans, the CEI Secretary General, Roberto Antonione, and the Regional Director of WHO/Europe, Hans Henri P. Kluge. While endorsing the Roadmap, participants highlighted the importance of multilateralism and regional cooperation with solidarity and partnerships as the only way forward towards a healthier, more resilient and a fully integrated region. The event was concluded with a Joint Statement of Action to further highlight the need “to keep health high at the top of the political agendas of all governments and partners to better strategize for health” — especially in consideration of developing and building a community of strategic partners to close the health gap between the Western Balkans and the European Union.



MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT

On 8 October, Ministers, State Secretaries and other high officials dealing with environmental issues in the CEI countries gathered in Trieste for a Conference organised by the Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning and Urbanism of Montenegro and the CEI-ES. It was held within the Sea Summit hosted by the world-renowned regatta, the “Barcolana”. “Waste Management” and “Waters without Borders” were the themes of this event under the Montenegrin CEI Presidency. The two interlinked sessions opened both by Montenegro’s Minister Ratko Mitrović and by CEI Secretary General, Roberto Antonione, focused on the key policies linked to these topics and on pinpointing new cooperation avenues, strategies and joint actions for sustainability in terms of post-COVID 19 recovery and to contribute to meeting the UN 2030 Agenda’s SDGs. In view of long-term actions to address these pressing issues, the session on “Waste Management” was concluded with a Joint Statement on Cooperation in the field of Sustainable Waste Management in the CEI region. The session “Waters without Borders”, which focused on sharing best practices and at stimulating cooperation and joint actions in the field of water protection, perfectly represented the CEI’s aim to facilitate the establishment of regional partnerships able to address common challenges.



MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON TRANSPORT

The Ministry of Capital Investments of Montenegro, in the framework of the Montenegrin CEI Presidency, organised a High-level Meeting on Transport in Budva on 22 October. The event, hosted by Minister Mladen Bojanić and attended by Ministers in charge of Transport and Special Guests, was composed of two sessions: 1. Transport Community as a key mechanism of cooperation in the Western Balkans “One year of Transport Community Action Plans on road, road safety, rail, and transport facilitation, progress, and the way forward”, and 2. CEI High Level Meeting “Strengthening the connectivity with Western Balkans and among CEI members” – challenges and the way forward. It aimed at discussing the state-of-the-art of the transport links in the region, as well as at identifying innovative solutions for facilitating the progress of the transport networks, while considering the impact on the environment.



PARLIAMENTARY DIMENSION

Representatives of national Parliaments cooperate and meet in framework of the Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Committee and the General Committees.

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE

The Parliamentary Committee met on 15 June for an online meeting under the title “Promotion of equality and solidarity mechanisms in health care”. It was opened by the President of the Parliament of Montenegro, Aleksa Bečić, while the panel discussion was introduced by Minister of Health of Montenegro, Jelena Borovinić Bojović. At the meeting, which gathered in an online format, Members of the Parliament (MPs) and secretaries of delegations from CEI Member States and other prominent attendees and guests, the participants referred to the pandemic and its consequences in the health, economic and social sphere. Speaking about the importance of promoting equality and solidarity mechanisms in health care, they agreed in general that the pandemic had demonstrated how important cooperation, mutual support, solidarity and multilateralism were, and in particular on the need to provide a successful response to a global threat.



General Committee on Cultural Affairs

The Hungarian Chairmanship of the General Committee on Cultural Affairs organised a meeting on 21 April, hosted by the Hungarian National Assembly, with remote participation of Parliamentary Delegations of CEI Member States. The gathering focused on “Cultural diversity and identity in Europe”. The participants emphasised the importance of promoting cultural diversity and identity in the region, preserving cultural heritage and supporting the creative sectors with great potential for growth. They also underlined the capacity of cultural diplomacy to strengthen international relations through mutual understanding and people-to-people exchanges. The panel discussion moderated by Hajnalka Juhász, Ministerial Commissioner in charge of fostering the international relations of the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of Europe, witnessed contributions from Kairat Abdrakhmanov, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities; Jeroen Schokkenbroek, Director, Directorate of Anti-discrimination, Council of Europe; Herbert Dorfmann, Member of the European Parliament, Intergroup for Traditional Minorities, National Communities and Languages.



PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

The meeting of the General Assembly of the CEI Parliamentary Dimension (CEI-PD) was held in a hybrid format in Herceg Novi on 15 October under the leadership of Tamara Vujovic, CEI PD President and Head of Montenegrin Delegation to the CEI-PD. It was opened by the President of the Parliament of Montenegro, Aleksa Bečić and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro, Đorđe Radulović. The occasion witnessed the elaboration of a Final Declaration which stresses the importance of regional cooperation and outlines the conclusions of necessary actions to be taken in the CEI area, e.g. expansion of economic and infrastructural inter-connectivity, especially in the transport and logistics sector; stronger CEI Economic Dimension to promote trade and investment; removal of barriers to enable access of local micro and small enterprises to the market; stimulate tourism businesses to increasing connections with local economy and producers; cooperation for international travels and tourism. The participants also nominated the chairmanship of the general committees (political and home affairs; economic affairs; cultural affairs).



DECISIONS AND DECLARATIONS ADOPTED:

- Final Declaration
- Chairmanship of General Committees



ECONOMIC DIMENSION

Promotes an active participation of the business communities fostering inputs, open discussions and recommendations for cooperation.

ECONOMIC FORUM

The Economic Forum was held on 2-3 December back-to-back with the CEI Summit of the Heads of Government. The gathering - organised by the Chamber of Economy of Montenegro under the title "Economic resetting in the post-COVID period" - provided an excellent opportunity to engage high-level decision makers, economic experts and university professors, representatives of businesses and others from the CEI Member States, and discuss how to address the challenges caused by the pandemic and their impact on the economy. Risks and uncertainties in the business community, green and circular economy and the opportunities provided by the digital transformation were among the main topics of discussion. While on one side, sectors such as tourism and traffic had been heavily hit, on the other, the digital sector had brought about positive effects, providing quick solutions to many problems. The event was concluded with a special Prime Ministers' Panel on the Post Pandemic future of Europe during the CEI Summit, which launched a message about the importance of European integration in particular with the Western Balkans, bound to become part of the large European family.

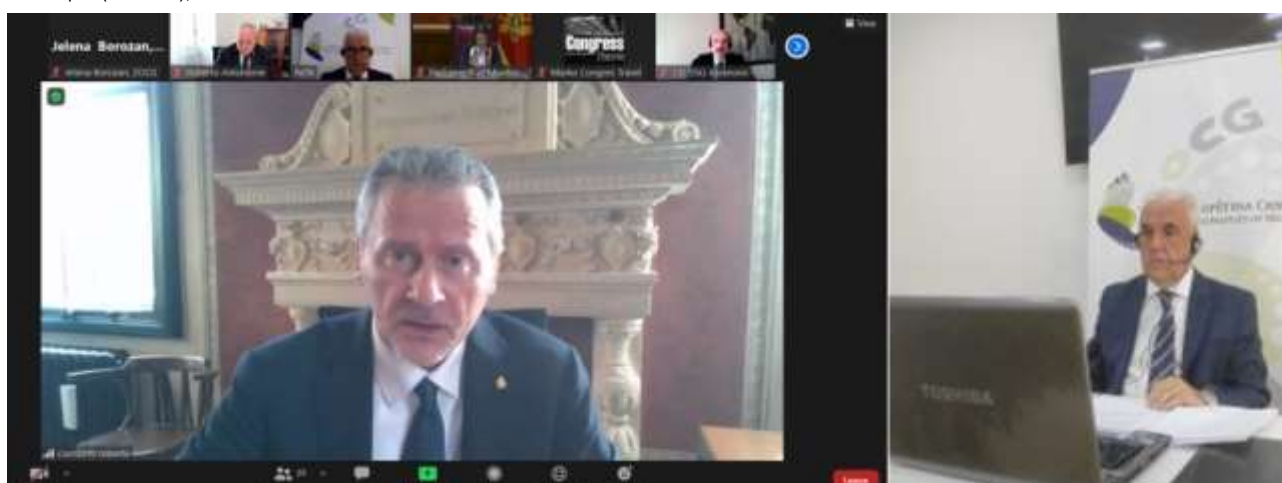


LOCAL DIMENSION

Supports cooperation between local and regional entities in CEI Member States and their actions in addressing local challenges.

LOCAL DIMENSION KICK-OFF MEETING

On 12 November, the CEI, the Montenegrin CEI Presidency and the CEI-ES, in cooperation with the Union of Municipalities of Montenegro, officially launched the Local Dimension of the CEI in an online meeting. Participants strongly commended the CEI's initiative and expressed their readiness to build upon this new pillar; they emphasised that the voice of local authorities had ample room for action, experience exchange and joint-project development. Attention was paid, among others, to boosting democracy, the rule of law and to the importance of creating partnerships/networks at local level; and strengthening cross-border cooperation and connectivity were described as two instruments at the basis of European integration. The Local Dimension has been established following the proposal of the Parliamentary Committee of the CEI during the Italian CEI Presidency 2019 and received the support of the Foreign Ministers of the CEI Member States. Alongside representatives of the local authorities of the CEI countries, the meeting was also attended by numerous guests and speakers from the Committee of the Regions, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, the Network of Local Authorities' Associations in South East Europe (NALAS), and others.







SECRETARIAT

The CEI-Executive Secretariat 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 and takes appropriate initiatives aimed at promoting the realisation of the CEI's mission.

ROLE AND FUNCTIONS

The CEI-Executive Secretariat (CEI-ES or Secretariat) supports the activities of the Presidency and other decision-making and operational structures of the CEI by providing continuous day-to-day administrative and conceptual assistance, as well as by taking appropriate institutional and project activities aimed at promoting the accomplishment of the CEI's mission.

With the establishment of the Secretariat, the Organisation has assured a permanent structure for a systematic approach to wide-spread activities. The overall guidance and orientation for CEI activities in general and for the Secretariat in particular remains embodied in the long-term CEI strategy. A strategy, which is reconfirmed both at political level and in the CEI Plan of Action, reflecting the priority interests for cooperation among its Member States.

In 2021, the Secretariat was led by a Secretary General (SG), an Alternate Secretary General (ASG) and two Deputy Secretaries General (DSGs). They make up the Executive Level of the CEI-ES. The Secretariat is also composed of various staff members engaged in institutional and project activities in numerous fields and administration. In 2021, the Secretariat's staff was actively involved in implementing the PoA 2021-2023 and supporting the Montenegrin CEI Presidency. *The respective tasks of the staff are outlined in Annex 2.*

The CEI-ES also oversees the funds, programmes and instruments for cooperation complementing the institutional activities. These include: the Cooperation Fund, supported by all Member States, the participation in EU-funded Projects and projects in cooperation with the Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia - ARFVG (*the contributions stemming from various resources are outlined in Annex 3*). They aim at financing various cooperation projects implemented in the CEI Member States, while the Secretariat takes care of their sound management and administration.

Through this function, the CEI has developed an important expertise, i.e. programme and project management, and has gained an additional role in the transnational and cross-border context. This represents an added value, in particular for the design, implementation and management of large projects, such as the EU-funded projects. To carry out this task, the CEI-ES has a dedicated Unit through which it actively participates in various EU Programmes, both as Lead Partner and Partner - thus, enhancing the involvement of its countries in EU-funded projects. The staff of the CEI-ES Unit for EU projects is financed out of the budget of the projects funded through EU Programmes.

The Office of the CEI Fund at the EBRD manages the Technical Cooperation Programme and the Know-how Exchange Programme (KEP) financed by Italy.

The SG, the ASG and the DSGs and other staff members actively participated in many CEI, CEI-sponsored or other international events. They have maintained regular contacts with institutions in the Member States and with other international and regional organisations. The Executive Level was also actively involved in a number of official visits and bilateral meetings.

The seat of the CEI-Executive Secretariat 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 CEI Secretariat and the FVG Autonomous Region, signed in Trieste on 20 December 1999.

INSTITUTIONAL ACTIVITIES

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

VISITS AND MEETINGS

Among the scopes aimed at promoting the realisation of the CEI's mission, the CEI-ES takes appropriate initiatives, including the organisation of official visits to the Member States and bilateral meetings with other international and regional organisations and partners.

Visit to Podgorica

On 26-27 April, the CEI-ES delegation paid a visit to Podgorica in the framework of the Montenegrin CEI Presidency. SG Roberto Antonione and DSG Nina Kodelja gathered with high government representatives to strengthen political dialogue and focus on the main activities foreseen under this year's chairmanship. Meetings with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro, Đorđe Radulović, and the Minister of Ecology, Spatial Planning and Urbanism, Ratko Mitrović, provided the opportunity to underline the CEI's mission in fostering European integration and sustainable development of the CEI countries.



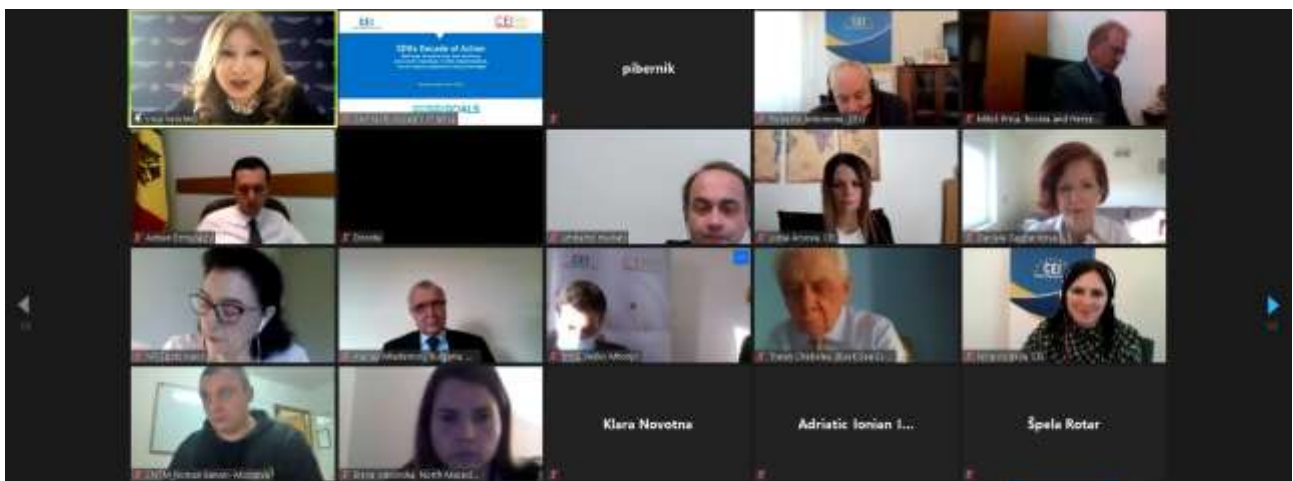
Meeting with Transport Community Secretariat

On 3 February, the CEI-ES met online the Director of the Permanent Secretariat of the Transport Community, Matej Zakonjšek. The aim of the meeting was to discuss possible joint activities promoting regional cooperation in the transport field. In particular, discussions focused on strengthening the institutional cooperation between the two Secretariats, on organising joint events and on promoting other activities within the scope of the priorities of both the Transport Community and the CEI.



CEI DIALOGUE ON SDGs' DECADE OF ACTION

On 24 March, the CEI-ES, in cooperation with the Montenegrin CEI Presidency, organised an online event, “SDGs Decade of Action – Exchange of Experiences, Best Practices and Current Challenges in SDGs implementation, Role of Regional Cooperation and Partnerships”. The meeting - gathering Government officials in charge of the SDGs’ implementation and coordination, as well as representatives from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, and UN representatives - came at a critical juncture of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN 2030 Agenda). It saw Maria-Francesca Spatolisano, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) as a keynote speaker. As the COVID-19 pandemic has dampened the achieved progress towards the attainment of the SDGs and exacerbated pre-existing inequalities, new transboundary actions and vigorous regional efforts are needed to shift the world onto a resilient path. The event thus aimed to share and exchange knowledge and experiences with relevant stakeholders as well as identify best practices on current challenges at both country and regional level. The UN 2030 Agenda recognises the pivotal role of regional cooperation in translating the global goals into national sustainable development realities. In this regard, intergovernmental regional organisations were called upon to complement and support UN efforts in addressing major global challenges and significantly contribute to the achievement of the SDGs.



Active Young Citizens for Sustainable Development in CEI and All Areas

Among the various activities of the CEI related to sustainable development in general, and the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs in particular, the CEI joined the forces with the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative (All) and launched an initiative under the title “Active Young Citizens for Sustainable Development in CEI and All Areas”, with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy. The overall objective of the initiative, advancing also the CEI Youth Agenda, is to raise awareness of CEI and All countries’ high school students on the UN 2030 Agenda and the SDGs through a learning process and the participation in a Call for Ideas and Award Competition, thus to stimulate the contribution of young people, as future citizens of the world, towards its implementation. *The results of the initiative are described in the dedicated section of this report.*

CEI POST-COVID ECONOMIC DIALOGUE FORUM

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely hit all countries around the globe, with devastating effects in two spheres. The first is obviously the human sphere, the healthcare aspect, causing severe illness and death toll of millions of people. The second is the socio-economic crisis. In the short term this means the immediate economic loss of lockdowns, and in the long term, it results in an unfolding economic crisis. In this context, all organisations, be they local or international, made efforts to help to adapt to the situation. To do so, the CEI has also been playing a role through a series of programmes during 2021 tackling the economic aspect; it has launched a Dialogue Forum, coordinated by the ASG Antal Nikolett, and teamed up with international financial organisations, including the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the European Investment Bank (EIB) as well as some international think tanks.

Chief Economist Forum

The CEI-ES, the EIB and the Montenegrin CEI Presidency held an online Chief Economists' Forum on 22 March, revolving around the question "what can governments do to make the economic policy more crisis resilient?" High-level economists from CEI Member States touched upon urgent issues such as overcoming policy uncertainty, greening and digitisation, social inclusion and cohesion and prompted discussions on lessons learnt this past year in order to set Europe on a new sustainable growth path. They carried out a macroeconomic review of the situation and prospects for the future, taking into account the development of main economic indicators such as GDP growth, labour, inflation; the sectors that have been affected the most, e.g. tourism, catering, logistics, transport, banking; as well as actions taken and to be taken to counter the unfavourable effects of the crisis.



Large regional investors and associations forum

The event, held online on 29 April, was organised by the CEI-ES in partnership with the OECD and the EIB. It was complemented by presentations from Bruegel and the Italian Banking Association. The discussions focused on the challenges faced this past year by the COVID-19 pandemic, the post-covid economic structures, and on how CEI Member States and EU policy makers could help to create a more competitive business environment in Central and South Eastern Europe region.

Online Presentation of the OECD Development Center's "Multi-dimensional Review of the Western Balkans – Assessing Opportunities and Constraints"

The event took place online on 28 September, where the Head of Country Diagnostics and Strategy Unit at the OECD, Jan Rielander, and a Policy Analyst of the OECD South East Europe Division presented the main outcomes of the Review to participants from CEI Member States, including OECD country contact points, experts involved in economic policy decision making, experts involved in social policy in widest sense, including education, healthcare, labour, equality, Western Balkans experts of Foreign Ministries and/or Ministries of Economy.

COOPERATION WITH WHO/EUROPE

Establishing closer partnerships with other players is a CEI focus. In this regard, the excellent cooperation with the WHO/Europe needs to be singled out. Several joint activities with this important partner were developed throughout 2021 and a joint event was organised in Trieste in November. Activities also included the participation in events of mutual interest.

CEI-WHO on strengthening primary health care in Western Balkans

On 22-23 November, CEI and WHO senior representatives, together with delegates from health care systems in the Western Balkans, gathered in Trieste for their first intercountry area technical meeting titled "Realizing the potential of primary health care to deliver on the Roadmap for Health in the Western Balkans". The conference aimed at implementing the "Roadmap for Health in the Western Balkans (2021-2025)", one of the priorities identified by the "European Work Programme, 2020-2025 - United Action for Better Health", of the WHO Europe Office; and at facilitating knowledge exchange for developing the potential of the social and health care systems. It was also an opportunity to strengthen the synergies already in place between these countries as well as foster future collaborations. The two-day event offered the participants the chance to experience a guided tour of selected health facilities in the Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia, organised by the CEI-ES and the Regional Health Authorities.



CEI joins WHO meeting on "European Roadmap for Health AND Well-being in the Western Balkans 2021-2025"

The CEI-ES participated, on 7 June, in the WHO-led ministerial and expert subregional meeting on health and well-being in the Western Balkans. The CEI-ES contributed to the discussion by confirming its determination to build synergies and provide support for the key priority areas of action for health in the Western Balkans, proposed in the draft roadmap. The document is intended to be implemented jointly by the Western Balkans, with support from the key partners.

CEI joins 71st session of WHO Regional Committee for Europe

On 13 September, the CEI-ES participated in the 71st session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe along with Health Ministers and high-level representatives of the 53 Member States of the WHO European Region - and partner organisations and civil society - gathering to discuss economic, social- and health-related issues as well as devise future directions for concerted global action. The CEI-ES emphasised the crucial role of regional and sub-regional cooperation, drawing attention to topics such as universal health coverage, digital solutions, and the role of primary care response in the current and future debate.

CEI SPONSORED EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

The CEI-ES continued the promotion of its Feature Events and sponsored various activities covering crucial issues for the region.

Belgrade Security Forum

The CEI supported the 11th edition of the Belgrade Security Forum on 28 October under the title “Testing Humanity”. In particular, one of the sessions was organised by the CEI, in partnership with Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence (BFPE), which tackled region-to-region cooperation with focus on opportunities for Central and South-Eastern Europe, and was attended by SG Roberto Antonione.

The panel started from the premise that the global pandemic had the potential to reshape the world. As interconnectedness and interdependence are still present, they are evolving over time. At the same time, a number of challenges remain the same, e.g. the use of sustainable resources, a human-centred development and resilient institutions and democracies; in particular, it sought to understand what the role of national governments was in establishing regional cooperation and what the plans for the post-COVID recovery in respective countries were; and looked at the ever-changing role of regional organisations, from knowledge brokers, facilitators and advocates.



South East Europe Media Forum (SEEMF)

The SEEMF - one of the major media events in Central and Eastern Europe bringing editors, media CEOs, journalists, experts and politicians together - took place in Belgrade on 3-4 November. The 2021 edition, titled “Lessons learned in the pandemic: better communication, conquering disinformation, standing up for quality journalism in South East and Central Europe”, served as a platform for a debate among relevant players on topics such as the dialogue between journalists and decision makers; disinformation, fake-news, fact-checking; pressure on journalists through the Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs); storytelling through virtual reality technology. The agenda also

included a discussion on media and politics in Serbia. This edition of the Forum confirmed the importance of promoting a dialogue on the media situation in the region and looked into current challenges. It was complemented with lively Q&A sessions that enabled attendees to directly engage and show their interest.



PRIZES AND AWARDS

The CEI-ES promotes a number of Prizes and Awards on the occasion of some of the traditional events supported by the CEI.

CEI Award at Trieste Film Festival

Serbian director Srdan Golubović received the CEI Award at the Trieste Film Festival 2021, at an online ceremony on 30 January. The award is intended to highlight a filmmaker from the CEI area whose work contributes to enhancing dialogue between countries and peoples. It also touches upon universal topics, relevant to all regardless of identities and geographical background.



CEI Special Prize at Piano Forum

In line with the CEI's longstanding commitment to promoting intercultural cooperation in the region, the CEI awarded the young Albanian pianist Kostandin Tashko with the Special Prize at the "CEI Piano Forum", organised by the Piano FVG Association in the framework of an International Piano Competition in May. Tashko, who has distinguished himself in national and international piano competitions, was born in Tirana in 1997 and is currently studying at the Trieste Music Conservatory "Giuseppe Tartini".



CEI Award for Young Writers

Stefan Bošković from Montenegro won the CEI Award for Young Writers on 7 September at the Vilenica International Literary Festival 2021. This initiative - jointly promoted by the CEI and the Slovene Writers' Association in the framework of the Vilenica International Literary Festival - aims at supporting the translation of literary works of young, outstanding writers from the CEI region.



CEI SEEMO Award for Outstanding Merits in Investigative Journalism

On the occasion of the South East Media Frum held in Belgrade on 3-4 December, Sadeta Bajrović from Bosnia and Herzegovina was proclaimed as the winner in the "Professional Journalists" category. Milica Vojinović from the Crime and Corruption Reporting Network – KRIK is the winner in the "Young Professional Journalists" category.



ACTIVE YOUNG CITIZENS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN CEI AND AII AREAS

With the aim to stimulate the contribution of young people towards the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs, the CEI, through the CEI-ES, joined forces with the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative (AII) and launched a Call for Ideas Competition “Active Young Citizens for Sustainable Development in CEI and AII Areas”, by awarding the best presented ideas. The initiative, financially supported by the CEI-ES, the AII and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy, contributes to the implementation of the “CEI Youth Agenda” as well. The Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia (ARFVG) decided to also join the initiative, by awarding the best ideas presented by the schools of the Region. 5 schools were selected in all: 3 from the CEI countries, covered by the Call itself, and 2 from the ARFVG, covered by local contributions.

Award Ceremony in Rome for schools from CEI countries

The three winning schools in Albania, Croatia and Hungary - selected in the framework of the Call for Ideas competition “Active Young Citizens for Sustainable Development in CEI and AII Areas” - were officially announced at the award ceremony held in Rome at the premises of the Italian Foreign Ministry on 19 May. The organisers recognised the remarkable proposals of these high schools, selected among more than 70 applications: the Ibrahim Kodra school in Durrës with “Less hazardous waste in the city, more food and clean water on the tables of the poor and more ways to fight poverty”; Gimnazija Pula school in Croatia with “Plastic scholastic: towards better education and innovation on environmental sustainability”, as well as Eötvös József secondary school in Budapest, with “Green soap movement”. The prize will be utilised either for the implementation of the idea itself or for other institutional purposes of the schools, contributing to the UN 2030 Agenda and its SDGs.



Award Ceremony in Trieste for schools from ARFVG

The best ideas submitted by the schools in the ARFVG and the City of Trieste under the first edition of the Call for Ideas “Active young citizen for sustainable development in CEI and AII areas” were officially announced during the award ceremony in Trieste on 24 May. Among the 70 proposals received in all, and among those developed by the high schools in the ARFVG, the “Robotic in action to preserve our lagoon ecosystem!” from the Enrico Mattei State Institute of Higher Education in Latisana-Lignano Sabbiadoro and “The ponds reflect the sky - The Karst ponds, witnesses of a community's history, safeguard for the biodiversity, keepers of rainwater” from the Liceo classico e linguistico Petrarca of Trieste, were respectively selected as the best in the Region and the best presented by the Trieste high schools.



PARTICIPATION IN PARTNERS' EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

In the strive to build synergies and establish closer partnerships with other players, the CEI provides support and participates in numerous events organised by other international and regional organisations as well as other partners.

The #Balkan route 5 years later

SG Roberto Antonione kicked off an event organised by the Centre for Politics and International Studies (*Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale - CESPI*) in the framework of the project "The #Balkan route 5 years later" on 3 March. The webinar was an opportunity to take stock of possible strategies to counter organised crime along the Balkan route.



EU Balkan Youth Forum

The conference held in Rome on 22-26 November brought together European youth to discuss common issues, face policymakers, and mobilise new energies through a bottom-up approach, facilitating the emergence of a young transnational network to design new initiatives as well as foster fresh views on both the EU and Balkan integration. SG Roberto Antonione joined the session on "EU enlargement, national and international policies" along with representatives from other key international and regional organisations.



17th Salzburg Europe Summit

DSG Zoran Jovanović attended the 17th edition of the Salzburg Europe Summit held on 26-28 September under the general theme "The comeback of Europe". In his presentation before the General Assembly of the Institute of the Regions of Europe, one of the regular events of the Summit gathering local and regional authorities across Europe, Jovanovic informed about recent and forthcoming CEI activities. He pointed out that the Youth Agenda and the Local Dimension were new files in the CEI portfolio.

OSCE event on understanding public attitudes towards migrants

In the framework of International Migrants Day 2021, DSG Nina Kodelja virtually took part in an event on 17 December, organised by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Under the title "Understanding attitudes to migrants beyond polarization" the gathering (in Vienna, Hofburg and online) aimed at discussing the challenges created by the always polarized discourse on migration and migrants and why bridging the gap between perception and reality about migration matters for social cohesion and the stability of hosting societies.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The CEI-ES continued to implement and support various projects out of its funds, programmes and instruments for cooperation.

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 co-financed projects represent an important tool for attaining the goals outlined in the CEI Plan of Action, as well as a unique capacity of the CEI, if compared to other regional organisations. 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 between and among relevant 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 important issues.

In the time frame 2004-2021, the CEI participated in the successful implementation of 46 projects (both as Lead Partner - LP and Project Partner - PP, with a total value of about 82 million EUR, of which about 17 administered by the CEI-ES.

In 2021 alone, 12 projects were under implementation (4 were closed in the course of the year) with a total value of about 27 million EUR, of which over 2.3 million EUR administered by the CEI-ES. The following projects were implemented throughout 2021:

Title	Implementa- tion date	EU Pro- gramme	Area	Role	Total cost (€)	CEI budget (€)	PoA ob- jective/s	SDGs
ITHACA Innovation in Health And Care for All	01/2017 - 06/2022	Interreg Europe	Health	SC	2,263,152.61	98,300.00	1.6, 2.2	3, 8, 10, 17
INTER-CONNECT Inter-modality Promotion and Rail Renaissance in Adriatic-Ionian Region	01/2018 - 01/2021	Interreg ADRION	Mobility	PP	1,604,192.38	197,805.11	1.1	3, 9, 11, 17
BLUE_BOOST Boosting the innovation potential of the quadruple helix of Adriatic-Ionian traditional and emerging BLUE sectors clusters through an open source/knowledge sharing and community based approach in favour of MED blue and green growth	01/2018 - 01/2021	Interreg ADRION	Innovation / Blue economy	PP	1,489,422.00	252,598.00	1.2, 1.5	2, 8, 9, 14, 17

Title	Implementation date	EU Programme	Area	Role	Total cost (€)	CEI budget (€)	PoA objective/s	SDGs
DIGITAL HEALTH EU-ROPE Digital transformation in Health and Care	01/2019 - 09/2021	H2020	Health	PP	3,999,993.75	41,400.00	2.2	3, 17
ETIP-B-SABS 2 European Technology and Innovation Platform on Bioenergy	09/2018 - 12/2021	H2020	Bioenergy	PP	997,720.00	93,750.00	1.4, 1.5	7, 11, 17
ICARUS Intermodal Connections in Adriatic-Ionian Region to Up-growth Seamless solutions for passengers	01/2019 - 03/2022	Interreg Italy-Croatia	Mobility	PP	2,200,000.00	170,000.00	1.1	9, 10, 13
ACSELL Accelerating SmE innovation capacities with a Living Lab approach	08/2019 - 07/2023	Interreg Europe	Innovation	PP	1,726,686.00	161,600.00	1.2, 1.6	8, 17
PRE-RIGHTS Assessing impact and performance of preventive measures on EU Directives and Framework Decisions	10/2019 - 07/2022	Justice	Judicial cooperation	LP	806,673.00	207,152.00	2.1	16, 10
TAAFE Towards an Alpine Age-Friendly Environment	10/2019 - 06/2022	Interreg Alpine	Social innovation	PP	2,168,317.23	135,399.84	1.6, 2.2	1, 3, 11, 12, 17
SUSTOURISMO Sustainable Tourism & Mobility Hand by Hand Development	02/2020 - 08/2022	Interreg ADRION	Mobility	PP	1,798,950.00	228,750.00	1.1, 1.6	3, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15
FORTIS Institutional cooperation for improving cross border public transport services	03/2020 - 08/2022	Interreg Italy-Slovenia	Mobility	LP	759,290.00	225,815.00	1.1	1, 9, 11, 13
MIMOSA Maritime and multimodal sustainable passenger transport solutions and services	01/2020 - 12/2022	Interreg Italy-Croatia	Mobility	LP	7,140,000.00	477,000.00	1.1	3, 9, 11, 13

EXAMPLES OF RECENT ACTIVITIES IN THE EU-FUNDED PROJECTS

Open Call for SMEs on innovation activities in the framework of ACSELL Project

ACSELL (ACcelerating SmE innovation capacities with a Living Lab approach) is funded under the Interreg Europe Programme through the European Regional Development Fund, with CEI as a partner. It aims at sensitising the public sector, innovation intermediaries and SMEs towards the user integration in the early stage of the innovation process and towards expanding SME competencies following the interregional living lab approach.

The CEI-ES participates in sharing practices and experiences in the mutual learning activities; supports the multi-disciplinary advisory panel and participates in the twinning initiatives. Additionally, it is also involved in a pilot activity dedicated to testing the living lab approach in a transregional implementation of a user-centered, demand-driven methodology based on a real use case from an SME.

In its framework the CEI-ES launched a call for European SMEs to participate in a study, in Italy and Germany, testing their innovation activity.



Free Trieste - Koper bus service in the framework of FORTIS Project

Establishing a free bus service between Trieste and Koper, running on Sundays from 24 October 2021 until July 2022 with three trips a day in each direction, is a concrete action of the FORTIS Project, led by the CEI, to overcome the infrastructural gap in the Alpe Adria area and improve the quality of service and transport in this strategic geographical region.

The service is an experimental initiative of the Municipality of Koper implemented as part of the FORTIS project, funded under the Interreg V-A Italy Slovenia 2014-2020 Cooperation Program, by the European regional development fund and national funds.

The improvement of the quality of transport services in the cross-border area, as well as the creation of better living conditions for residents, can contribute to reversing depopulation in these areas, thus increasing their attractiveness, also in terms of tourism. The service has been activated by the Municipality of Koper.



CEI FUND AT THE EBRD

Established in 1992 and financed by Italy with a total contribution amounting to 53 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 30.6 million EUR towards 189 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 7 billion EUR of international investments. The EBRD alone is expected to contribute to those investments with around 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 2021, the TIR is estimated to be 1:231. The EBRD's share, alone, is expected to reach approximately 160 EUR for each euro of the CEI Fund dedicated to TC projects: this represents the EBRD Investment Ratio (EIR). In 2021, the CEI Fund at the EBRD committed over 1.5 million EUR for 7 new TC assignments (*the full list of the TC projects approved in 2021 is attached as Annex 4*). In addition, 23 TC projects were implemented and 4 closed throughout the year, as outlined in the table below:

Title	Country of operation	Comitted (€)	Commitment stage	PoA objective/s	SDGs
JSC Serbian Railways: Lender's Monitor Advisor	Serbia	93,056	implemented and closed	1.1	11
Climate Resilience Assessment for the Belarus Roads Sector	Belarus	74,960	implemented and closed	1.1	11, 13
Sustainable and Eco Tourism Programme - Albania National and Regional Roads Project	Albania	69,210	implemented and closed	1.1	11
Study to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the use of public transport in the Western Balkans	Regional	47,870	implemented and closed	1.1	11
North Macedonia: Railway Corridor VIII - Energy Management System for PERI	North Macedonia	175,000	under implementation	1.1	11
Local Roads Reconstruction and Upgrade Project	Montenegro	164,350	Under implementation	1.1	11
Moldova Railways: Assistance in preparation and implementation of tender for rolling stock rehabilitation	Moldova	250,000	under implementation	1.1	11
North Macedonia: National Roads Programme - Project Implementation Unit support	North Macedonia	450,000	under implementation	1.1	11

Title	Country of operation	Comitted (€)	Commitment stage	PoA objective/s	SDGs
Project Preparation along the Silk Road in CSEE: Assessing and Tackling Policy Obstacles to Infrastructure Investment in the Region	Regional	90,000	under implementation	1.1	11
Independent System Operator of Bosnia and Herzegovina - Consultant for the Project Implementation Unit	Bosnia and Herzegovina	400,000	under implementation	1.3	7
Implementation of the Corporate Governance Action Plan (CGAP) for "Korporate Elektroenergitike Shqiptare Sh.A"	Albania	300,000	under implementation	1.3	7
Albania Secretariat to the Investment Council	Albania	175,000	under implementation	2.1	8
CEI Support to Small Business Initiative: Expansion of Origination and Execution Capacity Program for SME Direct Finance and Risk Sharing in Belarus	Belarus	90,000	under implementation	1.2	8
Green Economy Transition (GET) Project Preparation and Implementation Framework	Regional	65,572	under implementation	1.4	7
Green Economy Transition - Project Preparation and Implementation Framework	Regional	185,000	under implementation	1.4	7
Albanian Railways - Asset Management Plan and Track Access Charges Methodology	Albania	350,000	under implementation	1.1	11
Albanian Railways - Development of accounting and reporting systems for full IFRS compliance	Albania	150,000	under implementation	1.1	11
Albanian Railways - Assistance with Civil Society Engagement	Albania	120,000	under implementation	1.1	11
Preparation of the Study on improvement of public transportation and preparation of tender for a multi-year public lines distribution	Montenegro	150,000	under implementation	1.1	11
Analysis of Climate Change Risks to Critical Transport Infrastructure Networks in Ukraine	Ukraine	149,910	under implementation	1.1	11, 13
CEI Support to Small Business Initiative: Expansion of Origination and Execution Capacity Programme for SME Direct Finance and Risk Sharing in Belarus - Phase 2	Belarus	150,000	under implementation	1.2	8
Investment Climate and Governance Expert for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro	Regional	145,000	under implementation	2.1	13
Advice for Small Businesses in Moldova (Youth and Skills)	Moldova	300,000	under implementation	1.2	8
Mostar North to Mostar South Motorway	Bosnia and Herzegovina	72,790	under implementation	1.1	11
Increasing market opportunities for high-quality food products	Regional	118,416	under implementation	1.2	8
COVID-19 Crisis Response: Environmental & Social Contractor Management	Regional	119,450	under implementation	2.1	8
Market readiness for a low-carbon hydrogen economy in the Western Balkans	Regional	150,000	under implementation	1.4	7

EXAMPLES OF RECENT TECHNICAL COOPERATION PROJECT ACTIVITIES

CEI-funded study on Impact on use of public transport due to COVID-19 pandemic in Western Balkans

The CEI Fund at the EBRD financed this study, published in September 2021, assessing the COVID-19 impact on public transport operations in the main cities in the Western Balkans. It also identified practical measures that have the potential to reduce health and safety risks to vulnerable passengers and road users. Overall, the research found that changes in mobility behaviour patterns had negatively affected the business operations of public transport operators in the analysed cities and would almost certainly continue to do so. Therefore, more substantial work needs to be done to outweigh the impacts of the pandemic on the public transport systems in terms of reducing health and safety risks in particular to vulnerable passengers and road users. This can be achieved by working on restoring trust and confidence in the safety of public transport services by prioritising health and safety issues and by making public transport a safer way of travelling in times of social distancing.



CEI support in helping develop sustainable tourism in Albania

The technical assistance Sustainable and Eco-tourism Programme - Albanian National and Regional Roads funded by the CEI Fund at the EBRD, aimed at supporting sustainable eco-tourism activities along the seacoast of Albania consisting in strategic as well as local actions, in the framework of a larger EBRD investment on rehabilitation of two sections of Albania's regional and local road network (Vlore and Orikum along the southern seacoast and Shengjin and Velipoje along the northern seacoast). This Programme was designed to improve general awareness of environmental preservation and conservation practices and measures that could contribute to reaching sustainable eco-tourism objectives within the Shëngjin and Velipojë region. This, also through the establishment of stakeholder engagement networks, capacity building, and policy dialogue activities. A particular focus was placed on key biodiversity and community road safety due to an expected increased access and growth in tourism in the area.



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, 129 projects have been financed through the KEP for a total CEI Fund contribution of over 3.7 million EUR with an overall project value amounting to 15.5 million EUR.

In 2021, the KEP co-financed 7 new projects with around 200,000 EUR and an overall total cost of projects of almost 500,000 EUR (*the full list of the KEP projects approved in 2021 is attached as Annex 5*). In addition, 17 KEP projects were implemented and 15 closed throughout the year, as outlined in the table below:

Title	Provider country	Recipient country	Total project cost (€)	CEI grant (€)	Implementation stage	PoA objective/s	SDGs
Development and Regulation of the University of Belgrade Laser-laboratory infrastructure for Education and Research	Italy	Serbia	571,664	27,090	implemented and closed	2.6	4
Training in dietary assessment and sharing platforms for monitoring population food consumption habits in a long-term perspective (TRAIN-DIE)	Italy	Serbia	80,000	40,000	implemented and closed	2.1	3
Capacity Building for Implementing Innovative EU Monitoring Tools for Good Governance and Anti-Corruption	Bulgaria	Regional	80,022	39,994	implemented and closed	2.1	16
CEI support for strengthening Energy Regulatory Authorities in the Western Balkans - Third phase	Italy	Regional	118,372	39,475	implemented and closed	2.1	7
MEAT BIOHAZ	Italy	Serbia	80,000	40,000	under implementation	2.6	4
Innovative Know-how Exchange Programme in Animal Nutrition and Feed Technology (INNOKEP-FEED)	Italy	Serbia	86,450	39,950	under implementation	2.6	4
On the Flood Wave of Vardar River. Flood Risk Management for Skopje	Italy	North Macedonia	80,236	38,726	implemented and closed	2.1	6
Capacity Support of Regional Cooperation in Mine Action (SEEMACC)	Slovenia	Regional	35,000	17,500	under implementation	2.1	11
Promoting geological, ecological and cultural heritage through sustainable development and creation of geo-parks (GECCOSPARK)	Italy	North Macedonia	80,539	40,000	implemented and closed	1.3	15
Introducing modern learning methods in North Macedonia using Italian experiences (INLEARN)	Italy	North Macedonia	72,853	33,822	implemented and closed	2.5	4
Non-invasive and multi-analytical approach to the discovering of "Old Believer Faith icons" of VETKA Museum (ICONS)	Italy	Belarus	39,543	18,860	under implementation	2.3	4
Strong nurses for strong health systems and a healthier world	SEEHN	Regional	39,848	39,848	implemented and closed	2.2	3

Title	Provider country	Recipient country	Total project cost (€)	CEI grant (€)	Implementation stage	PoA objective/s	SDG/s
Portal Implementation for Sharing Information about Personal Protective (PPE-HEALTH-PORTAL)	Italy	Regional	38,997	38,997	implemented and closed	2.2	3
Distance Learning on Epidemic and Pandemic Outbreaks in the Western Balkans: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia	Italy	Regional	29,993	29,993	implemented and closed	2.2	3
Distance Learning on Epidemic and Pandemic Outbreaks in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine	Italy	Regional	19,034	19,034	implemented and closed	2.2	3
SOS COVID-19 Emergency - Protecting Mental Health and Psychosocial Well-being of Adults and Minors during Social Distancing in Italy and Serbia	Italy	Regional	39,000	39,000	implemented and closed	2.2	3
Interactive Webinars to Accelerate the Shift to Digital Innovation in Albanian Health (WebinHealth)	Italy	Albania	40,438	39,800	implemented and closed	2.2	3
Use of Regressive Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) Methods in Modelling of COVID-19 spread (COVIDAi)	Serbia, Croatia	Regional	37,900	37,764	implemented and closed	2.2	3
Hospital at Home in the Field of Chronic Wound Management during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Romania and Moldova	Romania	Regional	39,000	39,000	implemented and closed	2.2	3
Improving Occupational Health and Safety System in Republic of Moldova	Italy, Hungary	Moldova	80,000	39,933	under implementation	2.1	3
Sustainable Management of Cultural Heritage in the Balkans in Response to Climate Change. Best practices for adaptation and intercultural cooperation (SMACH)	Italy	Regional	80,935	39,925	under implementation	2.3	13
An Evolution of the Automotive Training Centre Serbia toward the Concepts of Light and Sustainable Mobility (ATC Evo)	Italy, Croatia, Slovenia	Serbia	83,485	39,960	under implementation	2.5	4
Practical Application of 3D Technology in Medicine and Health Care	Italy	Bosnia and Herzegovina	59,556	24,975	under implementation	2.6	4
"Composites for All". Advanced Materials for a Modern, Improved, and Sustainable Society	Italy, Slovenia	Regional	84,020	39,775	under implementation	2.6	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	80,000	40,000	under implementation	2.1	3

EXAMPLES OF RECENT KEP PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Using Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning to counter COVID-19

COVIDAI is a CEI-funded project in the framework of the COVID-19 Extraordinary Call for Proposals / Know-how Exchange Programme. It aims at analysing factors influencing COVID-19 development in humans, including genetics, blood markers, geographical position, as well as medical x-ray images.

The six-month project was implemented by the Faculty of Engineering and the Faculty of Mathematics and Informatics of the University of Kragujevac (UNIKG) in Serbia, in cooperation with the Faculty of Engineering of the University of Rijeka (RITEH) and the Clinical Hospital Centre (KBCRI) in Croatia.

The unique Artificial Intelligence (AI) tool provides a set of solutions for COVID-19 development both in specific patients (personalised model), as well as on the level of the region (epidemiological model). With this goal, the COVIDAI tool would help medical experts to decide whether the patient would be subject to further analysis and prescribe adequate therapy.

In particular, this project has created an epidemiological model for COVID-19 – three sub-models: the first one is based on differential equations and focuses on three countries (Serbia, Croatia and Belgium) and the other models are based on genetic programming (tested on data from the USA).



GECCOSPARK

GECCOSPARK, is a KEP project led by the University of Ferrara (Italy). It was concluded on 28 September and aimed at helping the beneficiary (the Institute of Geology of the State University “Goce Delcev”) and local municipalities to promote the creation of geoparks in potential sites in North Macedonia, thus promoting geological, ecological and cultural heritage through sustainable development and the creation of geoparks in the country.

UNESCO Global Geoparks are single, unified geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education, and sustainable development.

A geopark is an area with clearly defined boundaries that has a remarkable geological heritage combined with a strategy for sustainable development (i.e. economic development that is planned and implemented taking into account environmental protection and sustainability). The related places become tourist attractions and improve the local economy.

A number of activities were organised including capacity building sessions to present the characteristics of Italian parks, with a focus on their organisation and management. In addition, technical activities were carried out on the study of the scientific characterisation of rocks, the results of which were illustrated in international scientific journals and conferences.

The project team worked closely with representatives of municipalities Demir Kapija, Negotono, Gevgelija and Kavadarci to get Memorandum of support for the KEP project and forming of the Geopark Board.

It drafted a ten-year Master Plan related to a proposed Geopark in North Macedonia covering areas from Alshar in the west to Gevgelija in the east, and from Disan (Negotino) in the north to Kožuf mountain and the Greek border in the south; it set up a web page, a GIS database and gathered data for a UNESCO application (October 2021).



CEI COOPERATION FUND

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

Cooperation Activities

The CEI Cooperation Activities (CAs) 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 entirely financed out of the CEI Cooperation Fund to which all Member States contribute annually. The Fund operates through calls for proposals.

Since the start of its operations in 2002, the CEI Cooperation Fund has co-financed - with an amount of more than 11 million EUR – more than 1,200 Cooperation Activities for a total value of the activities amounting to about 67.5 million EUR. It is estimated that the annual mobility generated by the Cooperation Fund throughout the years of its operation is of about 5,000 people.

In 2021, 22 new activities were approved. The total CEI contribution for these activities amounts to 209,950 EUR or about 13.2% of the total cost of the projects representing a value of more than 1.5 million EUR (the full list of activities approved in 2021 is attached as Annex 6).

In addition, 27 CAs postponed from 2020 were implemented throughout 2021, together with some activities which had been approved in the framework of the CEI Extraordinary Call for Proposals to address the COVID-19 emergency the previous year. They are outlined in the table below:

Title	Country and Institution	Total project cost (€)	CEI grant (€)	Implementation stage	PoA objective/s	SDG/s
11th CEI Regional Forum for Health, Wellness and Spa Industry (Rural & Wellness Tourism)	Serbia, Cluster of Health, Wellness and SPA Tourism Serbia (Cluster Wellness Serbia)	16,146.00	5,696.00	Implemented	1.6	11
The European Union and Legal Reform Summer School (EULR)	Italy, Johns Hopkins University SAIS Bologna Center	3,606.00	7,441.50	Implemented	2.1	16
Unlocking the potential for successful technology transfer (Technology Transfer Brokerage Event)	North Macedonia, YES - Youth Entrepreneurial Service (YES) Foundation	6,245.00	7,298.50	Implemented	1.2	8
XVI International Forum of Aquileia Euroregion – The Past that Does Not Pass	Italy, Mitteleuropa Association	42,490.00	6,325.00	Implemented	2.3	4
Business and Arbitration in an era of globalization: Challenges and perspectives	North Macedonia, Economic Chamber of Macedonia - Permanent Court of Arbitration	30,255.00	7,139.00	Implemented	2.1	8, 16
Second Trieste International Forum for Cultural Diplomacy “Promoting the role of young people in the field of Cultural Diplomacy”	Italy, International Association for Cooperation and Cultural Diplomacy	35,316.00	5,000.00	Implemented	2.3	4
Danube Future Interdisciplinary School: “2020: Sustainable development in the Danube River Basin. Where we are and how we tackle future challenges?”	Romania, University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine Cluj-Napoca	33,340.00	8,239.00	Implemented	1.6	8
CEI Piano Forum 2020: MUSICAL DIPLOMACY	Italy, Piano FVG	23,686.00	4,500.00	Implemented	2.3	4

Title	Country and Institution	Total project cost (€)	CEI grant (€)	Implementation stage	PoA objective/s	SDG/s
FluoMicro@ICGEB – Course of Fluorescence Microscopy 2020	Other, International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB)	28,700.00	6,180.00	Implemented	2.6	4, 9
Biodiversity protection across borders - legal watch over extractive and energy industries	Czech Republic, Justice and environment	15,820.00	4,273.50	Implemented	1.3, 1.6	15
16th International Summer School “National Energy and Climate Plans 2021-2030 in CEI Member States”	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Regional Education and Information Centre for Sustainable Development in South East Europe (REIC)	33,160.00	8,156.50	Implemented	1.4	7, 13
Contact #2 (CERIC-CEI Open ACces Training, second edition)	Italy, CERIC (Central European Research Infrastructure Consortium)	56,013.95	9,000.00	Implemented	1.2	9
Towards Social Economy: Young Social Innovators as Forerunners of Positive Change	North Macedonia, Mladiinfo - Association for Education Mladiinfo International	21,690.00	5,959.25	Implemented	2.5	8
Strengthening cooperation among different actors dealing with asylum seekers returnees in Albania and WB countries	Albania, Center for Economic and Social Studies (CESS), Tirana	27,480.00	8,082.00	Implemented	2.1	10
Summer Seminar for Good Governance – European and Regional Dimensions / XXI Annual Summer Seminar for Young Public Policy Professionals from South Eastern Europe and the Black Sea Region	Bulgaria, Economic Policy Institute (EPI)	64,560.00	6,771.00	Implemented	2.1 , 2.5	16
Warsaw 2020 - “Youth’s Vision for the Future of Europe”	Other - European Youth Parliament through Schwarzkopf-Stiftung Junges Europa (SF)	164,648.00	8,250.00	Implemented	2.5	10
CEI Foodie Dialogues: Short Food Supply Chains Boost for non-EU CEI	Poland, Development Policy Foundation (DPF) Warsaw	30,182.00	8,943.60	Implemented	1.6	2
Regional Conference Save the Rivers Sarajevo 2020	Czech Republic, Arnika – Citizens Support Centre	30,198.00	8,940.00	Implemented	1.3	13
Young Bled Strategic Forum	Slovenia, Center for European Perspective (CEP)	57,060.00	8,250.00	Implemented	2.5	9, 10

Title	Country and Institution	Total project cost (€)	CEI grant (€)	Implementation stage	PoA objective/s	SDG/s
Ministerial Conference on Sustainable Waste Management in SEE	Montenegro, Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism	29,350.00	14,490.00	Implemented	1.3, 1.6	11, 13
Transport Ministers meeting on the topic of Transport Community as a key mechanism of cooperation in the Western Balkans	Montenegro, Ministry of Transport and Maritime Affairs	29,853.11	14,905.00	Implemented	1.1	11
Expert support for drafting application for involving SEEIST to ESFRI Road map	Montenegro, Ministry of Science	30,000.00	15,000.00	Implemented	1.2	9
ShareIT Platform – Sharing of relevant electronic IT experience, data, knowledge, trainings, webinars, offer and demand via new Platform	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Srpska	22,000.00	22,000.00	Implemented	1.2	8
Building Innovative E-commerce platform to digitalise micro and small businesses from Western region (BE-digitalised)	North Macedonia, KREACIJA	22,000.00	22,000.00	Implemented	1.2	8
E-learning Platform for People with Disability (EPPD)	Albania, Help the Life Association (HLA)	22,000.00	22,000.00	Implemented	2.5	4
Dissemination of the Knowledge on Application of Ionising Radiation for Sterilization of Medical Equipment, Personal Protection Equipment and the other Microbiologically Infected Objects	Poland, Institute of Nuclear Chemistry and Technology	22,000.00	22,000.00	Implemented	1.2	3
Healthcare online. Acronym: HERO	Croatia, Rudjer Boskovic Institute Zagreb	22,000.00	22,000.00	Implemented	2.2	3
Improving COVID-19 Reporting (ICR)	Czech Republic, Transitions	22,000.00	22,000.00	Implemented	2.2	3
National Telemedicine Platform	Montenegro, Institute of Public Health, Central Public Authority of Public Health	22,000.00	22,000.00	Implemented	2.2	3
CEI Round-Table Discussions at Vilenica	Slovenia, Slovene Writers' Association	63,651.00	10,000.00	Implemented	2.3	4
South East Europe Media Forum SEEMF	Serbia, South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO)	111,305.00	14,950.00	Implemented	2.4	16
(RE)BUILDing Together - REBUILT	Montenegro, Chamber of Economy of Montenegro	42,770.00	15,000.00	Implemented	1.2	8

EXAMPLES OF RECENT COOPERATION ACTIVITIES

11th CEI Regional Forum for Health, Wellness and Spa industry

The CEI-funded forum organised by the Cluster of health, wellness and tourism took place in a hybrid mode (in Belgrade and online) on 15 April.

The event aimed at promoting the sustainable development of both rural and wellness tourism, as well as at fostering the tourist offer in rural areas to retain the population in those areas and provide them with employment opportunities, by improving existing tourism products and creating an authentic tourist offer in rural areas.

Participants from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Slovenia and Serbia had the chance to take part in this platform of regional cooperation for professionals operating in the field of rural, health, wellness, and spa tourism sectors, through networking and exchange of best practices.

The discussions also delved into possible recovery business models to be implemented as a result of the crisis caused by the global pandemic.

Cross-border partnership supports health operators in piloting telemedicine in Moldova

The six-month project funded through the CEI Extraordinary Call in response to the COVID-19, aimed at facilitating and adjusting telemedicine in 5 care centres in Moldova. It focused on strengthening the collaboration with the Romanian partner, the “Social Link” association, whose experts were responsible for the transfer of knowledge to Moldovan colleagues.

Project teams from Romania and Moldova participated in joint events on Telemedicine platform testing, with Romanian experts providing psychological consultancies to medical staff and patients from Moldova. The project reached about 2900 beneficiaries from the 5 care centres. It ensured they had better access to necessary services, as well as training to 25 nurses to develop competencies and practical skills for the benefit of telemedicine.

The project also initiated a campaign to promote telemedicine and to extend the network from 5 pilot regions across the country, with support from the central authorities, the most important being the one provided by the Moldovan Ministry of Health, which will be able to initiate draft laws and facilitate this dissemination across the entire country.



EXAMPLES OF RECENT COOPERATION ACTIVITIES

Young Europeans kick off first hybrid session of European Youth Parliament

The CEI co-funded 93rd International Session of the European Youth Parliament (EYP) was concluded on 10 July.

This first hybrid session was held at the College of Europe (Natolin Campus) and brought together decision-makers, representatives from NGOs, institutions, and young people to discuss the future of Europe.

The conference started from the premise that the recent events had increased the need for young Europeans to have a say in the future of Europe. As the topics for the session were selected with this exact purpose in mind, Warsaw 2021 gave them the chance to have an ultimate say in what kind of Europe, and thus what kind of future, they should be working towards.

The discussions revolved around the topics of civil rights, economy, environment, digital societies, among others.

EYP, a long-standing partner and beneficiary of the CEI, is a youth-driven programme – run by young people, for young people - mainly voluntarily. From its operational office in Berlin, over the years the EYP has enabled thousands of youth from different backgrounds to build intercultural understanding and friendships across borders.

The event fostered an inclusive and open space for youth participation and cooperation which is at the heart of the EYP Sessions.



Young Public Policy Professionals explore post-Covid scenarios for Central and South-Eastern Europe

The 2021 edition of the Summer Seminar for Young Public Policy Professionals focused on “Exploring Post-Covid Recovery Scenarios for Central and South-Eastern Europe” was organised by the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) from Bulgaria. It was held in Varna, Bulgaria, on 6-10 September.

After a competitive selection process, the 2021 Summer Seminar brought together a diverse group of young public policy professionals from state institutions and policy-oriented research centers from the CEI region.

The meeting served as a platform for expert-level discussions and exchange on the most pressing issues concerning Central and South-Eastern Europe.

The five-day event capitalised on a wide range of formats to leverage the participants’ diverse vantage points and collective wisdom to derive a strategic outlook for the post-COVID development perspectives ahead of the economies and societies.



PROJECTS FINANCED BY THE AUTONOMOUS REGION FRIULI VENEZIA GIULIA (ARFVG)

The CEI-ES has established a close cooperation with the ARFVG with the aim to develop relations between the FVG 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 FVG international links and reinforcing the role of the Region in the Adriatic-Ionian macro-regional strategy, as well as to developing new economic relations with the Balkans and the Danube area, and the countries bordering the Black and Baltic Seas. The CEI's longstanding experience in promoting regional cooperation as well as the solid experience in managing EU projects 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 included in agreed Joint Work Programmes (JWPs), with a total value of about 1 million EUR in 2021. The projects and cooperative actions implemented in 2021 are outlined below:

Title	CEI-ES role	Implementa- tion date	PoA objective/s	SDGs
Project WB6 Facility	CEI-ES Implementing partner	September 2018 - December 2021	1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.5	8, 17
Project SILK2FVG plus	CEI-ES Implementing partner	May 2018 – June 2022	1.1, 1.2, 2.1	8, 9, 17
Joint Work Programme 2019 - 2021	CEI-ES Implementing partner	January 2019 – June 2021	1.1, 2.2, 2.5, 2.6	3, 8, 17
Joint Work Programme 2020-2022	CEI-ES Implementing partner	January 2020 – June 2022	1.1, 1.5, 2.2, 2.5, 2.6	3, 8, 12, 17



ANNEXES

ANNEX 1

Calendar of Events of the Montenegrin CEI Presidency 2021

Date	Place	Event
24 February	Online	1 st Meeting of the CEI Committee of National Coordinators (CNC)
27 May	Online	2 nd Meeting of the CEI Committee of National Coordinators (CNC)
15 June	Online	Parliamentary Committee Meeting
22 June	Online	3 rd Meeting of the CEI Committee of National Coordinators (CNC)
23 June	Online	Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the CEI Member States (MFA Meeting)
8 October	Hybrid (Trieste and online)	Ministerial Conference on Environment
11 October	Hybrid (Trieste and online)	4 th Meeting of the CEI Committee of National Coordinators (CNC)
15 October	Herceg Novi	Parliamentary Assembly Meeting
22 October	Hybrid (Budva and online)	Ministerial Conference on Transport
12 November	Online	Kick-off Meeting of the CEI Local Dimension
2 December	Budva	4 th Meeting of the CEI Committee of National Coordinators (CNC)
3 December	Hybrid (Budva and online)	Meeting of the Heads of Government of the CEI Member States (CEI Summit)
2-3 December	Budva	Economic Forum

ANNEX 2

Staff of the CEI-ES

CEI-Executive Secretariat

Executive Level

Roberto Antonione <i>Secretary General</i>	Overall management of the CEI activities.
Antal Nikolett <i>Alternate Secretary General (until 30 September)</i>	Overall management of the CEI activities. CEI Economic Dimension.
Nina Kodolja <i>Deputy Secretary General</i>	Overall management of the CEI activities. Institutional relations.
Zoran Jovanović <i>Deputy Secretary General</i>	Overall management of the CEI activities. CEI Parliamentary and Local Dimensions.

Executive staff

Lidija Arsova <i>Senior Executive Officer</i>	Liaison with Member States (CNC and CEI Presidency); External relations; Preparation of CNC meetings, MFA Meetings and CEI Summit; Coordination of Annual Report and Plan of Action.
Barbara Fabro <i>Senior Executive Officer</i>	Coordination of CEI activities in the areas of intercultural cooperation and media, including Cooperation Activities and Feature Events in these areas; CEI Parliamentary Dimension; CEI SEEMO Award for Outstanding Merits in Journalism and other CEI Prizes/Awards.
Alessandro Lombardo <i>Senior Executive Officer</i>	Head of Programme - Unit for EU Projects; management of EU projects including related financial administration; Coordination of CEI activities in the areas of scientific cooperation, science diplomacy and innovation, including Cooperation Activities in these areas; CEI Executive Secretariat's financial management.
Tania Pibernik <i>Senior Executive Officer</i>	Communication and media relations including CEI website's news, social media and CEI newsletter; English reviser/copy-editor of CEI website, publications and official documents; corporate image.
Paola Plancher <i>Senior Executive Officer</i>	Supervision of procedural requirements and administrative evaluation of CEI Cooperation Activities.
Slavena Radovanovic <i>Senior Executive Officer</i>	Administrative and financial support within the cooperation with ARFVG; Cooperation Activities in the areas of Climate and People Empowerment; activities related to the CEI Youth Agenda; coordination of Young Officials from CEI Member States and of intern recruitment.

Administrative staff

Roberta Milano <i>Senior Administrative Officer /Accountant</i>	Head of Human Resources; responsible for Personnel Administration and General Services; Accounting; Cooperation on budgetary issues: overall financial planning, monitoring and reporting of Italian Contribution (L. 286/1997 and 142/2003) and overall financial planning, monitoring and reporting of contributions provided by the Region FVG (LR 11/1996, 18/2011 and 19/2000).
Loretta Brcic <i>Senior Administrative Officer</i>	Assistance to SG; assistance to accounting; assistance to administration of personnel issues; supervision on relations with suppliers; supervision on conference services.
Antonio Monteduro	Archives and Protocol; switchboard; management of the official CEI e-mail ad-

ANNEX 2

Staff of the CEI-ES

Frida Cottic <i>Administrative Officer</i>	Assistance to SG; travel desk for SG, ASG and DSG; relations with suppliers and MFA with regards to ID cards, passports and plates; administrative support to CEI-ES; overall office maintenance; hospitality and conference services, including internal meetings; errands.
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Francesca Taliani de Marchio <i>Senior Secretary</i> (until 31 December)	Detached to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy.
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Office of the CEI Fund at the EBRD

Elisabetta Dovier <i>Programme Manager</i>	Management of the CEI Fund at the EBRD: Technical Cooperation Programme and the Know-how Exchange Programme.
Simona Mameli <i>Executive Officer</i> (until 15 February)	Liaison Officer at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy. Support in the management of the CEI Fund at the EBRD.

Unit for EU Projects

Anna Marconato <i>Programme Manager</i>	Head of Finance and Administration – Unit for EU Projects; Project Manager of ICARUS, PRE-RIGHTS.
Gian Matteo Apuzzo <i>Project Manager</i>	Project Manager of ACSELL, Digital Health Europe, TAAFE; CEI-ES Focal Point of the CEI-WHO Task Force in response to COVID-19 emergency.
Ugo Poli <i>Project Manager</i>	Focal Point Migrations; Focal Point Anti-corruption.
Paolo Dileo <i>Project Manager</i>	Project Manager of INTER-CONNECT, SUSTOURISMO, MIMOSA.
Peter Canciani <i>Project Manager</i>	Project Manager of ETIP-B-SABS 2, FORTIS.
Alice Pappas <i>Project Officer</i>	Day-to-day support to project management and reporting.
Ana Sinkovic <i>Project Officer</i>	Day-to-day support to project management and reporting.
Ana Aligrudić	Day-to-day support to project management and reporting.
Stefania Silvestri <i>Project Officer</i> (as of 1 August)	Day-to-day support to project management and reporting.

Cooperation with ARFVG

Carlo Fortuna <i>Programme Manager</i>	Project Manager of SILK2FVG, WB6Facility.
Lisa Chen (Chen Qiong) <i>Project Officer</i> (until 31 July)	Day-to-day support to project management and reporting (SILK2FVG).

ANNEX 3*Contributions to the Budget 2021 of the CEI-ES*

Type of contribution	€
Contribution from Italian MFA (including contribution to Cooperation Fund) + special contribution to project "Active Young Citizens ed. 2021/2022"	1,280,053.00
Contribution from Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia (ARFVG), including for CEI-ARFVG Projects	249,093.68
Contribution from Member States to CEI Cooperation Fund (excluding Italy)	284,030.00
EU Grants and Refunds, in the framework of EU-funded projects	€ 1,083,739.36
Other: special contribution from Adriatic Ionian Initiative to project "Active Young Citizens ed. 2021/2022"	€ 50,000.00

ANNEX 4

TC Projects Approved in 2021

No.	Earmark document No.	Title	Country of operation	Sector of operation	CEI Grant (€)	Expected related investment (EUR million)
1	50008295	Green City Action Plan for Brcko District	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Municipal infrastructure	275,000	21.0
2	50008332	Green Cities Framework 2 Window 2 Sarajevo Public Transport e-Mobility – Project Implementation Support	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Transport	430,000	20
3		Green Cities Framework 2 Window 2 Sarajevo Public Transport e-	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Transport	70,000	
4	50008403	Chisinau Solid Waste – Project Implementation Support Ser-	Moldova	Municipal infrastructure	300,000	23
5	To be assigned	Port of Brcko – Corporate Development Plan	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Transport	250,000	12.4
6	To be assigned	Market Assessment for the Uptake of Climate Technologies in the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North	Regional	Energy/Climate	150,000	n/a
7	To be assigned	Improving Corporate Governance in Familyowned Enterprises	Serbia	SME support	40,000	n/a

ANNEX 5*KEP Projects Approved in 2021*

No.	Reference No.	Title	Country of know-how provider institution	Country of know-how recipient institution	Total project cost (€)	CEI grant (€)
1	304.4.015-21	"Bridging the Culture Gap", Novi Sad 2022 - 95th International Session of the European Youth Parliament	Czech Republic, Slovenia, Italy	Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Serbia, Ukraine	98,700	15,000
2	304.4.022-21	To enhance the institutional and regulatory framework for organic food production in Albania	Italy	Albania	80,000	40,000
3	304.4.026-21	Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Constitution and EU Accession. An Academic Platform for Discussing the Options	Italy	Bosnia and Herzegovina	79,960	39,700
4	304.4.030-21	Exchange programme on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities between Albanian and Croatian Institutions of human rights and anti-discrimination	Croatia	Albania	30,369	15,175
5	304.4.044-21	FORKITS - FOod expeRtise and Know-how exchange on technology transfer between Italy and Serbia	Italy	Serbia	43,570	21,785
6	304.4.046-21	Italy-North Macedonia knowledge exchange in conservation and innovative management of cultural heritage	Italy	North Macedonia	50,470	25,020
7	304.4.072-21	MARteFund: developing cooperation in the creative sector in the Western Balkans through replication of an Italian expertise in project design and fundraising	Italy	Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia	79,920	39,930

ANNEX 6

Cooperation Activities Approved in 2021

No.	Reference No.	Title	Institution	Country	Total Cost (€)	CEI Grant (€)
1	302.5.2021.001	CEI Round-Table Discussions at Vilenica	Slovene Writers' Association	Slovenia	63.651,00	10.000,00
2	302.5.2021.002	South East Europe Media Forum SEEMF	South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO)	Serbia	111.305,00	14.950,00
3	302.5.2021.003	(RE)BUILDing Together - REBUILT	Chamber of Economy of Montenegro	Montenegro	42.770,00	15.000,00
4	302.5.2022.005	The Tenth International Conference on Radiation in Various Fields of Research (RAD 2022 Conference)	RAD Centre	Serbia	57,800.00	10,000.00
5	302.5.2022.001	Trieste Film Festival 33 / Feature Launch Workshop at Eastweek / Midpoint Shorts / TSFF Academy	ALPE ADRIA CINE-MA ASSOCIATION	Italy	482,000.00	8,000.00
		CEI Award in the framework of Trieste Film Festival (Feature Event)				3,000.00
6	302.5.2022.011	WHEN EAST MEETS WEST Co-Production Forum	FVG Audiovisual Fund	Italy	185,670.00	8,000.00
7	302.5.2022.013	Theatre for social activation of vulnerable social groups (working title)	Slovene National Theatre Maribor	Slovenia	31,256.62	10,000.00

ANNEX 6

Cooperation Activities Approved in 2021

No.	Reference No.	Title	Institution	Country	Total Cost (€)	CEI Grant (€)
8	302.5.2022 . 023	EESTEC Spring Congress 2022	Electrical engineering students' European association – Local committee Belgrade	Serbia	35,718.45	10,000.00
9	302.5.2022 . 007	Equal Pay Day conference going international!	Business & Professional Women CR z.s.	Czech Republic	117,390.00	10,000.00
10	302.5.2022 . 017	Tenth CEI Venice Forum for Contemporary Art Curators	Trieste Contemporanea. Dialogues with the Art of Central Eastern Europe.	Italy	34,455.00	10,000.00
11	302.5.2022 . 022	DisCo 2022: Empowering Digital and Entrepreneurial Competences through E- learning	Centre for Higher Education Studies	Czech Republic	27,229.00	10,000.00
12	302.5.2022 . 006	12th CEI Regional Forum for Health, Wellness & Spa Industry	Cluster Wellness Serbia	Serbia	19,116.90	6,000.00
13	302.5.2022 . 002	Ecosystems services, pressures, payments, and actions – motivation required in south-eastern CEI countries (ESS - MotSE)	Faculty of Agriculture, University of Novi Sad, Serbia	Serbia	29,970.00	10,000.00
14	302.5.2022 . 019	Final Conference of V4+WB RMA Network project	HETFA Research Institute Ltd.	Hungary	43,808.00	10,000.00
15	302.5.2022 . 008	International Conference “Geo-Hazards and Climate Change in Geoparks”	Civil Association Stena - Stenae Demir Kapija	North Macedonia	30,080.00	10,000.00

ANNEX 6

Cooperation Activities Approved in 2021

No.	Reference No.	Title	Institution	Country	Total Cost (€)	CEI Grant (€)
16	302.5.2022 . 018	The Conference "Strengthening Women Entrepreneurs in Rural Tourism for post COVID-19 period"	Center for Tourism Research and Studies	Serbia	32,910.00	8,000.00
17	302.5.2022 . 016	European Youth Network on Intercultural Dialogue and Inclusion	European Youth Network for Creativity and Innovation	Bulgaria	31,200.00	8,000.00
18	302.5.2022 . 021	Promotion & support EUSDR National & Priority Areas Coordinators meeting & discussion, answering CEI AP objectives (PANACEA)	State Scientific & Technical Centre for inter-sectorial & regional problems of the Environmental Safety and Resource Conservation (Centre	Ukraine	27,660.00	8,000.00
19	302.5.2022 . 020	Building resilience of the Gen Z and Millennials	NEW LEADERS FOR STABILITY AND TRUST	Serbia	42,050.00	8,000.00
20	302.5.2022 . 009	Upcelerator fully remote idea stage accelerator for startups in Eastern Europe.	"Dreamups" Innovation and Entrepreneurship Accelerator	Moldova	51,499.60	8,000.00
21	302.5.2022 . 010	Prague Pre-Presidency Conference 2022	Institute of International Relations	Czech Republic	35,250.00	8,000.00
22	302.5.2022 . 012	Transfer of knowledge between local public authorities and citizens on climate friendly best practices of solid waste management through the use of a mobile application technology	Public association Women in Sustainable Development of Moldova (WiSDOM association)	Moldova	28,000.00	7,000.00



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