

Annual Report of the Secretary General 2025



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 as key prerequisites for stability, social cohesion, security and prosperity in the CEI region.

One central mission: supporting European integration and promoting sustainable development through regional cooperation.

The CEI - Executive Secretariat is based in Trieste (Italy).

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Introduction

The year 2025 marked a period of strengthened commitment and strategic engagement for the Central European Initiative (CEI). Amid complex geopolitical dynamics and global challenges — including security concerns, disinformation and hybrid threats — the CEI reaffirmed its role as a platform for promoting solidarity, dialogue and concrete action.

At the core of the CEI's operational framework is the CEI-Executive Secretariat, which has strengthened its structure and enhanced its capacity to deliver on the Organisation's strategic goals. Under the leadership of the new **Secretary General, Franco Dal Mas**, and supported by a revitalised team of three Deputy Secretaries General representing Eastern, Central and Southeastern Europe, the Secretariat

has upheld the CEI's mission as a driver of multilateral diplomacy and project management in support of European integration and sustainable development.

In parallel, the Serbian CEI Presidency, in close coordination with the Secretariat, has advanced regional cooperation in support of these overarching objectives. Its focus on key priorities — European integration, sustainable development, artificial intelligence, connectivity, labour migration and local dimension — set a forward-looking agenda aligning regional ambitions with broader European and global goals. By fostering innovation and political dialogue, the Presidency helped address emerging challenges and seize new opportunities.

Throughout the year, the CEI strengthened engagement with Member

“ *In 2025, the CEI reaffirmed its role as a platform for promoting solidarity, dialogue and concrete action - combining political advocacy with practical results that benefit citizens across Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe.* ”

Franco Dal Mas
Secretary General, Central European Initiative

States, has consolidated partnerships with European, international and regional institutions, and advanced cooperation in key areas such as connectivity and good governance.

In 2025, the CEI also reaffirmed its unwavering solidarity with Ukraine, standing firmly by its side amid ongoing Russian aggression. It combined political advocacy with concrete measures to support the country's recovery, reconstruction and EU integration, reflecting its enduring commitment to regional stability, resilience and shared prosperity.

Moreover, the overarching commitment to sustainable development guided the Organisation's actions across multiple fields—from youth and gender equality to science diplomacy, health, and the environment—reflecting its integrated approach to regional cooperation, resilience and inclusiveness.

A central element underpinning these actions was the effective use of its financial instruments — notably the CEI Cooperation Fund, financed by all Member States, and the CEI Fund

at the EBRD, financed by Italy. These mechanisms continued to act as catalysts for achieving common objectives by combining networking, knowledge exchange, targeted technical assistance and capacity development. In 2025, they mobilised significant resources for initiatives across CEI countries, particularly benefiting non-EU CEI members, fostering connectivity and economic integration, institutional resilience and people empowerment.

The Funds' activities also complemented EU-financed projects implemented by the CEI-Executive Secretariat, further enhancing the Organisation's ability to connect policy dialogue with tangible results on the ground, while also drawing on the resources and support of the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region for CEI-backed initiatives.

This report presents the Organisation's main activities undertaken during 2025. It documents progress across political, institutional and operational dimensions, demonstrating how collective commitment and multilateral cooperation reinforce the CEI's role in the evolving European and global landscape.

Presidency



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

1. Relations with Member States

In 2025, the Secretariat's engagement with the Member States gained renewed momentum through strategic dialogue and closer cooperation at both political and institutional levels. Bilateral contacts have intensified with the Serbian Presidency and

across all Member States, strengthening partnerships and identifying new collaboration opportunities. Internally, with Member States' support, the CEI-Executive Secretariat has further been reinforced to better implement the CEI's strategic priorities.

Serbian CEI Presidency 2025



The Secretariat's activities began with a mission to Belgrade on 5 February (see photo 1 and 2), where Secretary General Franco Dal Mas met Foreign Minister Marko Đurić to exchange views on the programme and priorities of the **Serbian**

CEI Presidency. Discussions focused on European integration and sustainable development, regional cooperation, support for Ukraine and enhancing the CEI's political role in addressing current challenges.



In this context, the Serbian CEI Presidency's priorities, presented at the first CNC Meeting in Belgrade on 27 February, emphasised the following: advancing EU accession for non-EU countries; promoting the responsible and ethical development of artificial intelligence through enhanced research cooperation and appropriate legal frameworks; improving regional connectivity to boost competitiveness; and advancing fair labour mobility by protecting workers' rights, addressing brain drain, and ensuring a well-regulated flow of the workforce. Several high-level and expert events were organised around these priorities, with the support and active participation

of the Secretariat, alongside meetings held within the frameworks of the Governmental, Parliamentary, Economic, and Local Dimensions (See Calendar of events of the Serbian CEI Presidency 2025).

The Serbian CEI Presidency also pursued contacts with the EU institutions, focusing on aligning activities with EU priorities and promoting synergies. Additionally, it leveraged the CEI's observer status at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) through an increased institutional presence.

Throughout the year, the Secretariat and the Presidency worked closely to advance the programme and priorities through frequent exchanges and high-level meetings between them, including the mid-term meeting between Secretary General Dal Mas and Minister Đurić in Belgrade on 9 September.

Regular contacts between the Secretariat and the Presidency ensured the smooth implementation of activities. All initiatives undertaken under the Serbian CEI Presidency has reinforced the spirit of cooperation and solidarity at the core of the CEI.



- *European integration*
- *Sustainable development*
- *Artificial intelligence*
- *Connectivity*
- *Labour migration*
- *Local dimension*

Serbian Priorities



Calendar of events

of the Serbian CEI Presidency 2025

Date	Place	Event
27 February	BELGRADE	First meeting of the Committee of National Coordinators
15 April	BRUSSELS	Second meeting of the Committee of National Coordinators with representatives of EU institutions
20-21 May	BELGRADE	Meeting of the CEI Parliamentary Committee
22-23 May	BELGRADE	Ministerial Conference on artificial intelligence <i>Preparing for the AI Era</i>
5 June	TRIESTE	Third meeting of the Committee of National Coordinators
June-December	ONLINE	Digital exhibition on cultural heritage of the CEI region
22 July	NEW YORK	Presentation on sustainable development on the margins of the UN High Level Political Forum
26 September	NEW YORK	Informal meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs
15 October	TRIESTE	Fourth meeting of the Committee of National Coordinators
23 October	BELGRADE	CEI Local Dimension Forum <i>The Local Dimension of the CEI: Strengthening Platforms for Local and Regional Authorities in Europe</i>
6-7 November	BELGRADE	Inter-Ministerial Conference on Labour Migration <i>Regular Pathways and Sustainable Labour Markets</i>
4-6 November	BELGRADE	Meeting of the CEI Parliamentary Assembly
22-25 November	BELGRADE	Wine Vision Fair with participation of the Chambers of Commerce
25 November	BELGRADE	Fifth meeting of the Committee of National Coordinators
26 November	BELGRADE	Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs
4 December	NIŠ	CEI-TCT Panel <i>Integrated solutions for sustainable passenger and freight transport</i>

Dialogue and Exchanges with Member States

Secretary General Dal Mas launched a series of initiatives to renew and strengthen relations with the Member States, fostering cooperation and dialogue. Institutional missions were conducted across capitals.

These visits featured meetings with Foreign Ministers and State Secretaries, aimed at consolidating bilateral relations and defining a pragmatic cooperation agenda based on mutual trust and shared priorities. They also helped identify concrete steps to address common

challenges and further enhance the CEI's role as an effective platform for regional cooperation.

1 Meeting with Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Slovakia, Juraj Blahár, Bratislava, 13 February

2 Meeting with Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Security Policy, and Energy Security of Hungary, Péter Sztáray, Budapest, 14 February

3 Meeting with Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of Albania, Igli Hasani, Tirana, 24 February

4 Meeting with Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro, Ervin Ibrahimović, Podgorica, 2 April

5 Meeting with Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia, Gordan Grlić-Radman, Zagreb, 8 April

6 Meeting with Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Slovenia, Tanja Fajon, Ljubljana, 5 May





7



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7 Meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Elmedin Konaković, Sarajevo, 15 May

8 Meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of North Macedonia, Tímcho Mucunski, Skopje, 20 May

9 Meeting with State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, Radek Rubeš, Prague, 11 June

10 Meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria, Georg Georgiev, Sofia, 10 September

11 Meeting with Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland, Henryka Mościcka-Dendys, Warsaw, 13 November

12 Meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Andrii Sybiha, Kyiv, 19 November

13 Meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania, Oana-Silvia Țoiu, Bucharest, 10 December



13

Italy, as host country, reaffirmed its commitment through several high-level contacts, including visits to the CEI-Executive Secretariat in Trieste from Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Antonio Tajani (26 March - see photo 1), State Secretary Maria Tripodi (24 March - see photo 2), Director General for Europe and International Trade Policy Nicola Verola (13 June - see photo 3), and President of the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee of Italian

Senate Stefania Craxi (4 September). The Italian National Coordinator, Sem Fabrizi visited the Secretariat to meet the team (10 January - see photo 4). Discussions with Italian counterparts highlighted Italy's strong support for the CEI, in particular in the context of EU enlargement and engagement on geopolitical challenges. Minister Tajani notably emphasised the importance of advancing EU enlargement with the Western Balkans and the CEI's role in fostering dialogue and peace.



*Visit from Minister Tajani
to CEI-Executive Secretariat*



Further exchanges took place at the Secretariat in Trieste with the Ambassadors of Slovakia, Karla Wursterová, and Albania, Anila Bitri Lani (22 May and 29 September, respectively - see photo 5 and 6), and in Rome with the Ambassador of Romania, Gabriela Dancău (18 July - see photo 7) contributing to the overall reinforcement of cooperation with Member States.

Through these efforts, the Secretariat has consolidated its role as a constructive regional actor, promoting dialogue, European integration, sustainable development and support for Ukraine.



*Visit from Senator Craxi
to CEI-Executive Secretariat*

Secretariat



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

CEI-Executive Secretariat

To better advance strategic priorities, the CEI-Executive Secretariat has been strengthened and reorganised with the support of the Member States.

The current leadership, besides the Secretary General, includes three Deputy Secretaries General representing Eastern, Central and Southeastern Europe—Ambassadors Yurii Mushka (Ukraine), and Zsuzsanna Király (Hungary) and Ambassador Ivana Pejović (Serbia)—reflecting the CEI's principles of unity, inclusiveness and regional balance. Their extensive diplomatic experience enhances the Secretariat's capacity to deliver on its mandate and foster cooperation across the region.

The activities of the Secretariat strongly supported the Serbian CEI Presidency in the preparation and organisation of activities carried

out within its programme, while maintaining close cooperation with all Member States across the CEI Governmental, Parliamentary, and Economic Dimensions. At the same time, it continued to strengthen the CEI Local Dimension and the CEI Youth Agenda, as well as partnerships with EU and international and regional organisations. Its work was guided by the priorities and objectives of the CEI Plan of Action 2024–2026. In this framework, the Secretariat has implemented initiatives at both institutional and project level, fostering practical cooperation, new ideas, and innovative solutions. Through these activities, the CEI-ES continued to play an active role in regional cooperation, multilateral diplomacy, and programme and project management. The composition of the CEI-ES and its budget for 2025 are represented in Annex 1 and 2, respectively.

*Deputy Secretaries General.
From left: Amb. Yurii
Mushka, Amb. Ivana Pejović,
Zsuzsanna Király*



Working methodology



2. Advancing CEI Mission through Diplomacy, Institutional Relations and People-to-people Exchanges

In 2025, the CEI advanced its political mission and strategic priorities through active diplomacy and strengthened institutional relations. Central to this effort was the CEI Governmental Dimension, led by the Serbian CEI Presidency and coordinated by the Secretariat, which ensured structured engagement with Member States,

European institutions and other international and regional partners.

The Secretariat pursued the objectives by combining political advocacy with concrete initiatives, reinforcing the CEI's role as a platform for dialogue, cooperation and development across Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe.

European Integration and Relations with EU

The CEI has enhanced its engagement with European institutions to support the **European integration of non-EU CEI Member States**. The CNC Meeting held in Brussels (see photo 1) on 15 April provided an opportunity for representatives of the European Commission closely involved in the Enlargement process—namely Valentina Superti, Director for the Western Balkans (DG NEAR) and Thomas Hagleitner, Head of Unit for Enlargement Strategy Coordination, as well as Maja Bakran Marcich, Deputy Director-General at DG Mobility & Transport (DG MOVE)—to hear



directly from CEI EU candidate countries about their commitments and from CEI EU members about their support for non-EU partners, while also gaining insight into the CEI's specific contribution to the European integration process.

2



“The CEI is a crucial bridge between EU and non-EU countries. By supporting the European integration of the Western Balkans, Moldova and Ukraine, the Organisation helps strengthen citizens’ trust in institutions, advance regional connectivity, and foster reforms that bring these countries closer to the European family. Investing in integration also means investing in a prosperous, stable, and secure Europe.”

Complementing these institutional exchanges, Secretary General Franco Dal Mas participated in the Friends of the Western Balkans meetings in Rome (10 February - see photo 2), attended by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Kaja Kallas, and the European Commissioner for Enlargement, Marta Kos, and in New York (24 September - see photo 3), attended by European Parliament President Roberta Metsola. He also took part in a working dinner of the Political Directors for the Western Balkans of the “Quint” countries—the United States, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and Italy—held in Rome on 16 June. The Secretary General’s participation in these events represented both a symbolic and practical reaffirmation of the CEI’s commitment to the European perspective of the region, a goal strongly supported by Minister Tajani. On these occasions, Secretary General Dal Mas reiterated the importance of integrating the Western Balkans into the European family and underscored the CEI’s active role in supporting this process

The informal Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in New York on 26 September, held on the margins of UNGA, served to take stock of progress achieved in the context of EU enlargement and to identify remaining challenges—such as connectivity and security gaps—along with possible ways to address them within the CEI.

These discussions continued at the meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (MFA Meeting) in Belgrade on 26 November, which, together with accompanying side events involving all Member States, provided a strategic opportunity to jointly define the next steps of the CEI agenda in the broader context of EU enlargement, fostering regional cooperation and addressing pressing challenges.

At the same time, the CEI undertook tangible initiatives that promote regional connectivity and good governance providing a solid foundation for advancing European integration and strengthening regional cooperation.

3



CONNECTIVITY

The intensified efforts of the CEI-Executive Secretariat in the field of **connectivity** have already yielded visible results. Particular emphasis was placed—through both political engagement and project activities—on for example the rehabilitation of the Trieste–Ljubljana–Zagreb–Belgrade railway line. The Secretariat’s activities on this initiative build on the findings of the study on rail connectivity along the Trieste–Belgrade route, developed in cooperation with the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region and the Politecnico di Milano, and published in 2024. As a central transport axis, it contributes to improving mobility, trade and people-to-people connections across Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe, and could also serve as a model for replicable cross-border infrastructure cooperation within the Western Balkans–Eastern Mediterranean Corridor of the TEN-T Network.

A follow-up online meeting on the reactivation of the passenger rail connections along this route, bringing together transport and foreign ministry officials from Italy, Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia, as well as railway representatives and the TCT, was held online on 14 May, paving the way for further actions.

Building on this momentum, initial reflections were also launched on a possible CEI engagement in broader connectivity frameworks, including the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC). This initiative could open new opportunities for connecting Europe — and particularly the CEI region at its core — with key global partners. The topic was discussed during the CNC Meeting held in Trieste on 15 October, with the participation of Italy’s Special Envoy for IMEC, Ambassador Francesco M. Talò.

Cooperation with the Transport Community (TCT) has likewise been further reinforced. The Director of the TCT, Matej Zakonjšek, addressed the

CNC Meeting held in Trieste on 5 June (see photo 1), reaffirming the long-standing partnership between the two organisations. Moreover, a dedicated joint CEI–TCT meeting on connectivity in Niš (Serbia) on 4 December was included among the key activities for the year, providing a platform to exchange views on shared priorities, explore synergies between initiatives, and identify joint actions to advance sustainable and integrated transport solutions across the region.



“Supporting connectivity means supporting European integration and shared development. Connectivity is not only about moving goods and people – it builds bridges between people and communities, strengthens economic ties, and fosters dialogue and mutual understanding. Through its activities, the Organisation is committed to promoting efficient, sustainable, resilient, and inclusive connectivity across the region.”





GOOD GOVERNANCE

Strengthening **good governance** and the rule of law remains essential to ensure that connectivity and integration efforts translate into lasting progress. In this regard, the Falcone–Borsellino Programme has emerged as a key avenue for the CEI to deepen its engagement in legal and judicial diplomacy. The

challenges such as hybrid threats and disinformation. These phenomena undermine democratic institutions, social cohesion and regional stability, calling for coordinated responses that combine resilience-building, information integrity and strategic communication.

At the Warsaw Security Forum (29–30 September - see photo 2), where the



initiative promotes cooperation among Member States to advance transparency, accountability and institutional resilience, while fostering the exchange of best practices in combating organised crime and corruption.

In the field of anti-corruption, a renewed Memorandum of Understanding with the Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative (RAI) was signed in Sarajevo in May (see photo 1).

The agreement formalises joint actions, encourages inclusive and coordinated regional approaches, and provides a framework for continued collaboration in this field, reinforcing the CEI's contribution to strengthening the rule of law and good governance across the region. In this framework, the Secretariat, represented by DSG Ivana Pejović, participated in the celebration of 25 Years of RAI and working Meeting with RAI Partners in Sarajevo on 6-7 November.

Finally, **security** has emerged as an overarching priority, with growing attention devoted to evolving



CEI participated as a sponsor through its Cooperation Fund, Deputy Secretary General, Yuriy Mushka represented the Organisation as an institutional partner. During the CEI-supported roundtable “The Role of Media in the Democratic Shield: Between Anarchy, Political Control and Foreign Interference,” the CEI's commitment to promoting media freedom, democratic values and regional cooperation as essential pillars of security and stability in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe was reaffirmed.

“ Good governance is a key enabler of European integration, stability, and sustainable growth. It relies on transparency, accountability, strong institutions, and effective cooperation among public authorities. Experience-sharing and peer-to-peer cooperation among countries are essential to promoting democracy, the rule of law, and sound administrative practices. Through its activities, the Organisation supports reforms and capacity-building efforts that contribute to more effective, inclusive, and citizen-oriented institutions. ”

Support for Ukraine

The CEI's commitment to Ukraine—both political and practical—was reaffirmed throughout the year. First and foremost, the Member States unanimously endorsed the nomination of Ambassador Yurii Mushka, a distinguished Ukrainian diplomat, as Deputy Secretary General (DSG) of the CEI-Executive Secretariat. This appointment came at a particularly meaningful time, symbolising the Organisation's continued solidarity with Ukraine and its recognition of the country's vital role within the CEI framework.

The CNC Meeting held in Trieste on 15 October provided an opportunity for Member States to take stock of the situation in Ukraine and to reaffirm their joint commitment to supporting its sovereignty, reconstruction, and European integration process.

“The CEI firmly stands by Ukraine, a Member State since 1996, and remains committed to supporting its recovery, resilience, and European future. Through concrete cooperation, capacity-building activities, and regional solidarity, the Organisation contributes to strengthening institutional capacities, rebuilding communities, and fostering long-term stability. Supporting Ukraine also means supporting a more united, inclusive, and resilient Europe.”

Similarly, the informal meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in New York on 26 September and the MFA Meeting in Belgrade on 26 November conveyed a strong, united message of solidarity with Ukraine, underscoring the CEI's dual role as a platform for political dialogue and a facilitator of practical cooperation. Furthermore, while in New York, the Secretary General also participated in the 5th Crimea Platform Summit, convened by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on the margins of UNGA.

Between these key moments, Secretary General Franco Dal Mas undertook a



mission to Kyiv to participate in the Fourth International Summit on Food Security on 19 November (see photo 1 and 2), upon the invitation of the Ukrainian Foreign Minister, Andrii Sybiha, and the Minister of Economy, Environment and Agriculture, Oleksii Sobolev. On this occasion, he held bilateral consultations with Minister Sybiha to explore new avenues for cooperation between the CEI and Ukraine, particularly in areas of reconstruction, sustainable development and economic recovery.

Earlier, Secretary General Dal Mas had also met with Minister Sybiha on the sidelines of the Ukraine Recovery Conference – URC (11–12 July, Rome - see photo 3 and 4). Minister Sybiha expressed appreciation for the CEI's consistent support since the onset of Russian aggression, noting its role as a strategic regional platform for Ukraine's European integration and a partner in projects implemented through the EBRD.

Indeed, during the URC itself, the Secretary General Dal Mas participated

in the signing of a strategic EBRD-backed project for the city of Ternopil. The project, funded by the EBRD and supported through technical assistance from the CEI Fund at the EBRD financed by Italy, stands as a concrete example of locally driven cooperation in action.

Secretary General Dal Mas also took part in high-level discussions and thematic sessions of the URC, including a panel

on local and regional partnerships for reconstruction, where he stressed the importance of coordinated international action to ensure a resilient and inclusive recovery.

The Organisation remains committed to mobilising its platforms, instruments, and partnerships to assist Ukraine in achieving lasting peace, resilience and prosperity within the European family.



Parliamentary Dimension

role in advancing the Organisation's priorities, reinforcing dialogue among national parliaments and supporting EU integration and regional cooperation initiatives.



Fostering a more structured dialogue between political and legislative actors remained essential for ensuring coherent and effective action towards shared goals. In this regard, particular focus was placed on strengthening synergies between the parliamentary and governmental levels.

In 2025, the **CEI Parliamentary Dimension** continued to play a pivotal

On 16 January, Secretary General Dal Mas met in Rome with the Italian delegation to the CEI Parliamentary Assembly, led by Hon. Salvatore Caiata (see photo 1). The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss the CEI's strategic agenda and avenues for parliamentary engagement in supporting the Organisation's political mission.

On 6–7 February, the CEI Parliamentary Dimension General Committee on Economic Affairs convened in Matera (Italy), chaired by Hon. Caiata (see photo 2). Delegates discussed the CEI's role in promoting post-war reconstruction in Ukraine, underlining the importance of coordinated parliamentary support for recovery and reconstruction projects.

The Meeting of the CEI Parliamentary Committee was held in Belgrade on 20–21 May (see photo 3) under the Serbian CEI Presidency. Parliamentary delegations from all Member States gathered under the theme "Partnership

within the framework of the Central European Initiative: Support for EU Enlargement". Discussions focused on reaffirming parliamentary backing for the EU integration of candidate countries and exploring concrete measures to strengthen regional cooperation.

Before that, during the CNC Meeting in Brussels on 15 April, Hon. Caiata participated to showcase the CEI's multistakeholder approach to European integration, highlighting the role of the CEI Parliamentary Dimension to representatives of the European Commission.

Furthermore, on 4 September, the Secretariat welcomed Senator Stefania Craxi, President of the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee of the Italian Senate, for an institutional visit. The meeting underscored Italy's ongoing commitment to the CEI and provided an occasion to exchange views on parliamentary support for the Organisation's initiatives, including European integration, regional connectivity, and the CEI's contribution to peace, stability, and development in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe. This visit was preceded by a resolution, tabled by Senator Stefania Craxi, aimed at strengthening the Central European Initiative adopted by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Italian Senate on 1 July. The resolution recognises the CEI's strategic role in regional cooperation, EU enlargement, and support for Ukraine.

Finally, the CEI Parliamentary Assembly held in Belgrade on 4-5 November (see photo 4) underscored the Dimension's role in fostering dialogue among Member States, focusing on the ethical use of Artificial Intelligence to support sustainable urban development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This meeting also showcased its adaptability in addressing emerging challenges and strengthening regional cooperation.

Overall, these engagements reaffirmed the CEI Parliamentary Dimension as a vital platform for political dialogue, consolidating Member State support, and linking parliamentary action to the Organisation's broader diplomatic and results-driven goals.

Building on this framework, the Italian Parliament (Chamber of Deputies)



continued to implement an initiative supporting the European integration process by facilitating the exchange of good practices in administrative and legislative matters. This was carried out within the framework of a project financed by the CEI Know how Exchange Programme (KEP), titled "CEI Support to Strengthening the Parliaments of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia and Ukraine in the Context of EU Accession." The project was officially kicked off on 28 July. This initiative is particularly significant not only for the breadth of its partnership and the topics addressed, but also as a meaningful example of how inter parliamentary cooperation is being effectively strengthened and showcased within the CEI framework.



Economic and Local Dimensions

On the economic front, several activities fell within the scope of the **CEI Economic Dimension**. The Secretariat participated in the Italy–Croatia Business Forum in Zagreb in May, where it presented the findings of the study on rail connectivity along the Trieste–Belgrade corridor.

The CEI also participated as an institutional partner in the Balkan Economic Forum held in Belgrade on 30–31 October, with DSG Zsuzsanna Király representing the Secretariat (see photo 1 and 2). The event provided an opportunity for exchanges with regional stakeholders on economic development and cooperation priorities.

Moreover, the Serbian CEI Presidency involved the Chambers of Commerce of CEI Member States in the Fourth International Wine Fair “Wine Vision by



Open Balkans”, held in Belgrade from 22 to 25 November. The fair, one of the largest events of its kind in the region, served as a platform for promoting regional trade and investment opportunities, while enabling the Chambers to exchange views and engage in B2B meetings.



Regarding the **CEI Local Dimension**, which remains a cross-cutting priority, the Serbian CEI Presidency underscored its importance through the event “The Local Dimension of the CEI: Strengthening Platforms for Local and Regional Authorities in Europe,” held in Belgrade on 23 October. The Secretariat was represented by DSG Ivana Pejović. The event showcased CEI tools tailored to local needs, demonstrating how they enhance service delivery, support EU-aligned reforms, and translate regional commitments into tangible benefits for communities.



Closely linked to locally driven cooperation efforts and following up on the URC 2025, the activities included the participation of DSG Yurii Mushka, representing the Secretariat, at the event supported by the CEI Cooperation Fund and organised by the European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA) in Lviv on 26–27 November (see photo 3 and 4). The two-day forum, titled “Post-URC 2025 – Capitalisation and the Way Forward: Decentralisation and Local Governance at the Centre of Ukraine’s Reconstruction”, aimed to translate high-level commitments into practical outcomes through matchmaking activities between Ukrainian municipalities and their European peers—also within the CEI framework—and to strengthen partnerships and governance innovation for Ukraine’s recovery through the direct engagement of local authorities.



Sustainable Development and Relations with UN

At the heart of the CEI's work in 2025 was the promotion of sustainable development in line with the UN 2030 Agenda and its SDGs. In this framework, the Minister without portfolio in the Government of the Republic of Serbia responsible for gender equality, prevention of violence against women, and the economic and political empowerment of women, Tatjana Macura, addressed the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in New York in July. Representing the Serbian CEI Presidency, Minister Macura spoke during the session titled "Regional Perspectives on SDG Implementation"

on 22 July, accompanied by DSG Ivana Pejović. Her intervention provided visibility to the CEI's regional approach to advancing the SDGs and reaffirmed the CEI's role as a facilitator of inclusive and sustainable development.

Engagement with the UN continued during the 80th session of UNGA (see photo 1 and 2), where the Secretariat participated in a number of meetings aimed at advancing cooperation in areas aligned with the CEI's mandate and strategic priorities.

Moreover, priority initiatives across youth, science diplomacy, gender equality, culture, media, health and environmental sustainability were pursued throughout the year, reflecting a comprehensive and cross-sectoral approach to regional development and cooperation.

“Regional cooperation is essential for advancing sustainable development and shared prosperity. Addressing common challenges requires coordinated action across sectors such as governance, connectivity, energy, environment, innovation, and people-to-people cooperation. By promoting partnerships, knowledge-sharing, and inclusive growth, the Organisation contributes to building more resilient societies and supporting a sustainable and balanced future for the entire region.”





YOUTH

In the area of **youth**, the CEI has strengthened its engagement through closer cooperation with the Council of Europe's youth structures, following the granting of observer status at the intergovernmental committees of the Council of Europe's Youth Department in 2024. In this context, DSG Zsuzsanna Kiraly represented the Secretariat at the 74th and 76th Plenary meeting of the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) and the 52nd and 53rd meeting of the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ), held respectively in April in Budapest and in November in Strasbourg. The Secretariat also participated in the 10th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth, held in La Valletta on 8–9 October in the framework of the Maltese CoE Presidency. The Conference presented a key opportunity to renew commitments, exchange best practices, and advance concrete actions to strengthen the resilience of our democracies through enhanced youth participation – in particular by including young people's perspectives in policymaking.

Additionally, the CEI continued its collaboration with UNICEF through the UPSHIFT Programme, promoting youth skills development through formal and

non-formal education aimed at fostering youth employability and transition to work. In this regard, the Secretariat organised the 2nd Regional Workshop “UNICEF-CEI on UPSHIFT: Scale Models and Integration of Digital Tools in Supporting UPSHIFT Delivery in National Systems” in Trieste on 21 November (see photo 1 and 2), the activity was supported by the CEI Cooperation Fund.

In 2025, the CEI also engaged young professionals across the region through education, empowerment and policy initiatives supported by the CEI Cooperation Fund. These included the 25th edition of the Summer Seminar for Young Public Policy Professionals (9–13 June, Albena, Bulgaria)—a CEI Flagship Event 2025—and the Young Bled Strategic Forum (29–31 August 2025, see photo 3 and 4). It gathered emerging leaders from the region to discuss values and priorities in international relations, as well as other activities financed by the CEI Cooperation Fund and focused on youth empowerment, capacity-building, and the development of future-oriented skills.



SCIENCE DIPLOMACY

Science diplomacy remained central to the CEI's agenda, with efforts aimed at strengthening regional cooperation, fostering knowledge exchange and supporting capacity development across Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe.

2025 was pivotal for science diplomacy in Europe and beyond, marked by the first ever UNESCO Global Ministerial Dialogue on Science Diplomacy in Paris (March) and the European Commission's expert report "A European Framework for Science Diplomacy". Within this context, the CEI, through the Secretariat, advanced a regional approach along two tracks: 1. Capacity building, through the organisation of the Advanced Training Course Challenges and Perspectives of Science Diplomacy in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe (Trieste, Gorizia, 25-28 November - see photo 1 and 2), in cooperation with the University of Trieste and the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region, which hosted around 30 trainees from several CEI Member States; and 2. Networking and advocacy: co-chairing the EU Science Diplomacy Alliance (with the University of Trieste) until June 2026, the largest European networking and knowledge hub in the field. It also coorganised events on strategic topics, such as the workshop The Role of Science Diplomacy in Water Supplies (Venice, 21 March), in cooperation inter alia with UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe.

Moreover, the Serbian CEI Presidency organised the Ministerial Conference "Preparing for the AI Era" in Belgrade on 22-23 May (see photo 3 and 4) to discuss the rapid development of Artificial Intelligence and its regional implications. The event, attended by DSG Ivana Pejović, reaffirmed the CEI's role as a platform for science diplomacy and regional cooperation, promoting responsible and inclusive approaches to AI governance across Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe.



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CULTURAL COOPERATION

At the same time, the CEI continued to promote, through the CEI Cooperation Fund, **cultural cooperation** and support young talents through its cultural initiatives, thereby strengthening regional identity and collaboration. Highlights included: Ana Svetel from Slovenia receiving the CEI Award for Young Writers at the Vilenica International Literary Festival, the CEMAN Orchestra Summer Tour featuring young musicians from CEI countries, the 5th CEI Piano Forum in Sacile (Italy) and the CEI Award at Trieste Film Festival (see photo 1 and 2), bestowed to Polish director Damian Kocur for his film “Under the Volcano”.

In addition, the CEI also supported cultural cooperation and people-to-people exchanges through activities financed by the CEI Cooperation Fund. These initiatives brought together cultural practitioners, artists, young professionals, and local stakeholders, while promoting intercultural dialogue, cultural heritage, creativity, and regional cooperation across the CEI area.



GENDER EQUALITY

On **gender equality**, the “Equal Pay Day 2025 Conference” - a CEI Flagship Event 2025 supported by the CEI Cooperation Fund - was held in Prague on 25–26 March (see photo 1 and 2). It brought together international experts and participants to exchange best practices on gender equality, mentoring and professional development. The CEI supported the participation of women professionals from non-EU Member States, providing them with opportunities for networking, mentorship, and practical learning to strengthen their leadership and advocacy capacities.

The Regional Policy Dialogue on Good Governance and Women’s Leadership in Southeast Europe, held on 1 April in Sarajevo (see photo 3), gathered over 70 high-level participants from the region and the EU. Organised by RAI and co-funded by the CEI, the event highlighted the importance of gender-responsive governance for sustainable development and institutional resilience. Discussions focused on women’s leadership in advancing good governance, their role in peace and security, and the challenges they face in decision-making, while identifying opportunities for enhanced regional cooperation.



MEDIA FREEDOM

The CEI also remained active in promoting **media freedom**, ethical journalism and resilience against disinformation. Media-focused initiatives aimed to enhance professional standards, cross-border collaboration and the protection of independent media. A key event in this regard was the South-East European Media Forum - a CEI Flagship Event 2025 supported by the CEI Cooperation Fund and organised together with South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO) and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) Media Programme for SEE - held in Chisinau on 17–18 November (see photo 1), which brought together journalists, policymakers and media experts to discuss strategies for safeguarding press freedom and reinforcing democratic values across the region.

Moreover, in 2025, the CEI–SEEMO Award for Outstanding Merits in Investigative Journalism (see photo 2) once again recognised the essential

contribution of independent media to transparency, accountability and democratic resilience in the region amidst complex challenges faced by the journalists, the assessment was jointly conducted by the CEI and its long-standing partner SEEMO. The Award in the category of Professional Journalists was shared among Yevheniia Motorevska (The Kyiv Independent, Ukraine), Bogdana Lazarova (Bulgarian National Television, Bulgaria), Roman Anin (IStories / OCCRP, Moldova) and Anuška Delić (Ostro, Slovenia), while the Young Professional Journalists category recognised Daniel Kotecký (Deník Referendum, Czechia) and Edoardo Anziano (IrpiMedia, Italy). The winners were also invited to take part in the South East Europe Media Forum in Chisinau on 17–18 November, providing an opportunity to exchange views and reinforce cooperation in support of quality, independent journalism.



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HEALTH

In the field of **health**, cooperation with key international partners has further been consolidated. On 10 April, Secretary General Dal Mas held an institutional exchange with the WHO Regional Director for Europe Hans Henri P. Kluge to further advance the ongoing collaboration in the framework of the WHO Roadmap for Health and Well-being in the Western Balkans (2021–2025) and enhance health initiatives as a strategic priority for the CEI.

Aligned with this vision, health remains firmly anchored in the Organisation's role as a platform for stakeholder coordination and inclusive policy dialogue. This commitment was

reaffirmed by DSG Ivana Pejović at the 75th Session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe, held in Copenhagen on 28–30 October.

Collaboration with the South-Eastern Europe Health Network (SEEHN) was also reinforced. The Secretariat participated in the 48th SEEHN Plenary Meeting in Sofia on 17–18 June, and in a Regional Workshop on Healthy and Active Ageing in Bar, Montenegro, on 17–19 September (see photo 1 and 2), with DSG Pejović taking part in policy exchanges and discussions on joint initiatives aimed at improving public health and well-being. This last activity was supported by the CEI Cooperation Fund.



ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

In 2025, the CEI actively advanced **environmental sustainability** through initiatives focused on resilience, the green transition, marine protection and rural development.

The ResiliEnhance Platform Meeting in Udine, Italy (27–28 October) gathered experts, UNESCO Chairs and representatives from international organisations including UNESCO and UNDRR to exchange knowledge and advance disaster risk reduction and resilience strategies in Central and Eastern Europe.

The Secretariat also facilitated the “Green and Smart Ports” workshop in Trieste (16 October), which brought together port authorities, universities, regional stakeholders and training centres to explore sustainable maritime practices, skills development and the green transition in the Adriatic–Ionian region.

The CEI further demonstrated its leadership in maritime environmental protection through the ADRIA 2025 multinational exercise held in Dubrovnik on 1–2 October (see photo 1 and 2), thanks to its involvement in a CEI-run EU-funded project ASAP (Adriatic Sensitive Areas Protection Mechanism, co-financed by the Interreg IPA ADRION programme). Organised in cooperation with European Agencies (European Maritime Safety Agency – EMSA, European Fisheries Control Agency– EFCA, and FRONTEX), national maritime authorities and regional partners, the exercise focused on enhancing preparedness and response capacities for marine pollution incidents in the Adriatic–Ionian region. It gathered representatives from CEI Member States, the European Commission, UNEP/MAP, and REMPEC. It promoted coordinated action and interoperability among maritime and environmental agencies to fight against accidental pollution. ADRIA 2025 also contributed to shaping joint frameworks for marine protection, sustainable maritime transport, and blue economy development in line with EU and international standards.

Moreover, in 2025, two regional events held in Durrës (Albania - see photo 3) on 19 February and in Kotor (Montenegro) on 25 June brought together policymakers, researchers, and local stakeholders to promote sustainable maritime development and

enhance cooperation on environmental challenges. These events, co-organised by the CEI-ES and attended by the offices of the CEI National Coordinators of the two countries, were held as part of different complementary CEI-supported initiatives: TRUE BLUE, which supports training and research to unlock and enhance the potential of a sustainable blue economy for regional cooperation and EU integration, funded through the CEI Fund at the EBRD’s KEP; TREASURE,



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Interreg Euro-MED funded project combating pollution in and around ports; and the above-mentioned ASAP.

In parallel, the CEI supported sustainable rural development through a study visit for practitioners from North Macedonia to Friuli Venezia Giulia (7–10 April - see photo 4), organised in collaboration with AREA Science Park based in Trieste and regional partners, thanks to its involvement in a CEI-run EU-funded project RIBES (Regional Inclusive Bio-based Entrepreneurship Solutions). The



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delegation met with Local Action Groups, visited innovative rural projects and exchanged best practices in agriculture, the circular bioeconomy, sustainable tourism, and the use of EU IPARD III funds—fostering knowledge transfer and capacity building at the local level.

Beyond this, the CEI also brought together numerous practitioners and stakeholders to address sustainability-related challenges through activities financed by the CEI Cooperation Fund.

These initiatives focused on areas such as renewable energy, rural tourism, and other topics linked to sustainable and inclusive development.

Collectively, these initiatives reflect the CEI's continued commitment to advancing regional cooperation for environmental sustainability, resilience, and green growth—linking policy dialogue with practical action and international collaboration.

4



Regional Partnerships

In addition to its alignment with the EU and the UN in achieving strategic objectives—supporting European integration and promoting sustainable development—the CEI, through its Secretariat, has continued to actively pursue regional partnerships.

In this context, specialised organisations such as the TCT, RAI and SEEHN played a key role, with which the CEI, through the Secretariat, further strengthened cooperation. These partnerships enable the Organisation to leverage expertise, coordinate initiatives and support the implementation of regional projects across multiple sectors—from connectivity and governance to health and environmental sustainability.

At the same time, broader coordination was pursued with **regional organisations** such as the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative (AII), the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), fostering regular contacts and mutual participation. In this context, DSG Ivana Pejović represented the Secretariat at the RCC Annual Meeting and the Meeting of the SEECP Ministers of Foreign Affairs in Tirana on 16 June (see photo 1 and 2), as well as at the 25th Anniversary of the AII in Ancona on 27 June, thus reinforcing the Organisation's engagement in regional dialogue and joint initiatives.

The Secretariat also reaffirmed its commitment to regional connectivity by participating in the conference organised by the Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce (Forum AIC) on “Enhancing Road and Rail Connectivity in the Adriatic–Ionian Region”, held in Portorož, Slovenia, on 18–19 June. DSG Zsuzsanna Király took part in the discussions focusing on promoting efficient and environmentally sustainable transport across the region.

The Secretariat also took part in the 8th Workshop for Young Diplomats from the BSEC Member States, titled “Building Tomorrow: Project Implementation for Sustainable Growth in the BSEC Region”, held in Istanbul on 10–12 December, contributing to discussions on economic cooperation, sustainable development and regional stability.



These collaborative efforts were further consolidated during the 19th Coordination Meeting of Regional Organisations held in Sarajevo on 3–4 December (see photo 3 and 4), which confirmed shared objectives, strengthened operational links, and laid the groundwork for continued multilateral collaboration in the years ahead.



3. CEI Funds, Programmes and Instruments

Beyond its diplomatic and political efforts, the CEI employs several operational tools to achieve concrete results. These include the CEI Cooperation Fund, financed

by all Member States; the CEI Fund at the EBRD, financed by Italy; EU-funded projects; and initiatives supported by the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region.

While the Funds themselves do not operate as traditional investors seeking financial returns, the projects and activities they finance generate long-term societal, institutional and knowledge-based benefits. These initiatives focus on sharing expertise and best practices to enhance governance, infrastructure and development strategies across Member States, fostering mutual

benefits through knowledge exchange and capacity building. The greatest return is seen in sustainable progress, stronger institutions and deeper regional cooperation.

The CEI is often directly engaged in the supported activities through the Secretariat, National Coordinators, or other implementing partners.



CEI Cooperation Fund

The **CEI Cooperation Fund** plays a key role in generating knowledge spillovers that advance the Organisation's mission as a platform for the exchange of experiences and best practices, particularly between EU and non-EU Member States. Through the activities it supports, the CEI promotes cooperation and dialogue among its countries, enabling them to learn from one another and to build effective partnerships on shared priorities. This way, the Organisation continues to serve as a bridge for collaboration across political, economic, and social spheres, strengthening mutual understanding and regional cohesion.

The 47 **Cooperation Activities** approved in 2024 for implementation in 2025 took place over the year. Many of these initiatives, of strategic relevance to the CEI mission, added value through their visibility and outreach across Member States. High-profile events such as the Warsaw Security Forum and the Young Bled Strategic Forum highlighted the CEI's role in fostering dialogue on key regional and global challenges.

Several **Prizes and Awards** were made possible through the Cooperation Fund, recognising and encouraging creativity, innovation, and commitment—particularly among young professionals from Member States.

Thanks to the CEI Cooperation Fund, several initiatives under the **Presidency Programme** were implemented, focusing on themes such as artificial intelligence, local development, and labour migration.

The Fund further supported **cooperation with international and regional partners**, including joint activities with UNICEF on youth engagement and with the Transport Community (TCT) on connectivity.

In addition, 30 activities amounting to € 457.617,39 were approved in 2025 for implementation in 2026 (Annex 3 – Cooperation Activities approved in 2025).



€450K+

CEI
Financing

22%



30

Activities
Approved



€2M

Overall
Total Amount



1



2



3



4



5

CEI Fund at the EBRD

The CEI Fund at the EBRD, financed by Italy, embodies the Organisation's core principle of cooperation. It supports two programmes: the Technical Cooperation (TC) Programme and the Know how Exchange Programme (KEP). While many TC projects are linked to infrastructure development, they are also best understood as instruments for knowledge transfer and capacity building. These initiatives combine funding with technical expertise, strengthening institutional and operational capacities that enable beneficiary countries to address challenges and promote sustainable growth.

To showcase the achievements of both the TC and KEP Programmes, a Roadshow across the Western Balkans was organised in 2025, with events held in Belgrade, Skopje, Tirana, Podgorica and Sarajevo. The Roadshow highlighted concrete results of CEI–EBRD cooperation and the potential for deepening collaboration in sectors crucial for reforms and EU alignment. Presentations from ministries, public companies, municipalities, agencies and universities showcased progress in infrastructure, energy, environment, SME development and public governance. Testimonials from beneficiaries of KEP capacity building initiatives further illustrated how knowledge transfer strengthens institutional capacities and regional cooperation. Overall, the Roadshow reaffirmed the shared commitment of the CEI, Italy and the EBRD to advancing sustainable development and integration across the Western Balkans.

1 *Belgrade, 6 May*

2 *Skopje, 7 May*

3 *Tirana, 8 May*

4 *Podgorica, 26 May*

5 *Sarajevo, 27 May*

The **Technical Cooperation (TC) Programme** in particular acts as a catalyst for investments by the EBRD and other financial partners, supporting the essential groundwork that precedes major infrastructure works. This includes assistance in developing legal and regulatory frameworks, advancing institutional reforms, and improving corporate governance standards. By ensuring that strategically important projects are properly prepared, the Fund helps them attract international financing. Supported activities include feasibility and pre feasibility studies, project implementation support, management training, capacity building and pre loan audits. In this way, the CEI also further strengthens its cooperation with the EBRD (see photo 1, left: Odile Renaud-Basso, EBRD President) while contributing to the implementation of concrete projects in strategic sectors. One example is the Ternopil Trolleybus Project in Ukraine, for which the EBRD approved a €10 million loan to the city of Ternopil, signed at the URC 2025 in Rome with the participation of the CEI (see photo 2). In this framework, the CEI supports the project through technical assistance activities linked to its preparation and implementation.

As regards the assignments approved in 2025, particular significance was attached to the commitment of €1 million for technical assistance under the Ukraine Energy Security Support Facility (ESSF), a dedicated programme through which the EBRD is helping SMEs, medium sized corporates, regional municipalities, small state owned companies, private households and housing associations in Ukraine to invest in decentralised energy generation, renewable energy and related storage solutions, as well as energy efficiency measures in residential, commercial and municipal buildings. The programme aims to strengthen the resilience of Ukrainian beneficiaries to both the immediate energy security risks posed by the war and the medium term impacts of climate change.

Alongside Ukraine, the Fund is financing the Circular Economy Regional Initiative (€200,000), which supports non EU CEI countries in adopting circular economy technologies and business models; assistance to JP Autoceste in Bosnia and Herzegovina through the Tunnel Prenj Corporate Development Programme (€400,000) to reinforce its financial and operational capacity for the delivery



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of Corridor Vc; and a programme in the Western Balkans, Fostering Food Quality and Competitiveness through Digitalisation (€388,450), aimed at improving food quality, traceability and market access for small agri food producers. In Albania, the Fund is assisting OSHEE, the country's electricity distribution operator, through Investment Planning Support (€130,000) to develop transparent methodologies aligned with EU standards, while in North Macedonia it is supporting preparatory work for the 100 MW Miravci wind farm through the Miravci Wind Power Project (€120,000), including wind resource measurement and feasibility studies.



€2.2M+

CEI Financing

Ratio 1:273



6

Projects Approved



€600M+

Overall Investment Potential Exceeding

Taken together, these initiatives approved in 2025 amount to over €2.2 million in CEI financing and are associated with an overall investment potential exceeding €600 million across the region (Annex 4 – TC assignments approved in 2025).

Alongside TC projects, the **Know how Exchange Programme (KEP)** - also financed by the CEI Fund at the EBRD - focuses on capacity building and institutional strengthening. The KEP connects institutions from EU CEI Member States willing to share their expertise with counterparts in non EU countries, helping to bridge development gaps and align systems with EU

standards and policies.

KEP grants are awarded through annual calls for proposals. In this framework, the CEI Fund committed over €550,000 in 2025 to co finance 15 projects, involving partners from EU CEI countries and beneficiaries from the Western Balkans, Moldova and Ukraine (Annex 5 - KEP projects financed with budget 2025).

These initiatives support European integration and resilience while addressing key priority areas including institutional development and good governance, digital transformation, energy and climate, environmental protection, innovation and scientific research.



€550K+

CEI Financing

~50%



15

Projects Approved



€1.1M

Overall Total Amount

Projects and Initiatives Supported by EU and Friuli Venezia Giulia Autonomous Region

Through its participation in **EU-funded projects**, the CEI-Executive Secretariat attracts resources that strengthen institutional and operational capacities, thereby advancing the Organisation's mission and fostering regional cooperation. These projects also create strong synergies with other CEI instruments, helping to map common challenges and test innovative, replicable solutions.

One of the key areas is connectivity. In this regard, the Secretariat is actively involved in several EU-funded projects focused particularly on sustainable mobility.

Complementing these efforts are projects aimed at harmonising policies and restoring ecosystems, showcasing how shared solutions can bridge jurisdictions and protect natural resources. Along the Adriatic coast, CEI-backed networks address accidental marine pollution and enhance transnational response preparedness—particularly through the ASAP (ADRIATIC SENSITIVE AREAS PROTECTION – MECHANISM) Project, led by the Secretariat and co-funded by the Interreg IPA ADRION Programme—while also fostering synergies with other projects and instruments.

The same goes for the CEI's work to empower local communities, especially in rural areas, by promoting sustainable agriculture and tourism and unlocking the potential of the circular bioeconomy and nature-based solutions. A number of projects implemented or completed in 2025 through various EU Programmes (e.g., BIOLOC, RIBES, and others where the Secretariat is a partner) reflect the consolidation of a multi-year strategic line of action and build on earlier projects and activities aimed at supporting a just, inclusive, and territorially balanced green transition. Collectively, these complementary initiatives demonstrate the CEI's sustained commitment to reinforcing the institutional and operational capacities of quadruple-helix stakeholders in its Member States and to ensuring that the circular bioeconomy becomes a coherent

policy lever for rural regeneration, sustainable growth, and enhanced regional cohesion.

Overall, the CEI was involved in 10 EU-funded projects financed from various EU Programmes in various areas, mobilizing additional resources (a total of €25 million, of which €2.8 million managed by the Secretariat) and reinforcing its role as a facilitator of European integration and sustainable development (Annex 6 EU-funded projects implemented in 2025).



In **cooperation with the Autonomous Region of Friuli Venezia Giulia (ARFVG)**, various activities implemented or promoted by the CEI-Executive Secretariat—including institutional initiatives and partnerships with other international and regional organisations such as WHO/Europe, TCT, as well as initiatives involving stakeholders from the Region acting as know-how donors in areas such as health, rural development, and climate resilience—are financed through funding provided by the Region.

The CEI's longstanding experience in promoting regional cooperation, combined with its expertise in managing EU-funded projects, provides a solid foundation for this collaboration. Within this framework, the Secretariat has developed structured cooperation with the Region through the implementation of several projects and joint initiatives carried out under agreed Joint Work Programmes (JWPs)—such as the

ResiliEnhance Platform, Green and Smart Ports, and various activities related to science diplomacy.

In 2025, the total value of these projects and cooperative actions amounted to approximately €300,000 (Annex 7 - FVG projects implemented in 2025).

The implementation of projects and activities funded by external sources, in particular by the EU and the ARFVG, has enabled the Secretariat to turn shared priorities into concrete regional events and actions and to establish a broad cooperative network with hundreds of stakeholders throughout the CEI area and beyond.

The full list of events under projects and initiatives funded by the EU and the ARFVG in 2025 is attached as Annex 8.

4. Future Outlook

In 2025, the CEI consolidated its international profile by strengthening political dialogue and project operations. With the Western Balkans, Moldova, and Ukraine at the core of its activities, the Organisation has

reaffirmed its role as a bridge for regional cooperation, knowledge exchange, and European integration, while providing steadfast support to Ukraine. The CEI-Executive Secretariat stood at the helm of these efforts.

Looking ahead, the Secretariat will build on this momentum by further broadening the CEI's role. Within this context, Trieste, home to the CEI-Executive Secretariat since 1996, is increasingly positioned as a strategic hub connecting the Mediterranean, Central Europe and the wider Eurasian space.

Future efforts will focus on deepening collaboration with European and international partners to address hybrid threats, enhance cyber resilience, and promote media literacy. By embedding security considerations into its broader agenda of connectivity, governance, and

sustainable development, the CEI aims to foster a safer, more resilient, and cohesive regional environment.

In 2026, the 30th Anniversary of the CEI-Executive Secretariat in Trieste will offer an opportunity not only to celebrate past achievements but also to renew the Organisation's strategic vision for Europe and beyond. The CEI will continue to act as a practical link between European institutions and global platforms—advancing regional stability, sustainable growth and a shared future founded on cooperation.

Annexes

Annex 1

Composition of the CEI-ES in 2025

Executive level

Franco Dal Mas, Secretary General (as of January 2025)

Zsuzsanna Király, Deputy Secretary General

Yurii Mushka, Deputy Secretary General (as of May 2025)

Ivana Pejović, Deputy Secretary General (as of April 2025)

Executive staff

Lidija Arsova, Senior Executive Officer - Governmental Dimension, External Relations

Barbara Fabro, Senior Executive Officer - Parliamentary Dimension, Culture, Media, Gender equality

Alessandro Lombardo, Senior Executive Officer - EU and FVG Project Management, Science Diplomacy

Tania Pibernik, Senior Executive Officer - Communications, Media Relations

Paola Plancher, Senior Executive Officer - CEI Cooperation Fund

Slavena Radovanovic, Senior Executive Officer - Youth Agenda, FVG Projects

Office for the CEI Fund at the EBRD

Elisabetta Dovier, Programme Manager of the CEI Fund at the EBRD

Programme/Project management staff

Anna Marconato, Senior Programme Manager - EU and FVG Project Management, Environmental protection

Paolo Dileo, Programme Manager (until August 2025) - EU Projects, Connectivity and sustainable mobility

Carlo Fortuna, Programme Manager - FVG Projects, EU Projects, Connectivity and sustainable mobility

Peter Canciani, Project Manager - EU Projects, Circular bioeconomy

Ana Sinkovic, Project Manager - EU Projects, Health

Ana Aligrudic, Project Officer - EU Projects

Gabriele Mingolla, Project Officer - EU Projects

Alice Pappas, Project Officer - EU Projects

Michelle Decock, Project Assistant - EU Projects

Silvia Sattolo, Programme Assistant - FVG Projects

Administrative staff

Loretta Brcic, Senior Administrative Officer – Administration, general service

Roberta Milano, Senior Administrative Officer – Accounting, administration

Frida Cottic, Administrative Officer – General service, administration

Internships

Aljoša Poljšak, Intern (as of June 2025)

Tommaso Del Frari, Intern (as of October 2025)

Annex 2

FINANCIAL REPORT 2025 of the CEI-ES (01 January/ 31 December 2025)

Revenues

€

Balance carried forward from previous year		1.714.534,98
Executive Secretariat account		184.139,54
Cooperation Fund account (allocated)		748.348,78
European Projects accounts (allocated)		706.577,25
Region AFVG Projects and Programmes account (allocated)		75.469,41
Contribution from Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (balance 2024 and 2025)	<i>Laws 286/1997 and 142/2003</i>	1.345.765,39
Contribution from Member States to CEI Cooperation Fund	<i>CEI MFA decision Tirana, 20.11.2024</i>	542.000,00
Italian contribution to CEI Cooperation Fund 2024		81.000,00
EU Grants and Refunds		287.062,36
SUSTANCE	<i>subsidy contract CE0100054</i>	28.727,90
GRETA	<i>subsidy contract CE0100118</i>	50.740,87
PRO.CARE.FULL	<i>subsidy contract CE0100187</i>	20.206,23
RIBES	<i>grant agreement 101134911</i>	0
TREASURE	<i>subsidy contract Euro-MED0200218</i>	54.897,92
GREENPATH	<i>subsidy contract CE0200886</i>	54.589,24
ASAP	<i>subsidy contract IPA-A-DRION00103</i>	68.473,19
BIOSTARS	<i>subsidy contract Euro-MED0401133</i>	800,00
NAMIRS	<i>grant agreement 101048578</i>	8.627,01
BIOLOC	<i>grant agreement 101060558</i>	0
GREEN ME UP	<i>grant agreement 101075676</i>	0
other projects	-	0
Contribution from Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia		568.153,82
LR 18/2011 DGR 384 (03.03.23) - contribution 2023		150.000,00
LR 18/2011 DGR 583 (30.04.24) - contribution 2024		90.000,00
LR 18/2011 DGR 1263 (19.09.25) - contribution 2025		240.000,00
LR 19/2000, DGR 1896 (01.12.23)		3.153,82
LR 11/1996		85.000,00
Reimbursement from CEI Fund at EBRD		6.749,04
Transfer from the Contingency account		42.400,56
Total revenues		4.587.666,15

Expenditures

€

EU projects (activities and events)		111.865,42
SUSTANCE	<i>subsidy contract CE0100054</i>	15.577,52
GRETA	<i>subsidy contract CE0100118</i>	11.270,58
PRO.CARE.FULL	<i>subsidy contract CE0100187</i>	16.715,94
RIBES	<i>grant agreement 101134911</i>	3.628,17
TREASURE	<i>Euro-MED0200218</i>	5.176,12
GREENPATH	<i>subsidy contract CE0200886</i>	21.224,81
ASAP	<i>IPA-ADRION00103</i>	11.623,14
BIOSTARS	<i>subsidy contract Euro-MED0401133</i>	1.886,59
BIOLOC	<i>grant agreement 101060558</i>	21.780,92
GREEN ME UP	<i>grant agreement 101075676</i>	1.445,67
other projects		1.535,96
Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia Joint Work Programmes and International Cooperation Projects		140.647,94
LR 18/2011 DGR 583 (30 April 2024) - contribution 2024		139.667,94
LR 19/2000 DGR 1896 (1 December 2023)		980,00
Cooperation Fund activities		473.743,47
Duty travels		135.138,39
Events, meetings, sponsorships		34.358,43
Sponsorships/awards/contributions in line with PoA		32.995,80
Institutional meetings/hospitality		1.362,63
Transfer of Italian contribution to Cooperation Fund (2024 and 2025)		162.000,00
Human resources		1.563.113,69
Utilities		44.728,74
Office operating costs		181.803,63
Transfer to Executive Secretariat account		42.400,56
	<i>Total expenditures</i>	2.889.800,27
	<i>Balance carried forward to 2026</i>	1.697.865,88

Annex 3

Cooperation Activities approved in 2025

Activity Name	Country	Applicant	Approved CEI contribution	Stream	PoA objective/s	SDG
Capacity Building for CSOs: Empowering Sustainable Regional Development in the Western Balkans	NORTH MACEDONIA	Branch of the Association of Local Democracy Agencies in Republic of North Macedonia Skopje	13.500,00 €	TA	2.1.	horizontal
Enhancing Media Education: Networking with EU Journalism Schools for Capacity Building	NORTH MACEDONIA	Citizens Association for research, analysis and public policy development EUROTINK - Center for European Strategies-Skopje	7.014,00 €	TA	2.11.	4, 8, 10, 16, 17
Enhancing Citizen Science by Leveraging Non-Professional and Professional Scientists for Collaborative Research in SEE Countries (ECSP-SEE)	SERBIA	Faculty of Agriculture, University of Novi Sad, Serbia	8.619,00 €	TA	2.7.	horizontal
The 4th Serbian Conference on Materials Application and Technology SCOM2025	SERBIA	Society for science development of Serbia	1.372,25 €	TA	2.10.	4 5 9
Securing Media Freedom in the Digital Future: Regional Public Service Media Training	BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	ERNO - Office of the Eurovision Regional News Exchange for South East Europe	13.500,00 €	TA	2.11.	4, 5, 9
Supporting young people and women, including Ukrainians, in the digitalization of rural tourism sector, exchange of experiences with other countries, respecting gender equality	MOLDOVA	Association of Professional and Business Women from Moldova	9.611,00 €	TA	2.2.	1 2 5 8 10 11 13 17
Promoting citizen involvement in circular economy and waste recycling in CEI countries by awareness raise, exchange of good practices and pilot activities	MOLDOVA	Public association Women in Sustainable Development of Moldova	6.875,00 €	FS	2.7.	11, 12, 13
FESTIVAL IDENTITY 2025 – workshops for film professionals from across Europe	CZECHIA	DOC.DREAM Services / Ji.hlava IDFF	13.194,00 €	TA	2.12.	n/a horizontal
Healthy and active ageing in the SEEHN MSs - WBs and beyond: challenges, progress and potential policies through economic lens	OTHER	South-eastern Europe Health Network Secretariat (SEEHN Secretariat)	13.500,00 €	TA	2.3.	3, 8, 17
DAREFUL - Diatoms protection	NORTH MACEDONIA	CSO Ekovita	7.665,00 €	TA	2.7.	4, 8, 13

Activity Name	Country	Applicant	Approved CEI contribution	Stream	PoA objective/s	SDG
Equal Pay Day conference going international! IV.	CZECHIA	Business & Professional Women CR z.s.	13.885,00 €	TA / Flagship Event	2.2.	4, 5, 8, 10
Promoting young digital nomads to protect nature and enhance sustainable tourism in vulnerable rural areas (PRODIGINET)	NORTH MACEDONIA	NGO Stena Stenae	6.022,50 €	TA	2.8.	5, 8, 11, 13
Environmental issues and media in South East Europe: discussing challenges and fostering collaboration in the framework of the EU Enlargement	ITALY	Center for International Cooperation/Balkans Caucasus Transeuropa Observatory	6.354,00 €	TA	2.7.	7, 13, 15
NETWORKS OF MUSIC	ITALY	Palmanova Music Academy	10.129,70 €	TA	2.12.	n/a horizontal
Post Medieval Adriatic Trade Routes and their Mediterranean and Atlantic links	CROATIA	International Centre for Underwater Archaeology in Zadar	3.685,50 €	TA	2.12.	4, 14, 17
20th International Summer School "Sustainable Energy and Environmental Policy"	BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	Regional Education and Information Centre for Sustainable Development in South-East Europe	12.622,50 €	TA	2.5.	13
The Regional Policy Dialogue on Good Governance and Women Leadership in Southeast Europe	OTHER	Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative Secretariat	15.000,00 €	TA	2.1.	5, 16
TRIESTE FILM FESTIVAL AND WHEN EAST MEETS WEST: TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS FOR YOUNG TALENTS AND FILM PROFESSIONALS	ITALY	ALPE ADRIA CINEMA	15.000,00 €	TA	2.12.	4, 5, 17
"Building the Capacity of the National Convention on the European Union in the Republic of North Macedonia: CEI's Contribution to Strengthening the Rule of Law"	NORTH MACEDONIA	European Movement in the Republic of North Macedonia	13.387,50 €	TA	2.1.	16
Bratislava Industry Days 2025	SLOVAKIA	Association of Slovak Film Clubs	9.000,00 €	TA	2.12.	n/a horizontal

Activity Name	Country	Applicant	Approved CEI contribution	Stream	PoA objective/s	SDG
BalCARE Youth Forum	ITALY	COSPE - Cooperation for the Development of Emerging Countries ETS	8.250,00 €	TA	2.2.	5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13
CERT FORUM (Central Europe Rural Tourism Forum)	SERBIA	Center for Tourism Research and Studies – CTRS	8.526,00 €	TA	2.8.	5, 8, 9, 11, 12, 15, 17
The potential of cargo bikes to transform last mile delivery in Tirana, Albania	ALBANIA	Active Mobility	13.496,40 €	TA	2.4.	3, 5, 11, 12, 13, 17
XI. International Kraft Conference - Futures Literacy	HUNGARY	Institute of Advanced Studies	6.941,90 €	TA	2.8.	11, 13, 17
CEI Round-Table Discussion at Vilenica and CEI Award for Young Writers	SLOVENIA	SLOVENE WRITERS' ASSOCIATION	10.500,00 €	TA	2.12.	n/a horizontal
Ambrela Development Forum 2025	SLOVAKIA	Platform for Development Organizations - Ambrela	10.318,00 €	TA	2.7.	1, 13, 17
Third Freelance Conference	NORTH MACEDONIA	Foundation for Sustainable Development Impact Foundation Skopje	4.125,00 €	TA	2.2.	4, 5, 8, 10
XXV Anniversary Summer Seminar for Young Public Policy Professionals "Strategic Vision for Central and Eastern Europe in Times of Continuous Uncertainty"	BULGARIA	Economic Policy Institute	14.965,00 €	TA	2.1.	16, 17
Hackathon on Health Literacy	SLOVENIA	Youth Health Organization	13.500,00 €	TA	2.3.	3, 4, 5, 10, 17
Summer Academy RETURN- Renewable Energy Toward Urban Resilient Nexus	BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	Centar for Energy, Energy Efficiency and Environment CEEO	9.000,00 €	TA	2.5.	4, 9, 13
20th international conference DisCo 2025: Empowering Futures - Leveraging Digital Technologies in Education for Youth, Women, and Vulnerable Groups	CZECHIA	Centre for Higher Education Studies	6.060,60 €	TA	2.2.	1, 4, 5
Young Bled Strategic Forum 2025	SLOVENIA	Centre for European Perspective	9.981,46 €	TA	2.2.	4, 5, 8, 10

Activity Name	Country	Applicant	Approved CEI contribution	Stream	PoA objective/s	SDG
10th STS Italia International Conference: "Technoscience for Good. Designing, Caring, and Reconfiguring" (Milan, June 11-13, 2025)	ITALY	Italian Society of Science and Technology Studies (STS Italy)	13.262,00 €	TA	2.10.	3 5 10 13 17
Sustainable Gender-Responsive Futures -International GRB Forum	NORTH MACEDONIA	CENTER FOR RESEARCH AND POLICY MAKING	8.206,00 €	TA	2.7.	5 10 11 13 16 17
XIII Spring School on Clinical Engineering: Challenges for Digital Health Integration in Europe	ITALY	SSIC-HECE (Higher Education in Clinical Engineering) of the University of Trieste	9.027,00 €	TA	2.3.	3
CEI Piano Forum 2025: GO! Borderless	ITALY	PIANO FVG	3.850,00 €	TA	2.12.	4
Post-URC 2025 Local Authorities and Civil Society Forum	ITALY	ALDA Italy	25.000,00 €	FS / Flagship Event	2.1.	11, 17
Media Freedom vs Challenges to Democracy: Shaping the Solution for a More Resilient Broadcasters? — Warsaw Security Forum 2025	POLAND	Fundacja im. Kazimierza Pułaskiego	13.500,00 €	TA	2.11.	4 10 16
Upcelerator fully remote idea stage accelerator for startups in Eastern Europe.	MOLDOVA	The Accelerator for Innovations and Entrepreneurship "DreamUps"	10.487,55 €	TA	2.9.	4 8 9 17
10th Central European Symposium on Plasma Chemistry (10th CESPC)	ROMANIA	National Institute for Laser, Plasma and Radiation Physics	13.464,00 €	TA	2.7.	4 6 7 13 15 17
Rebuild Ukraine Ambassadors Lab	OTHER	Schwarzkopf Foundation Young Europe (European Youth Parliament)	13.733,50 €	FS	2.2.	7 13
Land-related conflict resolution strategies for sustainable rural development	UKRAINE	Land Management Institute of National Academy of Agrarian Sciences of Ukraine	4.617,00 €	TA	2.8.	1 2 11 15 16
XIX South East Europe Media Forum (SEEMF)	SERBIA	South East Europe Media Organisation -SEEMO	19.990,00 €	TA / Flagship Event	2.11.	4 5 16
Youth Guarantee - Assessment of Youth Employment	SERBIA	National Youth Council of Serbia	10.499,30 €	TA	2.2.	1 4 5 8 10 17
Memory and identity research lab	POLAND	Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw	13.750,00 €	FS	2.12.	4 16

Activity Name	Country	Applicant	Approved CEI contribution	Stream	PoA objective/s	SDG
Two Open Weeks of Plavo Theatre 2025 (Within the framework of the program 30 Years of Plavo Theatre)	SERBIA	Plavo Theatre - theatre laboratory	6.170,50 €	TA	2.12.	12 16 17
Ministerial CEI Conference – Preparing for the AI era	SERBIA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia and Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia	11.500,00 €	PRES	2.10.	
MFA lunch NY	SERBIA	MFA Serbia	20.000,00 €	PRES	n/a	
CEI Forum “CEI Local Dimension: Platform for Cooperation of Local and Regional Government in Europe”	SERBIA	Permanent Conference of Cites and Municipalities of the Republic of Serbia/ Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia	1.000,00 €	PRES	2.8.	11, 16
MFA meeting	SERBIA	MFA Serbia	25.110,00 €	PRES	n/a	
TCT – CEI Panel on connectivity: Integrated solutions for sustainable passenger and freight transport	UNICEF OFFICE FOR INNOVATION AND CEI – EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT	UNICEF Office for Innovation and CEI – Executive Secretariat	15.000,00 €	IO	2.4.	9, 11
2nd Regional CEI-UNICEF Workshop on UPSHIFT: Scale Models and Integration of Digital Tools in Supporting UPSHIFT Delivery in National Systems	SERBIA	Presidency and Transport Community Secretariat	15.000,00 €	IO	2.2.	4, 8, 10

Annex 4

TC assignments
approved in 2025

No.	Assignment name	Country of operation	Sector of operation	Value €	Expected related investment (€ million)
1	Circular Economy Regional Initiative - Technical Assistance for adopting circular technologies and processes, and strategies	REGIONAL	Finance, business	200,000	Up to 30
2	Tunnel Prenj – JP Autoceste Corporate Development Programme	BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	Transport	400,000	Up to 300
3	Fostering food quality and competitiveness through digitalisation	REGIONAL	Agribusiness	388,450	Not applicable
4	SOEs Management Assistance Reform and Transformation (SMART) – “Distribution Code update and Investment Planning support to OSHEE”. Component 2: support with Investment Planning for OSHEE	ALBANIA	Energy/ Climate	130,000	80
5	Ukraine Energy Security Support Facility (ESSF)	UKRAINE	Energy/ Climate	1,000,000	40
6	Miravci Wind Power Project - Wind resource measurement and Energy yield assessment	NORTH MACEDONIA	Energy/ Climate	120,000	150
TOTAL				2,238,450	600

Annex 5

KEP Projects financed with budget 2025

No.	Reference number	Project name	Country of know-how providers	Country of know-how recipients	Total project cost (€)	CEI grant (€)
1	304.4.2025.001	Applying Artificial Intelligence to the Electricity Sector in the Balkans	Italy	Regional	80,000	40,000
2	304.4.2025.005	CEI for Albania: a Blueprint for a modern, EU-Compliant Business Register to support EU integration and economic development	Italy	Albania	102,952	39,926
3	304.4.2025.010	CEI Support to Hydrogen Strategy Development and Know-How Transfer for Bosnia and Herzegovina	Croatia	Bosnia and Herzegovina	80,000	40,000
4	304.4.2025.012	Integration of Data and Approaches for Seismic Hazard assessment in CEI regions - IDASH	Italy, Slovenia, Croatia	Regional	87,765	39,999
5	304.4.2025.026	ALIGN-AL Albania–EU Data Protection Alignment	Italy	Albania	79,000	39,500
6	304.4.2025.027	Raising public and stakeholder awareness on the importance of water protection and pollution prevention in North Macedonia	Croatia	North Macedonia	79,928	39,400
7	304.4.2025.031	CEI support for Bridging Borders: Strengthening Regional Capacity for Moldova's EU Integration through Know-How Exchange (BRIDGE2EU)	Romania, Italy	Moldova	39,187	19,320
8	304.4.2025.035	DeepTech Capacity Building for EU-Aligned Innovation in Moldova	Romania	Moldova	82,000	40,000
9	304.4.2025.037	CEI support to regional development policy in the context of the EU integration of the Republic of Moldova by exchange of know-how with North-East and West Regional Development Agencies	Romania	Moldova	45,000	22,500
10	304.4.2025.040	European Bridges of Science and Knowledge: Capacity Building in Computational Approaches for Young Scientists	Slovenia	Regional	65,612	32,712
11	304.4.2025.042	BRIDGE – Strengthening EU Integration Capacities in Brčko District through Italian Know-How and Regional Cooperation	Italy	Bosnia and Herzegovina	87,615	39,965
12	304.4.2025.043	Technical assistance for the creation of the Albanian Development Bank - ADB	Italy	Albania	100,000	40,000

No.	Reference number	Project name	Country of know-how providers	Country of know-how recipients	Total project cost (€)	CEI grant (€)
13	304.4.2025.044	CEI Support to Taxation Policy Knowledge Transfer: Strengthening Public Revenues through Evidence-Based R&D	<i>Slovakia</i>	<i>Serbia</i>	80,000	40,000
14	304.4.2025.053	CEI support to regional exchange on climate risk adaptation in Moldova and Ukraine	<i>Poland, Italy</i>	<i>Regional</i>	80,000	40,000
15	304.4.2025.060	Designing better public services: Italian Serbian Exchange on User-Centred Digital Transformation	<i>UNDP, Italy</i>	<i>Serbia</i>	80,000	40,000
TOTAL (€)					1,169,059	553,322

Annex 6

EU Projects implemented in 2025

project name	implemen- tation date	EU Pro- gramme	area	role	total cost (€)	CEI budget (€)	PoA objective/s	SDGs
ASAP – Adriatic Sensitive Areas Protection – mechanism	01/09/2024 - 28/02/2027	Interreg IPA ADRI-ON	Environmental Protection	LP	€1.413.387	€231.209	2.7	3,8, 12,14, 15
BIOLOC - Biobased and social innovation to revitalise European local communities	11/10/2022 - 30/09/2025	Horizon Europe	Circular bio-economy	LP	€2.499.638	€428.750	2.6	1, 5, 7, 8,10, 12,13
GREEN PATH - Green mobility solutions for Pioneering Actions Towards a Healthy and sustainable commuting	01/05/2024 - 31/10/2026	Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE	Connectivity and Sustainable Mobility	PP	€2.365.017	€280.700	2.4	9,11
GREEN ME UP - GREEN bioMethane market Up-take	01/08/2022 - 31/07/2025	Horizon Europe	Circular bio-economy	PP	€1.999.059	€137.813	2.6	7, 9, 11, 12, 13
GRETA - Greening Regional Freight Transport in Functional Urban Areas	01/04/2023 - 31/03/2026	Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE	Connectivity and Sustainable Mobility	PP	€2.544.540	€268.890	2.4	9,11
PROCAREFUL - PRO.active CARE F.or U.sers L.ife	01/03/2023 - 28/02/2026	Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE	Health and Social Innovation	PP	€2.290.000	€226.400	2.3	3
RIBES - Regional Inclusive Biobased Entrepreneurship Solutions	01/03/2024 - 28/02/2027	Horizon Europe	Circular bio-economy	LP	€4.999.455	€548.750	2.6	1, 5, 7, 8,10, 12,13

project name	implemen- tation date	EU Pro- gramme	area	role	total cost (€)	CEI budget (€)	PoA objective/s	SDGs
SUSTANCE - Sustain- able public transport solutions and innovative governance schemes for improving connectivity in Central Europe	01/04/2023 - 31/03/2026	Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE	Connec- tivity and Sustainable Mobility	LP	€2.013.259	€314.130	2.4	9,11
BIOSTARS - Systemic circular bioeconomy solutions to support start-up and social driven innovation in rural areas	01/04/2025 – 30/06/2027	Interreg EUROMED	Circular bio- economy	PP	€1.500.000,00	€165.000,00	2.6	1, 5, 7, 8,10, 12,13
TREASURE - Testing novel environmen- tal quality measures in and around euro-med ports	01/01/2024 - 30/09/2026	Interreg EUROMED	Environ- mental Pro- tection	PP	€2.501.582	€233.450	2.7	3, 8, 12, 14, 15

Annex 7

FVG Projects
implemented in 2025

Project name	CEI-ES role	Implementation date	PoA objective/s	SDGs
Joint Work Programme 2024-2025	Implementing partner	July 2024 – December 2025	2.1, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8, 2.9, 2.10	3, 8, 12, 17
Project “The Community of Practice for international cooperation in FVG” (phase 2)	Implementing partner	July 2025 – June 2026	2.1	17

Annex 8

Events under projects and initiatives funded by the EU and the Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia 2025

Title	Organising institution(s)	Venue	Date	Source of funding
GRETA 1 st Permanent working group with external projects workshop	ITL – Institute of Transport and Logistics	Online	24 January	Interreg Central Europe
GRETA 2 nd Permanent Working Group with External Projects Workshop	ITL – Institute of Transport and Logistics	Online	28 January	Interreg Central Europe
TREASURE 3 rd Steering Committee Meeting	Durres Port Authority	Durres, Albania	18 February	Interreg Euro-MED
ASAP – TREASURE – TRUE BLUE Best practices on environmental protection in Albania	CEI-ES, OGS	Durres, Albania	19 February	Interreg IPA ADRION Interreg Euro-MED KEP
RIBES 3 rd General Assembly Meeting	CEI-ES	Online	17 March	Horizon Europe
PROCAREFUL Project Management and Steering Committee Meeting	Hungarian Economic Development Agency	Budapest, Hungary	20-21 March	Interreg Central Europe
GreenMeUp 6 th Project Meeting	DBFZ - German Biomass Research Center	Leipzig, Germany	24 March	Horizon Europe
ASAP Steering Committee meeting in Portorož	University of Ljubljana	Portorož, Slovenia	25 March	Interreg IPA ADRION
SUSTANCE 5 th Steering Committee Meeting	Institute for Transport and Logistics Foundation	Bologna, Italy	25-26 March	Interreg Central Europe
SUSTANCE Final Stakeholders' Roundtable	CEI-ES	Trieste, Italy	3 April	Interreg Central Europe
BIOLOC 6 th General Assembly Meeting	CEI-ES	Online	7 April	Horizon Europe
CEI-FVG JWP 2024-2025 Study visit "Rural development delegation from North Macedonia visits Friuli Venezia Giulia Region"	CEI-ES, Area Science Park	FVG Region	7-10 April	ARFVG
GRETA Steering Committee meeting	BKK Centre for Budapest Transport	Budapest, Hungary	9 April	Interreg Central Europe
GRETA 3 rd Permanent Working Group with External Projects Workshop	ITL – Institute of Transport and Logistics	Online	14 April	Interreg Central Europe

Title	Organising institution(s)	Venue	Date	Source of funding
GREENPATH Steering Committee meeting	CEI-ES	Trieste, Italy	16 April	Interreg Central Europe
GRETA - Online Workshop “Unlocking innovation in urban logistics: the role of stakeholders’ governance”	CEI-ES	Online	7 May	Interreg Central Europe
Sixteenth Meeting of the Focal Points of the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC)	REMPEC	Sliema, Malta	13-15 May	Interreg IPA ADRION
GreenMeUp 6 th Danube Biomethane Hub meeting	CEI-ES	Online	22 May	Horizon Europe
ASAP – TRUE BLUE Workshop on Policies and strategies for a sustainable blue economy in Montenegro	CEI-ES, OGS, OUR ACTION	Kotor, Montenegro	25 June	Interreg IPA ADRION KEP
TREASURE 4 th Steering Committee Meeting	Port of Bar	Bar, Montenegro	26-27 June	Interreg Euro-MED
CEI-FVG JWP 2024-2025 Workshop “Is the Future of Port Systems Still Green? – Balancing Decarbonisation, Competitiveness and Skills in the Adriatic-Ionian Macroregion”	CEI-ES	Online	27 June	ARFVG
TREASURE Natural Heritage Mission & Thematic Projects common meeting	Euro-MED Natural Heritage Mission	Athens, Greece	2-3 July	Interreg Euro-MED
GreenMeUp Final Project Meeting & Final Policy Workshop	CRES – Center for Renewable Energy Sources and Saving	Brussels, Belgium	3-4 July	Horizon Europe
PROCAREFUL Project Management and Steering Committee Meeting	CEI-ES	Trieste, Italy	1-2 September	Interreg Central Europe
CEI-FVG JWP 2024-2025 Workshop “Green Ports and the Skills of Tomorrow: Advancing Port Competences and Critical Success Factors for a Sustainable Maritime Transition”	CEI-ES	Online	12 September	ARFVG
PROCAREFUL Webinar: Boosting the Digital Health Transformation in Longevity Care Service	ENEA	Online	19 September	Interreg Central Europe
SUSTANCE Webinar: “Enhancing Connectivity in Peripheral and Cross-Border Areas through Innovative and Sustainable Mobility Solutions”	CEI-ES	Online	22 September	Interreg Central Europe

Title	Organising institution(s)	Venue	Date	Source of funding
RIBES 4 th General Assembly Meeting (Mid-term)	CEI-ES	Turin, Italy	23 September	Horizon Europe
BIOLOC Final Project Meeting & Final Conference	CEI-ES	Turin, Italy	24 September	Horizon Europe
BIOLOC & RIBES presence at IFIB – International Forum on Industrial Biotechnology and Bioeconomy	SPRING	Turin, Italy	25-26 September	Horizon Europe
SUSTANCE 6 th Project steering Committee	Prometni institut Ljubljana	Ljubljana	30 September–1 October 2025	Interreg Central Europe
ASAP ADRIA 2025 Anti-pollution exercise at sea and Steering Committee meeting	Ministry of the Sea, Transport and Infrastructure of Croatia, CEI-ES	Dubrovnik, Croatia	1-2 October	Interreg IPA Adrion
CAREGIVER DAY 2025	Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia (Department for Health, Social Services and Disabilities)	Gorizia, Italy	7 October	ARFVG
CEI-FVG JWP 2024-2025 Conference “Green and Smart Ports: Shaping the Future of Green Transition and Skills Development in the Adriatic-Ionian Region”	CEI-ES, ARFVG	Trieste, Italy	16 October	ARFVG
GREENPATH Steering Committee meeting	Municipality of Osijek	Osijek, Croatia	21-22 October	Interreg Central Europe
ASAP 23 rd meeting of the Thematic Steering Group for Pillar 3 – Environmental Quality under the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)	EUSAIR TSG3	Online	6 November	Interreg IPA Adrion
TREASURE Annual Institutional Dialogue event	Euro-MED Natural Heritage Mission	Barcelona, Spain	25-26 November	Interreg Euro-MED
CEI-FVG JWP 2024-2025 Advanced Training Course “Challenges and Perspectives of Science Diplomacy in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe”	CEI-ES, University of Trieste, ARFVG	Trieste, Gorizia, Italy	25-28 November	ARFVG
RIBES 5 th General Assembly Meeting	CEI-ES	Online	11 December	Horizon Europe



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