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## **A BRIDGE OVER CULTURAL HERITAGES: CENTRAL EUROPEAN INITIATIVE COOPERATION ACTIVITIES IN THE FIELD OF CULTURE**

**Abstract:**

*The paper shortly describes the Central European Initiative and its Cooperation Activities Fund, focusing on activities related to the field of culture in the light of the CEI Plan of Action 2010-2012, and exploring the possibilities of further international cooperation.*

**Key words:**

*Central European Initiative, plan of action 2010-2012, international cooperation*

**Izvleček:**

**Most preko kulturnih dediščin:**

**Sodelovanje Centralne evropske iniciative na področju kulture**

*Prispevek na kratko predstavlja Centralno evropsko iniciativo (CEI) in njen Sklad za sodelovanje ter se osredotoča na aktivnosti, povezane s področjem kulture v luči Akcijskega načrta CEI 2010-2012. Prav tako raziskuje možnosti nadaljnjega mednarodnega sodelovanja.*

**Ključne besede:**

*Centralna evropska iniciativa, akcijski načrt 2010-2012, mednarodno sodelovanje*

The CEI - Central European Initiative - is the oldest and largest intergovernmental organization for regional cooperation in Europe, with an observer status in the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Its origin lies in the agreement, called Quadrangular, signed in Budapest on November 11, 1989 (a couple of days before the fall of the Berlin Wall) by Austria, Hungary, Italy and the former Yugoslavia in order to implement mutual political, economic, scientific and cultural cooperation. In 1992 the grouping was renamed to Central European Initiative, and its membership rose during the years to the present number of 18 Member Countries: Albania, Austria, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Ukraine. All these countries embrace a territory of 2.4 million square kilometers and a population of nearly 250 million.

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During the life of the organization, a CEI Trust Fund at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development was created, as well as a Secretariat for CEI Projects in London (established in 1991) and the Centre for Information and Documentation in Trieste, later renamed CEI Executive Secretariat, based in Trieste from 1996, and functioning as the organizational centre of the Initiative, collecting, evaluating and following-up the co-financed projects.

Over the years, the CEI emphasized transfer of know-how, transfer of technology, business facilitation, investment promotion, promotion of scientific research, post-graduate training and of civil society, especially in the fields of culture, media and youth affairs. Although the CEI is not a major donor organization, it disposes of several funds which are used to promote projects in its various sectors of activity.

The organization works through various structures: the annual Meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs, other ministerial or sectoral events, the Meetings of the CEI National Coordinators (CNC), meetings and other activities covering various areas of economic, human and institutional development and numerous events (conferences, workshops, training courses, etc.) co-financed by the CEI.

The CEI core mission is the Regional Cooperation for European Integration, providing the Member States with a flexible and pragmatic platform for regional cooperation, particularly regarding the rapprochement towards the European Union (EU). The CEI is actively engaged in supporting projects in various areas of activity in the cultural, economic and scientific fields: Climate, Environment and Sustainable Energy; Enterprise Development (including Tourism); Human Resource Development; Information Society and Media; Intercultural Cooperation (including Minorities); Multimodal Transport; Science and Technology; Sustainable Agriculture; Interregional and Cross-Border Cooperation. A special attention is given to capacity building which, thanks to the ideal location of the Organization, is pursued through know-how transfer and exchange of experience from EU to non-EU CEI Member States. Moreover, due to its unique position, the CEI acts a bridge between macro-regions, such as the Baltic, Danube, Adriatic and Black Sea Regions, and it assists in mobilizing financial resources and in providing greater possibilities for studying, financing and executing national and international projects. CEI activities and projects are developed within programmes pursued particularly by the European Union (EU) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). Funds and Instruments of the CEI are the Cooperation Fund, the CEI Fund at the EBRD; the Know-how Exchange Programme (KEP); the University Network; the Science and Technology Network, the Feature Events and Awards; the EU-funded projects.

The Meeting of the CEI Ministers for Foreign Affairs held in Milan in June 2002 decided to establish a CEI Cooperation Fund in order to facilitate the implementation of programmes and projects organized or sponsored by the CEI; in view of the relevant number of applications an Evaluation Unit has been set up in the Executive Secretariat focusing on the administrative monitoring and budgetary control of the projects. It is funded by all Member States and is used to co-finance the CEI Cooperation Activities, small-scale multilateral projects, usually taking the form of seminars, workshops, training courses, etc., tackling the priority areas of the organization. A Call for proposals for CEI Cooperation Activities is launched on a yearly basis, and all public and private bodies in CEI Member States, as well as international organizations and other regional bodies, can apply. As a rule, at least

half of CEI Member States are to be involved, and preference is given to projects submitted by, and in favor of, non-EU CEI Member States. The basic relevance of the CEI Cooperation Fund is demonstrated by the aggregate results achieved over the years, i.e. an annual mobility of at least 5,000 participants from the CEI countries.

In the field of culture and cultural goods and assets, the CEI is co-financing, among many others like the Slovenian Writer's Round Table in Vilenica, the activities of the International Institute for Archival Sciences (IIAS) of Trieste and Maribor, particularly the IIAS International Archival Day and the IIAS Autumn Archival School. This project was found to be in line with the activities of the CEI Plan of Action in the sectors of human development, culture, education, conservation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, know-how transfer in the field of cultural management, cross-border cooperation, building a network of cooperation for a horizontal flow of experience and know-how.

All this well considering, and above all having in mind the present economic situation in which a general lack of possibilities due to a severe monetary restraint heavily affects the field of cultural goods, it seems much desirable taking the very few opportunities offered by the Institutions operating in Europe. To this regard, we attach here to the "CEI Funding of Cooperation Activities - Rules for Allocation of Resources", with the most sincere hope that important activities in the field of archives could be positively taken in consideration and implemented with the cooperation of the Central European Initiative.

## Appendix

### CEI FUNDING OF COOPERATION ACTIVITIES

#### RULES FOR ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES

##### A. General Criteria for the Allocation of Resources

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###### 1. Eligible applicants

All public and private bodies in CEI Member States as well as international organizations and other regional bodies are eligible applicants. An applicant who obtained funding for Cooperation Activities in the past can reapply for a grant, provided that all previous projects were completed and the Final Reports were duly approved by the CEI.

###### 2. Eligible activities

Cooperation Activities cover the full range of CEI activities. They are generally small in scale, limited in time and frequently take the form of conferences, seminars, workshops or other kinds of meetings, training activities as well as preparation of studies and analysis. As a rule, Cooperation Activities shall take place within the CEI region.

###### 3. Source of CEI funding

Cooperation Activities are co-financed from the CEI Cooperation Fund<sup>1</sup>. No additional contributions can be provided through other CEI Funds, such as the CEI Solidarity Fund.

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<sup>1</sup> This fund is administered by the CEI-Executive Secretariat.

#### **4. CEI Plan of Action**

Cooperation Activities should be compatible with the CEI Plan of Action. Preference will be given to applications which are in line with the priorities reflected in the Plan of Action.

#### **5. Participation in Cooperation Activities**

Cooperation Activities are an instrument for reflecting and achieving the principles and objectives set by the CEI Guidelines and Rules of Procedure and are open to the participation of all CEI Member States. As a rule, they should substantially contribute to the implementation of the CEI goals and aim to encompass at least half plus one, but in no case less than one third of CEI Member States. Higher rating will be given to applications foreseeing the participation of a larger number of CEI Member States. Particular attention will be paid to the involvement of non-EU CEI Member States<sup>2</sup> and to a reasonable balance between participating EU and non-EU CEI Member States. The number of local participants and speakers ought to be in a reasonable proportion to participation from other CEI countries. The CEI regional character should be preserved (in terms of reasonable proportion of participants) in Cooperation Activities involving a large number of third countries. The full respect of the criteria set herewith concerning envisaged participation in CEI Cooperation Activities will condition the Secretariat's evaluation with respect to the proposed financial contribution and will as well be applied in disbursing the Advance and Final Payments.

#### **6. Special preference**

Preference will be given to applications coming from non-EU CEI Member States.

#### **7. CEI visibility**

The CEI visibility needs to be guaranteed. Please note that the CEI visibility needs to be in proportion with the level of co-financing.

#### **8. Quality assessment**

The quality of the project and its contribution to the realization of the overall goals of the CEI will be taken into account in deciding on the financial support to be allocated to it.

#### **9. Amount of CEI contribution**

The CEI's financial contribution, which can reach a maximum of 50% of the total cost of the project, has to be substantially complemented by other sources of financing.

#### **10. Cost estimate**

The cost estimate needs to be realistic and reflect real needs and expenses in a manner which can be verified.

#### **11. Organizational structure**

There must be a clear organizational structure with a person responsible for project implementation and fully accountable for the use of the allocated resources.

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<sup>2</sup> Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Ukraine.

## **12. Modifications**

If after the approval of the application any changes occur with regard to the date, venue, title, scope, budget etc. of a Cooperation Activity, the CEI-Executive Secretariat, hereinafter called CEI-ES, needs to be informed immediately in order to evaluate the consequences of this change for the approved amount of financial support.

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## **B. Application for the Allocation of Resources**

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### **1. Submission**

Applications originating from institutions of Member States should be submitted in electronic/digital format (MS Word file and PDF file) to the CEI-ES ([applications.coopfund@cei.int](mailto:applications.coopfund@cei.int)) and the respective CEI National Coordinator (for contact addresses see the CEI website at <http://www.cei.int/contacts/National%2BCo-ordinators>). Applications originating from International Organizations can be submitted to the CEI-ES directly.

### **2. Deadlines**

In order to enable appropriate processing, the application for the planned activity needs to reach the CEI-ES by 30 June each year for projects to be implemented during the next calendar year (January to December). In special cases exceptions to this rule are possible. The National Coordinator of the country wishing to submit an application at a later date, in exceptional cases, should send a written request to the Committee of National Coordinators through the CEI-ES stating credible reasons for the late submission.

### **3. Contents**

The application should contain a clear outline of the activity, the projected participation, the preparation and follow-up as well as any co-organizing institutions and/or governments.

### **4. Expected results**

The expected results of the project (e.g. training effect, transfer of knowledge and technology, cross-border cooperation, harmonization of national legislation, integration effects, dissemination, publication, etc.) should be indicated.

### **5. Budget estimate**

A detailed budget estimate with a breakdown of costs (e.g. travel expenses, accommodation, publications, speaker fees, administrative fees, etc.) is needed as well as a clear indication of the expected co-financing of the activity.

### **6. Use of the CEI contribution**

The intended use of the contribution requested from the CEI should be specified. The CEI does not pay organizational or administrative costs, nor reimburses in-kind contributions, which nevertheless must represent a reasonable proportion of the estimated budget. The CEI contribution can only be used for participants coming from CEI Member States.

## **7. Eligible expenses**

Please find below an illustrative list of budget items eligible for CEI funding. Within the eligible budget items switches can be made if during the implementation changes in expenditures arise. The CEI contribution can be used to cover expenses such as:

- costs of participation of representatives of CEI Member States (accommodation and travel costs), including the costs of local participants in activities organized by non-EU CEI Member States;
- local transport costs connected to the event, including airport transfers as appropriate;
- subsistence costs during the event (meals, coffee breaks and refreshments);
- social programmes connected to the activity, including costs of excursions up to a reasonable proportion and amount;
- preparation of documentation connected to the event, i.e. printing and distribution costs;
- arrangement of conference kits (pens, notepads, folders, bags...);
- arrangement of conference venue: e.g. conference hall rent, rent of audio-visual equipment;
- promotion of the event, e.g. advertising campaigns, including printing of posters, leaflets etc.
- translation (although the working language of the CEI is English, these costs are admissible in special cases where the added value is proven).

## **8. Experts and speakers**

As a rule, experts and speakers should come from within the CEI region and only in exceptional cases from third countries. The CEI's financial contribution can also cover experts' and speaker's fees up to 50% of the cost and within a ceiling of 500 EUR for each speaker. If the speaker or expert comes from a non-CEI country, the organisers need to justify his/her participation on grounds of expertise.

## **9. Management**

In addition to the person responsible for project implementation, another person should assume the responsibility for the financial management. Should this not be possible, the reasons should be given.

## **C. Allocation Procedure**

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### **1. Eligibility check**

The CEI-ES will make a first screening of the applications aimed at checking whether the basic criteria have been respected, in particular referring to the deadline and a complete application form (including the basic eligibility criteria and the budget). Only those applications complying with these criteria will be submitted for further evaluation to the Evaluation Committee.

### **2. Evaluation of the Applications**

The applications will be evaluated by an Evaluation Committee in the respective area, according to the Terms of Reference. The evaluation will be done on the basis of an evaluation grid with scores, accompanied by a comprehensive written recommendation. The evaluation phase will end up in the creation of a shortlist of proposals categorised as follows: very good, good, acceptable, insufficient, not acceptable. Only applications with *good* and *very good* grades would be eligible to receive CEI co-financing.

### **3. Communication to the CNC**

The shortlisted applications will be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee of National Coordinators after the deadline of the given call along with a recommendation of the CEI-ES with regard to the amount to be granted in support of the project. In making its recommendations, the CEI-ES will take into account the result of the evaluation by the Evaluation Committee, the compatibility with the Plan of Action and the availability of Funds. When the CNC does not meet for more than a month the approval of a Cooperation Activity can also be obtained by means of a written procedure. The documentation will be forwarded by the CEI-ES to the CEI National Coordinators who will be invited to express themselves within two weeks. Lack of response will be interpreted as approval of the Cooperation Activity.

### **4. CNC decision**

The CNC decides on the allocation of resources to the Cooperation Activity in question, taking into account the recommendations of the CEI-ES.

## **D. Disbursement Conditions**

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### **1. Communication to the organisers**

Once a Cooperation Activity has been approved by the CNC, the organisers will be informed by the CEI-ES on its outcome and, as appropriate, be given additional explanations on the implementation and monitoring of the project.

### **2. Instalments**

The disbursement of the authorized CEI contribution may take place after the conclusion of the project. Normally, however, it is transferred to the organizer in two installments.

### **3. Advance payment**

Prior to the start of the Cooperation Activity the organizers can request an advance payment of up to 50% of the authorized CEI contribution formally confirming within such request that the co-financed activity will take place according to the description in the application form and the expected timetable, having at the same time already secured the other part of co-funding.

### **4. Final payment / conditions**

Once the Cooperation Activity is terminated, the remaining amount will be made available on the basis of expenses actually incurred

### **5. Ceiling**

This second and final disbursement cannot exceed the originally authorized CEI contribution. It will, however, be lower, should

certain budgeted expenses not have been made or not be adequately justified.

#### **6. Percentage rule**

If there is a considerable difference between the original budget and the final account, the CEI will apply the percentage rule: the CEI contribution to the entire budget will be adjusted to the percentage originally authorized.

#### **7. Use of CEI logo**

The financial support is conditional upon the use of the CEI logo. The organizers must, therefore, be in a position to prove that they have:

- used the CEI logo alongside the main title of the event on the cover page;
- exhibited the CEI logo outside of the building and/or inside the meeting room;
- exhibited CEI posters provided by the CEI-ES;
- distributed to participants the information material provided by the CEI-ES.

### **E. Advance Payment**

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#### **1. Submission procedure**

Once a Cooperation Activity has been approved by the CNC the CEI-ES will send to the organizers a form for a "Request for Advance Payment". In submitting this request the organizers should use their letterhead and send the original hardcopy request to the CEI-ES in Trieste. When submitting the "Request for Advance Payment", the organizers are asked to provide the CEI-ES with:

- a draft programme of the forthcoming event
- a short information about the current status of preparations
- the list of confirmed participants and speakers
- the latest status of the activity co-financing.

#### **2. Decreased co-financing**

Please note that if applicants have not been able to secure the additional outside funding indicated in the Application Form, the approved CEI co-financing will decrease according to the percentage authorized.

#### **3. Bank transfer**

Please note that the account into which the CEI contribution shall be transferred should belong to the organizing institution of the Cooperation Activity. In addition, please note that due to technical reasons (i.e. bank transaction), payments may take up to 30 days to arrive on the organizers' account.

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## **F. Final Payment**

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### **1. Submission procedure and annexed documentation**

After the event has taken place, the organizers need to submit a final report on the basis of the form entitled "Request for Final Payment" and send it to the CEI-ES by ordinary mail. The expenses should be listed in a consolidated form and accompanied by a complete documentation in English and where only the version in the original language is available, accompanied by an appropriate translation into English:

- justification of the entire expenses of the cooperation activity, not only the portion paid by the CEI (invoices or equivalent proof of payment made; please note that the proof for accommodation and travel expenses needs to be individualized (hotel bills and travel air tickets must contain the name of the beneficiary));
- the questionnaires for post-implementation evaluation filled in by participants;
- in-kind contributions must be justified in an appropriate manner and must represent a reasonable proportion of the total costs;
- a complete set of material distributed during the event (e.g. programme, brochures, invitation letter, etc.);
- the list of speakers with their complete contact data (profession, institution, address, phone/fax, e-mail);
- a list of participants indicating their nationality and full contact data (profession, institution, address, phone/fax, e-mail);
- a summary report on the results of the event (conclusions, intended future activities) and of repercussions in the media (visibility);
- photographic material for possible publication.

Please, note that the final payment cannot be made before the above-mentioned final report has been received and approved. If the expenses are not adequately documented or if they are not as high as originally estimated, deductions will be made from the Final Payment.

### **2. Use of event documentation**

It is understood that the material prepared by the organizers in connection with the project can be used, published or distributed by the CEI without restrictions.

### **3. Deadline for submission**

The Request for Final Payment with the annexes enumerated under point 1 needs to be submitted to the CEI-ES within 90 days after conclusion of the Cooperation Activity. Unless modifications have been communicated to the CEI-ES in conformity with rule a12, the intended date of implementation notified within the application form will be taken into account for calculating the deadline for submission of accounts. In any such cases the organizer will lose the right to claim the second tranche of the payment and will need to justify the use of the Advance Payment already received, refunding to the CEI the amount which could not be used in the manner originally authorized by the CNC

until 30 March of the next calendar year (of the said activity implementation date).

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## **G. Monitoring and Post-Implementation Evaluation**

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### **1. Identification of a monitor**

In order to guarantee an adequate information the CEI-ES can ask a suitable person to monitor the project implementation. This could be the National Coordinator, a member of the relevant CEI Network of Focal Points, or another trustworthy person having a working relationship with the CEI. The monitor will be consulted on his/her findings by the CEI-ES.

### **2. Post-Implementation Evaluation**

The CEI-ES will conduct a post-implementation evaluation: in this regard, the organizers are urged to distribute among participants the questionnaire for post-implementation evaluation, and send it back to the CEI-ES along with the final report. On this basis, the CEI-ES will prepare a post-implementation report to be submitted to the CNC until 30 April of the next calendar year.