



CEI Guidelines and Rules of Procedure

Adopted by the MFA Meeting in 2023 in Chisinau.

I. Principles and Objectives

1. The Central European Initiative (CEI) is a regional forum for co-operation and consultation among and between its Member States.

Member States of the CEI are: Republic of Albania, Republic of Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Bulgaria, Republic of Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italian Republic, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia, Republic of Poland, Romania, Republic of Serbia, Slovak Republic, Republic of Slovenia and Ukraine.

2. The Member States of the CEI are guided by the principles of the UN Charter, of all the documents of the Helsinki process/OSCE. They are guided as well by final declarations and documents of the meetings of the Heads of Government and the Foreign Ministers of the CEI (including those of the predecessor initiatives: Quadrilateral, Pentagonal, Hexagonal).

3. The CEI, as a part of the European integration process, endeavours to co-operate with European organisations and institutions, in particular with the European Union (EU), the Council of Europe (CoE) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), as well as with other regional co-operation initiatives in areas of common interest.

The CEI also co-operates with the United Nations (UN) system and with other relevant international organisations, as well as with international financial institutions, especially the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

4. The strategic goals of the CEI are:

- a) to work for cohesion of a united Europe, without dividing lines, a Europe with shared values, embracing all countries, regions, peoples and citizens of the continent;
- b) to strengthen the capacities of the 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.

5. The co-operation within the framework of the CEI shall aim at the following principal objectives:

- a) promoting political dialogue on matters of common interest;
- b) strengthening co-operation among Member States, and in particular on the European agenda, as an added value;
- c) supporting Member States towards modernisation and European integration without prejudice to further EU enlargement;
- d) promoting the alignment of Member States to EU standards;
- e) strengthening co-operation with the EU by taking part in and facilitating the implementation of applicable EU programmes;
- f) cooperating with other relevant international organisations and international financial institutions in view of realising the CEI goals;
- g) contributing, on a demand-driven basis, to tackling current challenges affecting the Member States, in particular through joint regional projects;
- h) supporting economic and technical co-operation, through project-oriented activities;
- i) promoting cross-border, transnational and interregional co-operation;
- j) promoting capacity building and transfer of experiences/know-how through small and medium projects;
- k) promoting intercultural dialogue, press freedom, mobility and people-to-people contacts;
- l) promoting the role and the engagement of civil society in the European integration process and cooperation among Member States.

6. The co-operation within the framework of the CEI shall primarily include the following areas:

- strengthening democratic institutions and protecting human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to national minorities and vulnerable groups as well as health and migration matters;
- support the development of infrastructure in transport, energy, telecommunication and agriculture;
- protection of the environment and tourism development;
- enterprise development;
- co-operation in the field of science and technology, research and innovation, IT, media, culture, education and youth exchange.

The Member States may decide to include other matters and possible subjects for the Initiative's co-operation.

The CEI's priorities within the established areas of cooperation are clearly defined and further specified in the Plan of Action (PoA), adopted by the Heads of Government and the CEI Presidency Programmes.

II. Membership and Participation in the CEI

7. The CEI can invite any interested third State, regional entity and international organisation to participate in CEI activities, events, programmes and projects.

The CEI can also confer the status of special guest or other forms of partnership as appropriate, e.g. through Memoranda of Understanding.

8. The CEI shall promote co-operation with NGOs, professional associations, academic and other institutions willing to co-operate on matters of mutual interest.

9. Any Member State of the CEI which has seriously violated the principles referred to in Art. 2 of the present Guidelines may be suspended from its rights of representation by the Foreign Ministers. If such Member State persists in these violations, the Heads of Government may decide that it has ceased to be a Member of the CEI. The decision on that matter should be taken following the rule of consensus minus one.

III. Organisation and Structure

10. The CEI operates in a flexible and demand-driven manner through several structures.

11. The Governmental Dimension of the CEI consists of the following bodies:

- Meeting of the Heads of Government (CEI Summit),
- Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs (MFA Meeting),
- Meeting of the Political Directors of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of CEI Member States (PoD Meeting),
- Committee of National Co-ordinators (CNC),
- Advisory/expert bodies (Advisory Networks, Project Implementation Groups, ad hoc Task Forces, etc.).

12. The Meeting of the Heads of Government (CEI Summit) may be convened upon the decision of the CEI Presidency concerted with all Member States, through the CNC. The following matters shall be decided by the CEI Summit:

- political and economic orientation for the co-operation within the framework of the Initiative, including adoption of the Plan of Action,
- principles and objectives of the CEI,
- amendments to the "CEI Guidelines and Rules of Procedure",
- membership (admission, suspension).

In case a CEI Summit is not convened, the matters mentioned in this Article shall be decided by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs.

13. The Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs (MFA Meeting) shall be convened, as a rule, once a year at the time and under modalities proposed by the CEI Presidency. The MFA Meeting shall decide upon specific issues of the CEI co-operation, including:

- political co-operation,
- participation in CEI activities, as referred to in Art. 7,
- the organisational structure, areas and ways of co-operation,
- matters concerning the establishment and the operational structure of the advisory/expert bodies,
- the formula of the annual contributions, annual budget and scale of contributions of the CEI Co-operation Fund,
- the appointment and recall of the CEI-ES Secretary General and the CEI-ES Deputy Secretary/ies General,
- approval of the Annual Report of the CEI-ES SG.

14. The Meeting of Political Directors of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of CEI Member States (PoD) shall be convened at the request of at least one Member State, upon the decision of the CEI Presidency.

15. The Committee of National Co-ordinators (CNC) is the key body responsible for the management of CEI co-operation and the implementation of CEI programmes and projects through appropriate structures. The CNC shall meet on a regular basis to discuss, review and to co-ordinate the cooperation within the various established bodies of the CEI as well as in relation with other international organisations and regional groupings. Any CEI Member State, in consultation with the CEI Presidency and the CEI-Executive Secretariat, may request to convene additional CNC meetings as required.

The CNC, assisted by the CEI-Executive Secretariat, shall prepare the documents to be approved by the CEI Summit or by the MFA Meeting.

The CNC shall discuss and review all activities and projects of the CEI-Executive Secretariat, and shall provide appropriate guidance.

16. The Chairmanship of the CEI (CEI Presidency) shall rotate annually at the beginning of the calendar year based on the alphabetical order of the English names of CEI Member States, unless decided otherwise.

The Chairmanship-in-office shall be supported by the former and the next Chairmanship, which form the Troika of the CEI.

The Presidency shall convene the meetings of the Heads of Government, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, the Political Directors and the CNC. These meetings may be convened also in other countries, upon an agreement by the CEI Presidency. In case of impediment of the Chairmanship-in-office meetings of the CNC shall be chaired, at the discretion of the Presidency, by one of the Troika members or by the CEI-ES Secretary General.

17. The principles and objectives of CEI co-operation shall be accomplished through appropriate activities, including meetings at expert, high official and ministerial levels, convened and chaired by the CEI Presidency, and assisted by the CEI-Executive Secretariat.

18. The CEI - Executive Secretariat (CEI-ES) is located in Trieste, Italy, and shall be headed by a Secretary General (SG), supported by up to three Deputy Secretaries General (DSG/s). The SG and the DSGs represent the Executive Level of the CEI-ES. One of the posts of the Executive Level will be filled in by the host country of the CEI-ES.

The CEI-ES, as permanent CEI body, shall provide continuous administrative and conceptual support to both the decision-making and operational structures of the CEI and shall take any appropriate initiative aimed at promoting the realisation of the CEI co-operation objectives.

The tasks of the CEI-ES shall comprise, inter alia, the following areas:

- information and documentation,
- organisation, preparation and follow-up of meetings,
- participation in CEI meetings and other CEI-related events,
- design and implementation of CEI programmes and projects, including EU-funded ones.

The CEI-ES shall also fulfil other tasks as assigned to it by the CEI Summit, MFA Meeting, the Chairmanship-in-office and the CNC.

The structure of the CEI-ES shall be decided by the Executive Level of the CEI-ES, in consultation with the CNC. The CEI-ES structure and activity, especially in the field of personnel and finance, should be consistent with the law of the host country. Therefore, according to the first paragraph of this article, the member of the Executive Level representing the host country of the CEI-ES takes on full responsibility for the administration of the resources provided by the host country, including in the field of personnel and finance. He/she will also represent the CEI-ES in the Steering Committee Meeting of the CEI Fund at the EBRD.

In performing its duties, the CEI-ES shall co-operate with and refer to the National Co-ordinators and other CEI bodies.

The authorities of the host country shall finance the activities of the CEI-ES. Any Member State designating any official of the staff (including the Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary/ies General) shall cover the respective costs. Any CEI Member State can voluntarily allocate additional staff, financial and material resources for the CEI-ES activities.

19. The CEI-ES Secretary General (CEI-ES SG) shall be selected among candidates nominated by the Member States and shall be appointed/recalled by the MFA Meeting, upon recommendation of the CNC. His/her term shall last three years with the option of a one-time renewal of up to three more years.

In co-ordination with the Chairmanship-in-office, the CEI-ES SG shall oversee the attainment of CEI strategic goals and principal objectives, as well as the implementation of the CEI Plan of Action.

The CEI-ES SG shall participate in the CEI Summit, MFA Meeting, PoD Meeting, CNC meetings, meetings at ministerial level, the Steering Committee of the CEI Fund at the EBRD and in other major CEI events. Moreover, the CEI-ES SG, or his/her representative, shall participate on behalf of the CEI in relevant activities consistent with his/her mandate organised by other European, international and regional organisations and institutions.

The CEI-ES SG shall prepare an Annual Report on activities of the CEI-ES including financial aspects, which shall be subject to acceptance by the MFA Meeting, upon recommendation of the CNC.

20. The CEI-ES SG is supported by DSG/s, as specified in Art. 18.

The DSG/s shall be selected among candidates nominated by the CEI Member States and shall be appointed/recalled by the MFA Meeting, upon recommendation of the CNC. The term of office of the DSG/s shall last three years with the option of a one-time renewal of up to three more years.

21. Should consensus not be reached among the CEI Member States in case there are two or more candidates for a vacant position in the Executive Level of the CEI-ES, and subject to procedural matters, the decision will be taken in accordance with Art. 19 and 20, regarding the selection and appointment procedure, as well as with Art. 27 and 28, regarding the decision-making procedure.

The procedures will take into account the following aspects: rotation of Member States on the relevant positions in the Executive Level of the CEI-ES; candidates' professional experience in multilateral affairs and its relevance in regard to the vacant position; geographical balance (presence of representatives of EU and non-EU CEI Member States); gender balance.

22. For the duration of the Agreements on which it is based, the Office for the CEI Fund at the EBRD¹ is assuming tasks aimed primarily at investment projects and, i.a., the following areas:

¹ The Office for the CEI Fund at the EBRD is functioning on the basis of a bilateral Agreement between the CEI Presidency and the EBRD, signed on 21 July 1998. The Italian Government established in 1992 a bilateral fund at the EBRD to support the non-EU CEI Member States. Italy is currently the only CEI Member State contributing to the expenses of the Office on a voluntary basis.

- economic co-operation,
- CEI Fund management and mobilisation of financial resources,
- investment project promotion, identification, and preparation assistance,
- technical support for investment projects,
- system development and institutional programme support (e.g. organisation of international events, training, advisory services, and information systems).

The Office for the CEI Fund at the EBRD is linked institutionally to the CEI-ES as it is located at the CEI-ES Headquarters in Trieste, Italy.

The CNC together with the Directors representing Member States in the Board of Directors of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development form the Steering Committee of the CEI Fund at the EBRD.

23. The Parliamentary Dimension of the CEI functions according to its structure and rules of procedure. It consists of the following bodies:

- The Parliamentary Assembly,
- the Parliamentary Committee,
- Working bodies (three General Committees, Ad Hoc Standing Committee).

24. The co-operation between the Governmental and Parliamentary Dimensions will be guided, i.a., by the following modalities:

- A joint session of the enlarged CEI Troika² at the level of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the enlarged Troika of the CEI Parliamentary Committee will be organised on the occasion of the MFA Meeting to permit a general debate on the strategic goals and challenges of the CEI as well as on the contributions of the Parliamentary Dimension to the overall work of the organisation.
- The Presidency of the CEI Parliamentary Dimension will be invited to participate in all high-level meetings organised by the CEI with the right to take part in the debate.
- Under no circumstance will the enhanced co-operation with the Parliamentary Dimension entail any financial commitments of the Governments of the CEI Member States or the CEI-Executive Secretariat.

The Draft CEI Plan of Action will be sent to the CEI Parliamentary Assembly in order to receive amendments and suggestions on it. As a general rule, the Parliamentary Assembly will be formally informed on the activities and projects of the CEI and on the outcomes of the Committee of National Coordinators (CNC) meetings.

25. The Economic Dimension of the CEI, which functions according to its own modalities, consists of:

- meetings of Chambers of Commerce of the CEI Member States,
- CEI Economic Forum.

26. The co-operation between the Governmental and Economic Dimensions will be guided, i.a., by the following modalities:

- Representatives of Chambers of Commerce of the country holding the CEI Presidency could be invited to participate in CEI meetings which might be of their interest.
- The Chambers of Commerce of the CEI Member States should actively co-operate in the promotion and organisation of the CEI Economic Forum by marketing activities of the Forum at national level, organisation of its sessions, parallel events and networking receptions.
- Special ministerial events may be conducted at the time and under modalities proposed by the Presidency targeting the improvement of business climate, promotion of international investment, SMEs support and other economic topics.

Under no circumstances will the enhanced co-operation with the Economic Dimension entail any financial commitments of the Governments of the CEI Member States or the CEI-Executive Secretariat.

² The enlarged CEI Troika consists of the CEI Troika plus the host country.

IV. Decision Making Procedure

27. Subject to the provisions of Art. 9 and 21 the decisions within the CEI are taken by consensus as a general rule.

Consensus shall be understood to mean the absence of any objection expressed by a Member State and submitted by it as constituting an obstacle to the taking of the decision in question.

Questions arising under procedural matters shall be decided by a simple majority of Member States.

28. When the decision-making organs of CEI are not in session, a written procedure may be applied for the adoption of decisions. The draft decisions circulated to the Member States by the Chairmanship-in-Office, through the CEI-ES, shall be considered as approved unless any objection preventing the adoption of a resolution or a decision is received within 15 working days from the communication of the draft by CEI-ES.

V. Signing of Agreements

29. CEI Agreements to be concluded with third parties shall be signed on behalf of the CEI by the CEI Presidency and the CEI-ES SG.

VI. Financing

30. Each Member State is responsible for financing its own expenses connected with CEI activities.

The costs incurred for the organisation of meetings shall, as a rule, be borne by the host country.

Member States shall facilitate the implementation of CEI programmes and projects through annual financial contributions to the CEI Co-operation Fund. The formula of the annual contributions, annual budget and scale of contributions of the CEI Co-operation Fund shall be decided by the MFA Meeting. Furthermore, Member States' contributions to the Fund will be reviewed by the CNC every 3 years on the basis of official macroeconomic data from independent financial institutions. Any proposal for changes in the scale of contributions will be reviewed by the CNC and, subject to consensus, submitted to the MFA Meeting for approval.

Given CEI's multilateral character, other voluntary contributions from Member States to different CEI structures, funds, programmes and projects are also strongly encouraged. The modalities for such contributions shall be agreed between the CEI-ES and the donor Member State, and administrated according to the CEI Guidelines and Rules of Procedures.

In order to facilitate the participation of all Member States in CEI and CEI-sponsored events assistance can be provided for covering travel and accommodation expenses through the Solidarity Fund managed by the CEI-ES in accordance with the Guidelines of the Solidarity Fund approved by the CNC.

VII. Flag and Language

31. The CEI flag represents a blue field with the official CEI logo in the middle. The CEI logo consists of the block letters "CEI" with a block transcription "CENTRAL EUROPEAN INITIATIVE", surrounded by a semicircle composed by 10 yellow stars.

32. The working language of the CEI is English. CEI documents are produced in English.

Whoever wishes to use another language at a CEI event, shall provide the translations on its own.

VIII. Amending the CEI Guidelines

33. Any amendment proposed by one or more Member States shall be examined by the CNC. If agreed upon, the CNC shall submit a recommendation for approval, according to the provisions of Art. 12.