

**Coming Up
in March**

10 March, Trieste
CNC Meeting

10 March, Gorizia (I)
**PROADRIAS Project,
Kick-Off Meeting**

13-14 March,
Belgrade
**Second BIOM ADRIA
Project Interim
Meeting**

31 March, Istanbul
**Coordination
Meeting of Regional
Organizations**

**New CEI National
Coordinators
for Romania
and Serbia**

Mr. Gheorghe Magheru, Director General for Enlarged Europe at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania, has been nominated as new CEI National Coordinator of Romania.

Ms. Marina Jovicevic, Director of the Department for Regional Initiatives at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Serbia, has been nominated as new CEI National Coordinator of Serbia.

CEI Presidency: More Visibility for Moldova

Mr. Andrei Stratan is Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova, The CEI Newsletter has posed him some questions regarding this year's Moldovan CEI Presidency:

Q: In which way do you think the CEI Presidency will be useful to your country?

A: The Republic of Moldova is holding the CEI Presidency for the first time. Considering that 9 CEI Member States are Members of the EU and 9 are not Members yet, we consider this role of the utmost importance for our State, especially from a political point of view, because it offers us the possibility to enhance the visibility of our country in the region and in particular with regard to our advancement in the European integration process. The Presidency of the Republic of Moldova will be an opportunity to include, among the events taking place this year, issues of national and regional interest which will contribute to developing national priority areas

such as economy and investments, transport, tourism, sustainable energy, agriculture, science and technology, youth and human resource development. The High level meetings scheduled to take place during this year's Presidency will be a valuable opportunity, through the implementation of regional projects, for know how transfer between EU and non EU CEI Member States.

Q: Do you foresee a stronger cooperation of Moldova with other neighbouring countries and in particular with the CEI EU Member States? Which CEI Programmes are particularly interesting in this regard?

A: Moldova fully shares the common idea of the importance regional cooperation has in the development of countries and perceives it as a mechanism for assuring the achievement of the European integration objectives. During its presidency, Moldova will promote the idea of strengthening the relations between the CEI and the EU. The enlargement of this cooperation will contribute substantially and efficiently to the continuous development of relations between CEI Member States, to the realization of joint projects and to the application of European principles and standards. The involvement of the EU and European institutions in these processes is crucial and represents an essential opportunity for creating a democratic, stable and prosperous region.

Within the organization itself, the EU member states should concentrate more on supporting other CEI partners in realization and implementation of the European integration processes. At the same time, the development of the cooperation and partnerships, through the realization of joint projects, between CEI EU and non EU Member States – will be one of the objectives of the Presidency of the Republic of Moldova.

During the last 10 years, Moldova has been actively involved in the regional cooperation processes in Central and South-Eastern Europe, being a founder country of the BSEC, participating in the majority of the regional initiatives, processes and organizations. The Republic of Moldova highly appreciates the cooperation at regional and international level and pleads for a further cooperation based on the principle of friendship and reciprocity.

In this regard, in order to enhance cooperation with regional organisations, promote closer cooperation with the European Union as well as promote joint projects between the CEI EU and non-EU Member States related to know-how exchange of best practices in all areas of development in June 2008, a Conference on “Regional Cooperation – Opportunities, Challenges and Synergy” is envisaged to take place in Chisinau.

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Q: With regard to the recent implementation of the CEI repositioning making the organisation more effective as a regional actor, do you have any suggestions, at this stage, on how to put the new guidelines into practice?

A: CEI Member States are currently deeply

involved in the new Reform process and have to be fully committed for the establishment of the new improved and efficient framework of cooperation among our states.

The CEI ought to continue to act as an efficient mechanism among the social, political and economic realities, as well as between the EU and

the states which tend to be a part of the European family. Further support to CEI non EU Member States is thus necessary. More cooperation with the EU and its institutions would mean more opportunities for building a region of democracy, security, stability, prosperity and cooperation.

CEI Director General on Extending Regional Cooperation

Black Sea Synergy meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the countries of the Black Sea Region and of the European Union

The CEI, represented by the CEI-ES Director General Ambassador Pietro Ercole Ago, was invited as a guest to the Black Sea Synergy Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the countries of the Black Sea Region and of the European Union, held in Kyiv on the 14 of February 2008 and attended by high-level participants from 36 countries and the European Commission. The meeting, organized back to back with the special Meeting of the Council of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), served as a platform to discuss a number of priorities of Black Sea regional cooperation, set up in a Joint Statement adopted by the participants at the end of the meeting. In his statement, Ambassador Ago outlined the position of the CEI regarding the development of



cooperation within the Black Sea region, highlighting the importance of the EU's role in this process and expressing the willingness of the CEI for concrete practical cooperation with other international institutions active in the region in areas of mutual interest.

Final Meeting of the Round Table of the Stability pact and Inaugural Meeting of the Regional Cooperation Council

Another occasion for CEI-ES Director General Pietro Ercole Ago to highlight the need for an extended coordination with other regional actors, was the final meeting of the Round Table of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe (SP) and the inaugural meeting of the Regional Co-operation Council (RCC) on 27 February (Sofia). The event was conceived to formally hand over the responsibilities for regional cooperation in South Eastern Europe, from the Special Coordinator of the SP, Mr. Erhard Busek, to the RCC and its Secretary General, Amb. Hido Biscevic. In this context, it was pointed out that the key role of the RCC will be to take over and further consolidate the initiatives commenced by the SP. During the meeting in Sofia, Amb. Ago also had a brief encounter with the



Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council, Amb. Hido Biscevic. Amb. Ago suggested, in particular, that the CEI and RCC, having a number of member countries in common (i.e. Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia) could organize specific joint projects and they both agreed to discuss this possibility in future meetings. (For more info: arsova@cei-es.org)

Enhancing Sustainable Rural Development in the Western Balkans

The CEI, through its Know-how Exchange Programme (KEP), will support a pilot project on transferring EU and, more particularly, Hungarian experience and best practices associated with LEADER - a successful EU-wide scheme on local development. The multi-stakeholder capacity-building pilot programme will seek to implant the LEADER approach in the Western Balkan countries with an objective of empowering local rural communities by training representatives of national stakeholders and community leaders in LEADER methodology. LEADER is an innovative approach within EU rural development policy. Experience has shown that it can make a real difference to the daily lives of people in rural areas by playing an important role in encouraging innovative responses to rural problems. It addresses issues such as participatory democracy, specific ways of local governance, cross sector decision-making, bottom-up approach and stretching the definition of accountability. The project's recipients will learn to devise sustainable local development strategies based on participatory principles; to cooperate, get funding for and implement projects of common interest. The project will be led by two Hungary-based NGOs: the International Centre for Democratic Transition (ICDT) and the Rural Workshop Foundation (RWF). The ICDT has a track record of a dozen projects implemented worldwide and it possesses wide contacts and partnerships in the region, while the RWF acted as a partner to the Hungarian Government in implementing LEADER in Hungary. The project is currently under implementation and is expected to be completed in June 2008. (For more info: www.ceinet.org/KEP or from Adrian Keler at keler@cei-es.org)

Views on Future of CEI from New Director General

“Rendering this intergovernmental forum a more effective instrument of cooperation, this is one of the main objectives of the CEI “



Ambassador Pietro Ercole Ago, CEI-ES Director General

Q: In your new capacity as Director General of the CEI Executive Secretariat, how do you envisage the future development of the CEI especially after the recent Reform?

A: I have taken on my duties as Director General immediately after the new reform process approved at the Summit of the CEI Heads of Government in November 2007.

Following the recent developments in the Region, such as the EU enlargement process and the emergence of new regional actors, the Initiative felt that it needed a re-evaluation of its tasks and to reposition itself on new objectives, in conformity with the current geo-political situation of Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans.

Therefore, our tasks today are to put into practice what was decided at the Summit in November, that is render this intergovernmental forum a more effective instrument of cooperation which at the same time would increase the visibility of the Central European Initiative at international level, this is one of the main objectives of the CEI.

Furthermore, the future of the CEI, considering its unique membership (nine EU MS and nine non-EU MS), its high political visibility, its demand-driven operational activities and its regional networks, lies in its usefulness to Member States with regard to the continuing process of European integration.

Q: What kind of role do you think the CEI will have with regard to its development / cooperation with other regional actors?

A: The CEI will have to play a synergetic role in the region. In order to do this in an efficient and constructive manner, the CEI needs to be in constant communication and

have a frequent dialogue with the various regional organizations, groups and institutions operating in South Eastern Europe.

Among them, particular emphasis has to be put on the relationship with the Regional Co-operation Council (RCC) and the South East European Cooperation Process (SEECPP), the Adriatic Ionian Initiative (AII) and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). Furthermore, strengthening dialogue and cooperation with the European Union, as well as with the relevant UN agencies and all International Financial Institutions (IFIs) operating in the region, is essential.

The fact that Member States expressed their willingness to increase the financial resources available for the operational activities will enable the CEI to make a stronger impact in the Region; the reduction of the areas of work will render the CEI more agile and focused on sector and country priorities.

Moreover, the elimination of the traditional Working Groups replaced by a network of focal points who will act, inter alia, as ad hoc Project Implementation Groups will bring about some advantages already witnessed in the context of the CEI University Network and the CEI S&T Network and the EU project partnerships. In this regard, cooperation will focus around project-related tasks to be performed in close cooperation with the CEI Secretariats (e.g. project implementation).

Q: How do you think the CEI will enhance its already consolidated project-oriented approach?

A: The CEI will continue supporting a considerable number of Cooperation Activities, it will increase its financial commitment in the CEI Networks (CEI Science and Technology Network and the CEI University Network) as well as its involvement as partner in EU-funded projects. Great attention will also be paid to further consolidating the CEI Know-how Exchange Programme and the CEI Feature Events such as the CEI Youth Orchestra, the CEI Youth Forum etc.

Cooperation with the CEI Business Dimension will continue by jointly financing and organising projects with Unioncamere of Italy. The same goes for the CEI Parliamentary Dimension thanks to the strong interest demonstrated by the Italian parliamentary delegation in the future development of the CEI.

Finally, the replenishment of the Trust Fund managed by the CEI Project Secretariat at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), will enable the CEI to keep supporting Technical Cooperation (TC) projects in favour of EBRD operations in CEI member countries.



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CEI Call for Proposals launched

CEI Award for Outstanding Merits in Journalism

The CEI, in cooperation with the South East Europe Media Organisation (SEEMO), has launched the Call for Proposals for the first edition of the CEI Award for Outstanding Merits in Journalism, which this year has a focus on investigative journalism. The Award of 5.000 EUR will be bestowed upon the winners during the CEI Journalists' Forum taking place in Wroclaw on 2-3 June 2008.

Deadline for submission: 31 March 2008

*Call for Proposals and Application Form available at
www.ceinet.org / www.seemo.org*

CEI Fellowship for Writers in Residence

The CEI, in cooperation with the Slovene Writers' Association, has launched the Call for Proposals 2008 for the CEI Fellowship for Writers in Residence of 5.000 EUR for a three-month stay in any of the CEI countries selected by the winner. The Award will be presented during the 23rd Vilenica International Literary Festival, which will take place from 3 to 7 September 2008 in various locations in Slovenia.

Deadline for submission: 30 May 2008

*Call for Proposals and Application Form available at
www.ceinet.org / www.vilenica.si*

CEI Know-how Exchange Programme - Funds Available for 2008 Project Proposals

The CEI Secretariat in Trieste is open to receive new project proposals within the CEI Know-how Exchange Programme (KEP), with funding made available by the Italy-sponsored CEI Trust Fund at the EBRD and by the Austrian Development Agency. KEP projects need to envisage a real transfer of expertise between donor(s) and recipient(s). Eligible applicants are donor institutions from CEI EU countries, which are to implement project activities to the benefit of the recipient institutions in CEI non-EU countries. Strategic priority themes for 2008 are: I) European Integration, Capacity Building and Market Economy; II) Infrastructure Planning and Development, and III) Agriculture, Energy and Environment.

For more information please consult

www.ceinet.org/KEP or write to kep@cei-es.org

More Project Applications Expected this Year from Moldova

On 19 February in Chisinau the Moldovan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration organised a "Training on the Opportunities in Projects Financing". The event was organised with an aim to provide information and thus to boost a number of project applications from Moldova submitted for co-financing to the Central European Initiative and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC). Amb. Altai Efendiev from BSEC and Mr. Adrian Keler from the CEI Project

Secretariat gave an insight into project financing opportunities made available by the two respective organisations. Some practical information on the CEI Cooperation Activities, the Know-how Exchange Programme, the University Network, and the Science and Technology Network was presented at a 1-day training session attended by around 60 participants representing public administration bodies, academic institutions, and the NGO sector in Moldova. The Moldovan CEI National Coordinator, Mr Dumitru Tira, who took the initiative to organise the training, expects the event to result in more applications from the country being submitted to the CEI and BSEC.



CEI Promotes Investment in Serbia within ZIP-NET Project

Organised by the CEI in collaboration with the Municipality of Zrenjanin, the ZIP-NET Interim Meeting was held on 28 January 2008 in Zrenjanin, Serbia, under the title "Fostering Business Enterprises Cooperation for Local Economic Development". More than 40 participants attended the workshop which analysed investment opportunities in Serbia,

in particular in the Vojvodina Region. The main topics discussed were the Serbian economic system and the instruments for attracting investment, in particular the availability of lines of credit. The workshop was followed by a business match-making which allowed the businessmen attending the event to discuss opportunities of economic cooperation with selected Serbian stakeholders. The next occasion offered by the ZIP-Net Project to strengthen the economic relations between the two sides of the Adriatic Sea will be the Final Conference organised in Chieti, Italy, in June 2008.



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www.ceinet.org*