



Know-how Exchange Programme (KEP) ITALY Call for Proposals 2019

The Central European Initiative is glad to announce a new Call for Proposals for the CEI Know-How Exchange Programme (KEP) - ITALY. The projects will be co-financed with funding made available by the CEI Fund at the EBRD, entirely financed by the Italian Government.

Date of publication on www.cei.int : Thursday, 9 May 2019

Deadline for application submission: Monday, 1 July 2019, 12 p.m. (midnight) CEST

Applicants need to carefully observe the criteria and obligations set by this Call before submitting their proposals. Rejection clauses will apply automatically as explained over the text.

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1. Background information

1.1. The Central European Initiative and the CEI Fund at the EBRD

The CEI is a regional forum for cooperation and consultation, which promotes collaboration at political, economic and cultural level in Central Eastern and South-eastern Europe. Founded in 1989, the CEI currently counts 17 Member States: Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Ukraine. Since its inception, the Initiative has aimed at supporting transition countries in their integration process with the European Union (EU). To this end, the CEI seeks to make a sustainable impact in strengthening the capacities of its non-EU Member States to consolidate their institutional and economic background and bring them closer to the Union.

In 1992, Italy signed an Agreement with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) for the establishment of a CEI Fund at the EBRD “to assist the Bank’s countries of operation in central and eastern Europe in their economic and social transformation process.” The Fund, towards which the Italian Government has solely made a total contribution of 47.5 million EUR, mainly provides grant-type assistance for Technical Cooperation (TC) projects. Since its inception, the Fund has provided 25.7 million EUR for funding TC projects. The CEI Fund has also contributed about 2.9 million EUR to the Know-How Exchange Programme (KEP), its second most important instrument and a specific CEI tool.

1.2. The CEI Know-how Exchange Programme

Launched in 2004, the KEP is a development instrument aimed at supporting transfer of experience and expertise from organisations in the EU to peers in the non-EU countries within the CEI region. The rationale of the Programme is based on the assumption that the economic development in non-EU countries can be strengthened through the transfer of best practices and benchmarks already in place in more advanced economies. These transfers could have an invaluable impact by ensuring social cohesion and economic dynamism in the region. By co-financing capacity building and technical assistance projects, the KEP offers grants to institutions willing to share their experience with their partners in the non-EU CEI Member States, thus helping non-members to advance on their path towards EU standards and policies. The KEP focuses on areas of intervention where EU CEI countries demonstrate strong-rooted experience, and where beneficiary states exhibit the strongest need for assistance.

2. Rules for this Call for Proposals

2.1 Available amount and general rules

The overall indicative amount for this Call for Proposals is up to a maximum cumulative amount of 290,000 EUR that will be made available through the CEI Fund at the EBRD, entirely financed by the Italian Government. The CEI reserves the right not to award all available funds, to annul the Call for Proposals and reject all project proposals at any time prior to the awarding of grants, without thereby incurring any liability. Up to fifteen (15) days before the deadline for submission of project proposals, the CEI reserves the right to amend this Call for Proposals by issuing addenda. Any addendum published at <http://www.cei.int/kep> will become an integral part of the Call for Proposals. If a project proposal has been submitted before the issuing of the last addenda, the applicant has the right to withdraw, substitute or modify its project proposal by sending - within the deadline for the submission of the project proposals - the amended project proposal.

2.2 Eligibility criteria

Any project proposal awarded under this Call for Proposals shall fully satisfy all the following eligibility criteria:

- Compliance of project objectives.
- Eligibility of applicants.

- Eligibility of beneficiaries.
- Eligibility of project activities.
- Eligibility of costs and CEI grant ceiling.

2.2.1 Compliant project objectives

The overall objective of this Call for Proposals is to contribute to the development of the CEI region, bolstering social cohesion and economic dynamism while strengthening cooperation between the CEI Member States. A project proposal has to be in line with the CEI Plan of Action 2018-2020. The KEP focuses on areas of intervention where CEI-EU countries have demonstrated strong-rooted experience, and where beneficiary states have shown the strongest need for assistance. Project Proposals are required to address at least one of the KEP Priorities (see Annex I). Proposals also have to show an economic rationale, cover investment aspects, economic transition, capacity building, or the business environment, in areas related to general development and European economic integration. All project objectives – general and specific – stated in the Application Form must be well defined, attainable and linked to tangible project activities. Overambitious objectives, not directly linked to activities of the project or impossible to post-evaluate, are likely to be poorly scored (see Annex II.3).

2.2.2 Eligible applicants

All public and private entities with legal personality based and registered in an EU CEI Member State, namely: Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia. All applicants shall refer to their legal status within the Application Form. International/regional organisations outside the CEI Member States can apply provided their members largely covers the CEI region. Individuals cannot apply. The applicant shall demonstrate and give evidence of experience in the sector of intervention, and of capability to deliver the proposed project results. The applicant is expected to be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the project for its entire duration. Preference will be given to projects displaying the ability of applicants to integrate or align project proposals into wider frameworks of related interventions.

2.2.3 Eligible beneficiaries

All public and private entities with legal personality based and registered in a non-EU CEI Member State, namely: Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Ukraine. The applicant shall highlight to which extent the beneficiary has participated in the project planning and drafting of the application. Information provided shall demonstrate that the project has been designed according to the beneficiary needs and that the beneficiary will be fully committed to its implementation. In case of more than one beneficiary, projects will be assessed on their potential to effectively and sustainably affect all beneficiaries, according to the overall budget and objectives. Whenever a project engages more than one beneficiary, the know-how needs of all beneficiaries are to be addressed by the project.

2.2.4 Eligible activities

Project proposals should present an appropriate range of activities for an efficient and effective transfer of a given know-how. They could be carried out through, but not limited to: on-the-job training, workshops, staff secondment, study tours, peer review missions, assistance in the preparation of strategic documents (e.g. development plans, reforms, strategic studies, etc.), technology transfer, technical assistance.

Applicants are requested to clearly state when the activity is expected to begin and end, how it will be organised, who will be responsible for its implementation, and the expected outputs and relation to the project objectives. The applicant shall also describe any planned follow-up activities after the official conclusion of the project. Project proposals are to create an impact through multiple activities and instruments, combining theoretical training (workshops, conferences, etc.) and more practical activities (site visits, on-the-job training, etc.). Proposals are to motivate the potential use of innovative and experimental means of capacity building.

Applicants are also required to clearly state any potential implementation risks and to propose related mitigating measures. Potential risks could include outstanding activities or decisions outside of the scope and/or control of the project, which could compromise the successful implementation, outputs and impact of the project.

All project activities shall take place in the CEI region and the CEI shall approve any exceptions to this rule.

The applicant is required to present a realistic and verifiable work plan and timetable of the envisaged activities, taking into account the necessary time for partners and/or contractors to mobilise resources, etc.

Project implementation should indicatively start after 01 January 2020. Project duration should normally not exceed two (2) years, while there is no minimum duration of the project. Whenever possible, the proposed project should also include post-implementation evaluation activities.

2.2.5 Eligibility of project costs and CEI grants ceiling

The estimated total project budget as well as the requested CEI grant shall be Euro-denominated and clearly indicated at points 6.2, 6.3, and 7.1 of the Application Form including the Budget Template. In principle, the CEI grant can be requested for any type of costs linked to the project implementation. The applicant is entirely responsible for the calculations leading to the outlined budget estimates including currency conversions and local taxes and levies. The CEI is not responsible for and will not reimburse currency rate variations, nor can the CEI be charged with potential shortages or financial consequences of exchange rate fluctuations and underestimation or disregard of national fiscal regulations by the applicant. Budget calculations in countries not using the Euro currency can take the exchange rate of the National Bank of their country on the day the application is submitted. The CEI grant will be transferred in Euro. The CEI will not be responsible for any depreciation of the transferred instalments of the CEI contribution.

Any grant awarded under this Call for Proposals shall not exceed fifty per cent (50%) of the total cost of a given project. The maximum grant amount allocated to a single project cannot exceed forty thousand euros (40,000 EUR). The balance is to be financed from the applicant's own resources or from other sources, including in-kind contributions.

2.3. Other mandatory considerations for project management

Applicants are fully responsible for the drafting of the Application Form and the Budget according to the KEP Application Form Guidelines and the information contained in this Call. Applicants are also entirely responsible for proposing and implementing actions to appropriately advertise and disseminate information regarding the project, and the CEI, throughout the implementation of the project as well as in any follow-up activity. Applicants are also responsible for providing information on and for any post-implementation activities. In some cases, projects might have an impact over a longer period, and a comprehensive final evaluation of its impact on beneficiaries cannot be carried out as a project activity. In such cases, in order to enable the CEI to carry out a post-implementation assessment, applicants should also clearly define tangible indicators.

3. How to apply

3.1 Application Form

The applicant shall complete the Application Form, including the Budget Template, in accordance with the instructions provided in this Call for Proposals and in the KEP Application Form Guidelines. The applicant is requested to complete the documents as carefully and as clearly as possible. Please note that:

- The project proposals' assessment will be based on the Application Form and supporting documents (if any) the Applicant submits only.
- The Application Form must be completed in English.

- Incomplete applications will be rejected.
- Under this Call for Proposals, applicants can submit up to two distinct project proposals, provided that the beneficiaries are different.
- Handwritten application forms will be rejected.

3.2 Submission

The Application Form, the Budget Template, and supporting documents (if any) shall be submitted via e-mail only (Subject: KEP ITALY CfP2019 – APPLICANT’S COUNTRY – PROJECT TITLE or ACRONYM). The project proposal has to be sent in electronic format as follows:

- a PDF copy of the Application Form with legible applicant and beneficiary signatures and stamps where requested in the Application Form.
- a word format of the Application Form.
- Budget (the use of the Budget Template is mandatory).

Project proposals shall be submitted to kep@cei.int and to the CEI National Coordinator (Cc) of the applicant’s country (contact details are available at <https://www.cei.int/national-co-ordinators>). If a copy is not sent to the CEI National Coordinator as specified above, the project proposal may be rejected. Project proposals from international organisations and other transnational bodies can be submitted directly to kep@cei.int.

For technical reasons the Application Form and related documentation as listed above shall not exceed the size limit of 6 MB.

3.3 Deadline

The deadline for the submission of project proposals is Monday, 1 July 2019, 12 p.m. (midnight) CEST. Any application submitted after this deadline will be rejected.

3.4 Additional information

Questions shall be sent in English no later than fifteen (15) days before the submission deadline to kep@cei.int. Answers will be provided no later than ten (10) days before the deadline for submitting proposals. All questions received and related answers will be published on the CEI website in order to give a fair, transparent and equal treatment to all applicants. In the interest of equal treatment for applicants, the CEI does not provide any support and/or assistance for the creation of the project partnership.

3.5 Period of Validity of the Project Proposal

Project proposals shall remain valid for one hundred and eighty (180) calendar days after the deadline for submission of Project proposals. A Project proposal valid for a shorter period shall will be rejected.

4. Evaluation procedure

Project Proposals will be evaluated according to the following steps:

- Administrative check
- Eligibility check
- Evaluation of the Project Proposals

Please note that only Project proposals passing steps 1 and step 2, will go on to step 3.

4.1 Administrative check

Project Proposals will be checked according to the criteria outlined in Annex II.1. If a Project proposal does not meet all criteria, it will be rejected.

4.2 Eligibility check

Project Proposals will be assessed according to the criteria outlined in Annex II.2. If a Project proposal does not meet all criteria, it will be rejected.

4.3 Evaluation of the Project Proposals

The evaluation of the project proposals will be carried out according to the Evaluation Grid (Annex II.3). At the end of the evaluation, the project proposals will be ranked according to a merit point system. To assist in the examination, evaluation, and comparison of the project proposals and qualification of the applicants the CEI may, at its discretion, ask any applicant for clarifications. The request for clarifications from the CEI and replies shall be in writing. No change in the substance of the project proposal shall be sought, offered, or permitted. If an applicant does not provide clarifications of its project proposal by the date and time set by the CEI, its project proposal may be rejected. Any attempt by an applicant, direct or indirect, to interfere and/or breach the confidentiality of the tendering, evaluation and awarding process may result in the rejection of the applicant's proposal.

5. Approval procedure and the CEI grant

5.1 Approval procedure

The Committee of CEI National Coordinators will approve the highest ranked project proposals within the available resources of this Call for Proposals.

5.2 Awarding of grants and Grant Agreement

After approval, applicants will be informed on the amount of the approved CEI grant and related conditions. Applicants will be requested to sign a Grant Agreement on the terms of project implementation and management of the CEI grant.

6. Timetable

Publication of the Call for Proposals: Thursday, 9 May 2019

Deadline for submission of project proposals: Monday, 1 July 2019, 12 p.m. (midnight) CEST

Expected awarding of grants: October 2019

7. Debriefings

Any requests for clarifications regarding discarded project proposals are to be addressed to kep@cei.int. A formal debriefing meeting at the appropriate level, and with the relevant staff and the project applicant, will be organised as appropriate to discuss strengths and weaknesses of the project proposal. No additional information will be disclosed.

8. Contacts

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ANNEX I. KEP Priority Areas

I. European Integration, Capacity Building and Market Economy

- I.1. European integration (preparing for the process of EU accession, including assistance in the elaboration of position papers, plans of action, analysis, and other strategic documents; improving skills of the public administration to carry out effective meetings with EU officials; assistance in the drafting of laws in accordance with EU requirements);
- I.2. Strengthening the rule of law through the introduction of appropriate European standards;
- I.3. Strengthening capacities of central administration (including institution building, improvement of efficiency and performance of the State administration, application of high standards and transparency in civil service and provision of adequate professional training for civil service employees);
- I.4. Assistance in economic transformation (creating conditions for the transition to a free-market economy, privatisation, reform of the public sector finances);
- I.5. Support to second-generation reforms (with particular attention to corporate governance, financial and banking sector services, and to capital markets);
- I.6. Improvement of local labour market efficiency and development of micro, small and medium-sized enterprise sectors (including support to the start-up of SME, promotion of spin-offs and innovative enterprises, development of micro-credit schemes, and SME financing);
- I.7. Strengthening administrative structures at regional and local levels (including assistance in the preparation of development strategies, implementation of transparency measures for local government finance system, and human resources development for local administration employees).
- I.8. Strengthening the social advancement of the beneficiary countries (development of the civil society, promotion of corporate social responsibility, etc.)

II. Infrastructure Planning and Development

- II.1. Technical assistance for infrastructure development (provision of consultancy in planning, rehabilitation and development of transport, municipal and other infrastructure of high economic impact; support to the application of public-private partnership schemes);
- II.2. Development of Geographic Information Systems (GIS).

III. Agriculture, Energy, and Environment

- III.1. Energy (know-how transfer in the following areas: energy efficiency, renewable sources of energy, clean energy and climate change);
- III.2. Environment (protection of the natural environment, waste management, water management and water resource development);
- III.3. Development of agriculture and rural areas (including food safety and food quality applications and regulatory standards, farm development plans, development of infrastructure for wholesale trade of agricultural products, training of specialists in farming-related areas; promotion of rural and environmentally-sensitive tourism);

ANNEX II. Evaluation

Administrative check

Criteria	Yes/No
Has the submission deadline been respected?	
Have all the parts of the Application Form, including the Budget, been filled-in?	
Have the Application Form and the Budget been completed in English?	
Is the Application Form duly signed by the applicant and the beneficiary?	

Eligibility check

Criteria	Yes/No
Are the project objectives compliant with the criteria set out in section 2.2.1 of this Call for Proposals?	
Does the applicant fulfil the criteria set out in section 2.2.2 of this Call for Proposals?	
Does the beneficiary fulfil the criteria set out in section 2.2.3 of this Call for Proposals?	
Are project activities compliant with the criteria set out in section 2.2.4 of this Call for Proposals?	
Is the grant request in line with the criteria set out in section 2.2.5, i.e. it shall not exceed 50% of the project total cost and the requested amount does not exceed 40,000 EUR?	

Evaluation grid

Questions	Maximum score
1 Applicant's operational capacity	10
1.a Does the applicant have sufficient experience in project management?	5
1.b Does the applicant have sufficient knowledge and technical expertise of the issues to be addressed?	5
2 Relevance	20
2.a How relevant is the proposal to the objectives of the Call for Proposals and to one or more of the KEP priorities? (DOUBLE WEIGHTED)	5*2
2.b How relevant is the Project Proposal to the particular need and constraints of the beneficiary (including avoidance of duplication and synergy with other initiatives)?	5
2.c Does the project proposal appropriately address the needs of the beneficiary and the target groups involved?	5
3 Ownership	10

3.a	What is the level of ownership of the project by the beneficiary and the target groups involved (DOUBLE WEIGHTED)?	5*2
4	Methodology	15
4.a	Are the proposed activities coherent, appropriate, practical, and consistent with the objectives and results as laid down in the application form?	5
4.b	Does the project proposal present objectively verifiable indicators related to the outcome of the action?	5
4.c	Are the proposed activities clear and feasible in the given timeframe?	5
5	Impact and Sustainability	15
5.a	To what extent do the proposed activities contribute to the effective know-how transfer and to the building up of relevant expertise in the beneficiary) institutions?	5
5.b	To what extent are the benefits of the project likely to continue after the cease of the current funding?	5
5.c	Which are the replication opportunities of the project (i.e. scope, extension of outcome of activities and dissemination of information)?	5
6	Dissemination and promotion	5
6.a	What is the quality of the proposed communication plan and the CEI's visibility?	5
7	Budget and cost-effectiveness	25
7.a	Are the estimated costs coherent with the expected results (TRIPLE WEIGHTED)?	5*3
7.b	Are the proposed costs needed for the implementation of the activities?	5
7.c	Does the project offer value for money?	5
Maximum total score		100

Scoring guidelines: This evaluation grid is divided into subsections. Each question is answered on a scale from 0 (zero) to 5, where 5 is the highest possible score, and 0 is the lowest. These scores are added to give the total score for the section concerned.