



KEP ITALY

Financed by the CEI Fund at the EBRD

Call for Proposals 2014

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Introduction

The Central European Initiative (CEI) 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.

1. Background information

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

The CEI is a regional forum for cooperation and consultation, which promotes collaboration at political, economic and cultural level in central and eastern Europe. Founded in 1989, the CEI now counts 18 member states: Albania, Austria, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, and Ukraine. Since its inception, the Initiative's main aim has been to support transition countries in the process of integration with the European Union. To achieve this, the CEI seeks to make a sustainable impact in strengthening the capacities of its member states remaining outside the EU 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) on 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." A Secretariat for CEI Projects, later renamed Office for the CEI Fund at the EBRD - hereinafter called the Office - was established to manage the Fund and enable activities of pre-investment and capacity building for the identification, promotion and appraisal of projects in the CEI region, as well as activities related to project implementation. The Fund, towards which the Italian Government has solely made a total contribution of €38.5 million, mainly provides grant-type assistance for specific components of Technical Cooperation (TC) projects. Since its inception, the Fund has provided more than €23 million for funding TC projects. The CEI Fund also contributed a total of more than €1.7 million to the Know-How Exchange Programme, which is its second most important instrument and a specific CEI tool. The total value of KEP projects supported by the CEI Fund so far, including the mandatory co-financing from partner organisations, is about €6 million.

1.2 The CEI Know-how Exchange Programme (KEP) www.cei.int/KEP

Launched in 2004, the CEI Know-how Exchange Programme (KEP) is a development instrument aimed to support transfer of experience from organisation 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. The CEI Fund at the EBRD has provided co-financing to KEP projects since the Programme's launch in 2004.

2. Rules for the present Call for Proposals

2.1 Available amount and general rules

The overall indicative amount made available under this Call for Proposals is two hundred and sixty thousand euro (€260,000), that will be made available by the CEI Fund at the EBRD, entirely financed by the Italian Government.

The CEI reserves the right to not award all available funds. In addition, the CEI reserves the right to reject any Project Proposal, and/or to annul the Call for Proposals and reject all Application Forms at any time prior to the award of grants, without thereby incurring any liability. In case of annulment of the Call for Proposals, all Project Proposals and related material shall be promptly returned to the applicants.

Up to fifteen (15) days before the deadline for submission of Project Proposals the CEI reserves the right to amend the present Call for Proposals by issuing addenda. Any addendum issued will become an integral part of the Call for Proposals upon being published at the following link: <http://www.cei.int/KEP?tab=2>

If a Project Proposal has been submitted before the issuing of the last addenda issued by the Office, 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, a written notice duly signed by the Applicant, with the amended Project Proposal duly signed by the project's partners.

2.2 Size of potential grants

Any grant awarded under this Call for Proposals shall not exceed fifty per cent (50%) of the total cost of a given project, and the maximum grant amount allocated to a single project cannot exceed forty thousand euro (€40,000). Exceptions to this rule can be recommended by the Office and must be approved by the Committee of CEI National Coordinators (CNC).

2.3 Eligibility criteria

Any Project Proposal awarded under this Call for Proposals shall fully satisfy the following six eligibility criteria:

1. Compliance of Project objectives and priorities with the CEI Plan of Action 2014-2016 and with the KEP priorities.
2. Eligibility of applicant(s).
3. Eligibility of beneficiary(s).
4. Eligibility of the activities foreseen by the Project Proposal.
5. Eligibility of types of cost which may be taken into account in setting the amount of the CEI grant.

2.3.1 Compliant objectives and priorities

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 the cooperation between the CEI member states. Therefore, a Project Proposal has to satisfy the CEI Plan of Action 2014-2016 that can be accessed at <http://www.cei.int/content/publications>

Moreover, the Know-how Exchange Programme is focused on areas of intervention where CEI-EU countries demonstrated strong-rooted experience, and where beneficiary states exhibited the strongest need for assistance, therefore Project Proposals are required to address at least one of the KEP priorities (Annex I).

Lastly, eligible projects are required 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. Therefore, the CEI considers important that projects respond to KEP priority sectors and lead to an investment related impact.

All project objectives – general and specific – stated in the Application Form must be well defined, attainable and linked to concrete project activities. With experience in managing KEP projects for over ten years, the CEI recognises the advantages of such projects, as well as their limitations. Objectives which are overambitious, not directly linked to activities of the project or impossible to post-evaluate, might score low points in the evaluation grid (Annex II.3).

Applicants are requested to provide information in the Application Form (item 3.1) regarding the activity of International Financial Institutions and of other aid donors in the beneficiary countries and in the targeted area of intervention. The CEI will use this information to ensure non-duplication of previous or existing efforts, and to place the KEP assignment in a greater context and, thus, enhance its potential impact. This information will be used in the selection criteria for compliance of project objectives and priorities.

2.3.2 Eligible applicants

The applicant shall be from organisations registered in CEI member states which are also members of the European Union, i.e. Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia.

The following types of applicants are eligible to apply: all public and private sector bodies, international and non-governmental organisations operating in the public interest, e.g. national, regional and local authorities, education/research institutions, environmental organisations.

In case of applications from international organisations that facilitate cooperation between the know-how providers and the beneficiary(s) institutions, the CEI grant shall be transferred to and managed by such international body.

The applicant shall demonstrate and give evidence of their experience in the sector of intervention, and of their capability to deliver the proposed project results. The applicant is expected to be directly responsible for the preparation and management of the project for all its duration. Applicants must also demonstrate their competitive advantage in the proposed area of intervention, relative to organisations from other CEI countries of eligible applicants. Applicants are required to provide background information on their experience concerning:

- (i) involvement in related projects, and
- (ii) knowledge of and experience with the beneficiary, their country and their region.

Preference will be given to projects which display the ability of applicant(s) to integrate or align the proposed KEP assignment into wider frameworks of related interventions. CEI experience in managing the KEP has also shown that projects reached higher levels of impact when the applicant had previous experience in the beneficiary countries. Applicant has to demonstrate knowledge of the beneficiary(s), of the beneficiary(s)' countries, and of the specific region targeted.

In order to give an equal treatment to all the applicants, the Office for the CEI Fund at the EBRD does not provide any support and/or assistance in the creation of the project's partnership.

2.3.3 Eligible beneficiary(s)

The beneficiary(s) shall be organisations registered in CEI member states which are not members of the European Union, and that are ODA-eligible: Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, and Ukraine.

The applicant shall highlight to which extent the beneficiary(s) have participated in the planning of the project and drafting of the application. Information provided shall demonstrate that the project has been designed according to the beneficiary(s) needs and that the beneficiary(s) will be fully committed to its implementation. Such information should mention concrete examples of areas of fit between the proposed assignment and the beneficiary(s)'s official strategy, development plans, and other strategic documents.

In the case of more than one beneficiary, projects will be assessed on their potential to effectively and sustainably impact all beneficiaries, proportionally to the overall budget and objectives. Additionally, whenever a project engages more than one group of beneficiaries, assurances should be made that the know-how needs of each of these groups are sufficiently addressed by the project.

2.3.4 Eligible activities

Project Proposals should present an appropriate range of activities, which promise efficient and effective transfer of a given know-how. The attainment of such a transfer may require, but is not limited to, the following type of activities: on-the-job training, workshops, secondment of staff, study tours, peer review missions, assistance in the preparation of strategic documents (e.g. development plans, reforms, strategic studies, etc.), technology transfer, technical assistance.

The applicants are requested to clearly state when the activity is expected to begin and finalise, how it will be organised, who will be responsible for its implementation, and the expected outputs and relation to the stated project objectives. In addition, the applicant shall also describe if any follow-up activity is planned after the official conclusion of the project.

The CEI considers important that project proposals are aimed to create impact through multiple activities and instruments, and by combining theoretical training (workshops, conferences, etc.) and more practical activities (site visits, on-the-job training, etc.). Proposals are also asked to motivate the potential use of innovative and experimental means of building capacity. The applicants are also required to clearly state in the Application Form any and all 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 prejudice the successful implementation, outputs and impact of the project. Failure to include risks which may seem to have resulted as a negligence of the applicant may result in the CEI later withholding parts of the awarded grant, or the entire amount.

All project activities shall take place in the CEI region and any exceptions to this rule shall be approved by the Office.

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

Project duration: Project implementation should indicatively start after 01 January 2015. Project duration should normally not exceed two (2) years. Whenever possible, the proposed project should also include post-implementation evaluation activities.

2.3.5 Other mandatory considerations for project management

Applicants are fully responsible for the drafting of the Application Form and the Budget Excel File according to the KEP Application Form Guidelines and the information contained in the present document.

Applicants are also entirely responsible for proposing and implementing appropriate actions to appropriately publicise and disseminate information regarding the project, and the CEI throughout the implementation of the project as well as in any follow-up activities related in any way to the project.

Lastly, applicants are also responsible to provide information on and to undertake any post-implementation activities available at their disposal and appropriate to the proposed intervention. In some cases, projects might have impact over a longer period of time, and so a complete and definitive evaluation of its impact on final beneficiaries cannot be carried out as a project activity. In such cases, in addition to the post implementation assessment, applicants should also clearly define, concrete assessment indicators for a potential final evaluation carried out by the CEI.

2.3.6 Eligible costs

Estimated project total cost and CEI contribution

Any amount shall be given in euro. The estimated total project cost in euro and the amount of grant applied for have to be clearly stated in parts 6.2; 6.3 and 7.1 of the Application Form. In principle a CEI grant can be used towards any types of costs associated with project implementation.

Exchange rate fluctuations

The budget of the Application Form shall be outlined in Euro-denominated amounts. The Applicant is entirely responsible of 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 which are not using the Euro currency can take as basis the exchange rate of the National Bank of their country on the day of submitting the Application. The CEI contribution will be transferred in Euro. Payments in a local currency through bank transfers to accounts in the bank denominated by the Applicant are usually automatically converted by the recipient's bank to the currency of the account, using the exchange rate of the date of transaction. In any such cases, the CEI will not be responsible of any depreciation of the transferred tranches of the CEI contribution.

More information on how to present the budget and on the project financing can be found in the KEP Application Form Guidelines.

3. How to apply

3.1 Application Form

The applicant shall complete the KEP Application Form, which includes the Budget Excel file, 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 carefully and as clearly as possible. The Application Form can be downloaded from the following address: www.cei.int/KEP?tab=2

Please note that:

- The Project Proposals assessment will be based only on the Application Form and supporting documents (if any) the Applicant submits.
- The Application Form must be completed in English.
- Incomplete Applications Form will be rejected.
- Under this Call for Proposals an applicant must not submit more than one Project Proposal. If an applicant submits or participates, in any capacity whatsoever, in more than one Project Proposal, all of its Project Proposals will be rejected.
- Handwritten applications forms will not be accepted.

3.2 Submission

The Application Form, and supporting documents (if any) shall be submitted via e-mail (Subject: KEP CEI Fund at the EBRD Call 2014 – APPLICANT'S COUNTRY – PROJECT NAME). The Project Proposal has to be sent in electronic format as follows:

1. a PDF copy of the Application Form with legible applicant and beneficiary(s) signatures and stamps on the last page of the application form.
2. a Word format of the Application Form.
3. the Budget Excel file.

The Project Proposal shall be submitted to kep.italy@cei.int and in copy to the CEI National Coordinator of the applicant's country. Contact details of the CEI National Coordinators are available at: <http://www.cei.int/contacts/National%2BCo-ordinators> . If the CEI National Coordinator of the applicant's country is not in copy in the submission email message, the Project Proposal may be rejected. Project Proposals from international organisations and other transnational bodies can be submitted directly to kep.italy@cei.int

3.3 Deadline

The deadline for the submission of Project Proposals is **15 July 2014 (midnight GMT)**. Any application submitted after the deadline will automatically be rejected.

3.4 Additional information

Questions shall be sent via email in English no later than fifteen (15) days before the deadline for the proposals submission to the following email address: biadene@cei.int . The Office will reply no later than ten (10) days before the deadline for the proposals submission. All the questions received by the Office and their related answers will be published on the CEI website in order to give a fair, transparent and equal treatment to all the applicants. In the interest of equal treatment for applicants, the Office cannot give a prior opinion on the eligibility of an applicant, a partner or an action.

3.5 Period of Validity of the Project Proposal

Project Proposals shall remain valid for one hundred fifty (180) calendar days after the deadline for submission of Project Proposals. A Project Proposal valid for a shorter period shall be rejected by the Office as non responsive.

4. Evaluation procedure

Project Proposals will be evaluated on the basis of the following steps:

1. Administrative control. (See point 4.1)
2. Eligibility check. (See point 4.2)
3. Comprehensive evaluation of the Project Proposals. (See point 4.3)

Please note that only if the Project Proposal has already got through the first and the second steps, i.e. administrative control and the eligibility check of applicant(s), beneficiary(s), and request for grant will it be taken into consideration for the third step, i.e. the comprehensive evaluation of the Project Proposals.

4.1 Administrative check

The application will be checked according to the following criteria as outlined in Annex II.1. If the Project Proposal does not meet all the criteria, it will be automatically rejected.

4.2 Eligibility check

The application will be assessed according to the criteria as outlined in Annex II.2. If the Project Proposal does not meet all the criteria, it will be automatically rejected.

4.3 Evaluation of the Project Proposals

The comprehensive evaluation of the Project Proposal will be carried out on the basis of the Evaluation grid presented in Annex II.3. At the end of the evaluation and selection procedure the received Project Proposals will be ranked according to the merit point system. To assist in the examination, evaluation, and comparison of the Project Proposals and qualification of the Applicants the Office may, at its discretion, ask any Applicant for a clarification of its Project Proposal, allowing a reasonable time for response. Any clarification submitted by an Applicant that is not in response to a request by the Office shall not be considered. The request for clarification of the Office and the response 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 in the request for clarification of the Office, its Project Proposal may be rejected.

4.4 Additional information

Please note that any attempt by an applicant to interfere or breach the confidentiality of the evaluation and award process may result in the rejection of the applicant's proposal.

5. Approval procedure

5.1 Approval procedure

The CNC will approve the highest ranked Project Proposals within the available resources of the present Call for Proposals.

5.2 Award of grant

After the CNC, the applicant will be informed on the amount of the approved CEI contribution and conditions.

5.3 Grant Agreement

The applicant 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:	09 May 2014
Deadline for project submission:	15 July 2014
Expected award of the grant	December 2014

7. Contacts

For more information on KEP grants to be financed by this Call for Proposals please contact:

Ms Daniela Biadene
Junior Executive Officer
email: biadene@cei.int

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 conduct 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-size 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

1. Administrative check

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

2. Eligibility check

Criteria	Answer Yes/No
Does the applicant(s) fulfil the criteria set out in section 2.3.2 of this Call for Proposals?	
Does the beneficiary(s) fulfil the criteria set out in section 2.3.3 of this Call for Proposals?	
Is the grant request in line with the criteria set out in section 2.2, i.e. it shall not exceed 50% of the project total cost and the request amount does not exceed €40,000?	

3. Evaluation grid

QUESTIONS		Maximum score
1	Applicant's operational capacity	10
1.a	Does the applicant have sufficient experience on 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 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(s) and the target groups involved?	5
3	Ownership	10
3.a	What is the level of the ownership of the project by the beneficiary(s) 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 outcome of the action?	5
4.c	Are the proposed activities clear and feasible in the given time-frame?	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(s)?	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	Is the proposal likely to have multiplier effects? (including scope for replication and extension of the outcome of the 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 activity(s)?	5
7.c	Does the project offer value for money?	5
Maximum total score		100
COMMENTS		

Scoring guidelines

This evaluation grid is divided into subsections. Each questions is answered on a scale from 0 (zero) to 5, where 5 is the best score possible, and 0 is the worst. These scores are added to give the total score for the section concerned. The totals for each section are then added together to give the total score for the project. The reasons for giving a determinate overall score shall be explained in the comment box with a general overall assessment.

Score	Meaning
0-49	poor
50-63	adequate
64-75	good
76-87	very good
88-100	excellent