



DECLARATION OF HEADS OF GOVERNMENTS
on the Occasion of the 20th Anniversary of the Establishment of the CEI
Bucharest, 13 November 2009

Twenty years ago, on 11 November 1989, during unprecedented historical changes in Europe which led to the dismantlement of the Iron Curtain and two days after the fall of the Berlin Wall, four countries (Italy, Austria, Hungary and at that time the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), decided to develop a quadrilateral initiative aimed at widening cooperation among them. This regional initiative, initially called the "Quadrangone", was later renamed the Central European Initiative (CEI), and rapidly grew into the largest forum for regional cooperation encompassing countries of the Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. The CEI has promoted the idea for the greater unity of Europe, a Europe without dividing lines and sharing common values.

In its twenty years of existence, the CEI has been an active participant in the historical changes in Europe, playing a valuable role in promoting political dialogue, democracy, tolerance, respect for human rights and the rule of law. It has also become a facilitator of the economic development in its Member States and a true resource centre for the European integration.

The Italian Government established in 1992 and has been financing a CEI Fund at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). The CEI benefited from the decision of the Italian Authorities to host in Trieste in 1996 the Headquarters of the Executive Secretariat of the Initiative, as well as from the substantial support of Austria. With the enlargement of the Initiative, the support of new members became an essential element in strengthening the CEI as an instrument of cooperation in the region.

Today the CEI enjoys the strong support of the Governments of its eighteen Member States, which demonstrates that the objectives of the CEI are still relevant for achieving the integration goals of all its Member States.

We, the Heads of Government of the Member States of the Central European Initiative:

- ? Emphasize the importance of the activities developed by the CEI and reaffirm our commitment to the CEI as an essential platform for enhancing European integration, strengthening co-operation among CEI Member States and increasing socio-economic cohesion of the CEI region,
- ? Stress that supporting the interested non-EU CEI Member States in their endeavors to move towards further European integration is one of the primary tasks for the years ahead,
- ? Reiterate the need for intensified efforts to promote democracy, human rights and functional market economies as key domains with particular relevance for the European integration,
- ? Underline that the CEI will also have to take full advantage of its structures, which have evolved and have been refined over the years,
- ? Emphasize the necessity for the CEI to forge in the years to come a strong partnership among governments, parliaments, business and the civil society in order to optimise the benefits for all its members,

- ? Look forward to pursuing with consistency and coordination the establishment of closer cooperation between the CEI and relevant international and regional organisations. Joint activities have already been undertaken and there are good prospects for increasing complementarity and synergies in the future,
- ? Stress the importance of having a well equipped, financed and structured Initiative and reiterate the commitment to make every effort during the forthcoming years to improve gradually the financial contribution to the funds and instruments aimed at developing project activities, in support of institutional capacities and economic growth of our countries,
- ? Express the willingness to strengthen the operational and project oriented approach and institutional ties with the European Commission,
- ? Commend the EBRD, as the largest single institutional investor in the region, for its response to the economic challenges. They encouraged it to maintain its activities on an expanded level through a strengthening of its capital resources in order to support recovery, protection and deepening of reforms, and the region's integration into the European and global economies,
- ? Acknowledge the usefulness of the Know-how Exchange Programme as a unique instrument aimed at transferring experience on European integration from EU to non-EU CEI Member States and support an increased role for it in the future,
- ? Welcome the growing involvement of the CEI-ES through its Secretariat for EU projects in EU funded projects,
- ? Recognize the importance of cooperation in the fields of environment protection and energy as essential aspects of sustainable development of CEI Member States, and support the continued operation of the CEI Special Fund for Climate and Environment Protection,

Looking forward with confidence to the next decades and we stress the need to ensure that the Central European Initiative uses its regional potential and retains the ability to adapt to the changing international environment in our region and beyond.