

### Coming Up in December / January

7-8 December, Belgrade -  
Great-IST Project // Steering  
Committee Meeting

13 December, Venice - Info  
Day on Marco Polo II  
Programme and EU FP7

15 December, Trieste - CNC  
Meeting // The Committee of  
National Coordinators will gather  
for its last monthly meeting  
this year. The occasion will also  
be used for the Award Ceremony  
of the CEI Medals of Honour as  
well as the "From Research to  
Enterprise" prizes

January 2007, Chieti -  
Launching of the project on  
"Realization and Networking of  
ZIP Enterprises Centres  
(Polyfunctional Industrial  
Zones – ZIP-Net)" // recently  
co-financed within the Adriatic  
New Neighbourhood Programme  
INTERREG/CARDS-PHARE

29-30 January, Trieste -  
Great-IST Project // Meeting of  
Working Group 1

*Season's  
Greetings for  
2007 to all  
partners and  
friends*

## Tirana Summit Highlights Regional Cooperation



*Plenary session of the Summit of the CEI Heads of Government in Tirana*

The Prime Ministers and their representatives who gathered at the CEI Heads of Government Meeting in Tirana on 24 November 2006 discussed the situation of the Region, emphasising the importance of enhanced regional cooperation and the role the CEI was called upon to play in this process.

The Albanian Prime Minister Mr. Sali Berisha called the CEI "a significant forum of political and economic co-operation" and "an outstanding instrument for promoting regional and European integration processes". Mr. Wolfgang Schüssel, Austria's Federal Chancellor, urged the CEI to adjust to the rapidly changing framework conditions. He advocated a stronger focus on priorities and an increased cooperation with the

European Union and other regional organisations.

His words were echoed by Mr. Clemente Mastella, Minister of Justice of Italy, who called for a reduction of the number of CEI Working Groups and reminded the other Member States that the Trust Fund established by Italy at the EBRD was risking depletion of resources unless a formula of co-financing could be agreed upon. Many other speakers, while renewing their commitment to the mandate of the CEI and approving its past performance pointed to the need of a better co-ordination with other regional actors, in particular with the new structures to emerge in the wake of the Stability Pact for South-eastern Europe which will be phased out at the end of 2007.



*Prime Minister Sali Berisha in conversation with Wolfgang Schüssel, Federal Chancellor of the Republic of Austria (left) and Nikola Gruevski, Prime Minister of the Republic of Macedonia (right).*

## Summit: the Challenges Ahead and the Albanian Presidency

The Summit of the CEI Heads of Government offered an opportunity to highlight the main challenges the CEI needs to address in the forthcoming years.

These are the need to find a follow-up instrument for the CEI Trust Fund at EBRD which has been financing technical cooperation projects in conjunction with bank loans; to improve the CEI's status vis-à-vis the European Union; and to achieve an effective co-operation and division of labour with other regional actors, especially those structures to emerge after the phasing out of the Stability Pact for South-eastern Europe.

There was agreement that Albania had made good use of its CEI Presidency sending several important signals. "With its Presidency Albania demonstrated its commitment to an open, market-driven economy in a dynamic and democratic environment, to European integration and to a strengthening of regional structures and cross-border initiatives, not only as a prerequisite for economic progress, but also in the interest of regional stability and good neighbourly relations" said Amb. Harald Kreid, CEI-ES DG.

## High Attendance at CEI Flagship Event



Opening session of the CEI Summit Economic Forum at the Tirana International Hotel

Around 1000 participants from 36 countries gathered in Tirana on 22-23 November on the occasion of the 9<sup>th</sup> CEI Summit Economic Forum (SEF). Under the main thematic title *Fostering Reforms and Innovation for Sustainable Growth*, industry leaders, business managers and senior government officials, representatives of regional, national and international organisations, financial institutions, professionals and consultants had the opportunity to attend 20 sessions ranging from *Fostering Business Climate* to *Exploiting Local Potential* and *Investing in Innovation*.

These formal sessions were complemented by the Interactive Business Area with business info desks and the Project Room (for project presentations) as well as Match-Making facilities (arranging bilateral business meetings among SEF participants).

The SEF was organised by the CEI Project Secretariat in cooperation with the Albanian Ministry of Economy and culminated in the traditional Round Table of CEI Ministers of the Economic Sectors.



### Among Activities Approved for CEI Co-financing: E-Government and EU Accession Monitor

*The Committee of CEI National Coordinators has approved 11 new Cooperation Activities representing a total value of 1.085.760,00 EUR, with the CEI contribution amounting to around 120.000,00 EUR.*

"E-government for the Development in Western Balkan countries: Assessment of the State-of-the-art and of Training Needs within the Public Administrations" is one of the Cooperation Activities for which CEI support was decided upon.

Organised by the CIRPS (Interuniversity Research Centre for Sustainable Development) in Italy, it will carry out an analysis on the e-government systems within the public administrations of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro. The proposal is part of a three-year training and exchange programme among 55 public administrations in the Balkan and Mediterranean

area aimed at achieving high quality training of administrative, political and technical personnel as well as links for know-how exchange and best practices.

The project entitled "EU Accession Monitor", submitted by the Czech NGO Transition on Line (TOL), will also be co-financed by the CEI. Its main objective is to monitor the progress of countries of South-east Europe working towards EU accession as well as to assist journalists in reporting on EU accession issues and its economic aspects in particular.

The CEI financial support will cover a three-day orientation seminar organised within the EU Accession Monitor Project. 22 journalists from South-eastern European countries will receive specialised training to enhance their skills regarding economic affairs (e.g. the common energy market, regional trade and economic cooperation).

## CEI Ministers of Economic Sectors Agree on Need for Creating an Innovation-friendly Environment

Under the Chairmanship of the Albanian Minister of the Economy **Genc Ruli**, the Roundtable of the CEI Ministers of the Economic Sectors, convened in Tirana on 23 November, exchanged views on “Fostering Reforms and Innovation for Sustainable Development”. The Italian Undersecretary of State **Milos Budin**, referring to the elusive goals of the Lisbon Strategy, called for increased effort because “the whole of Europe can only become more competitive and dynamic by starting an ample and profound reform process shared by all countries”. He called for the creation of an innovation-friendly environment. In this he was supported by the Polish Secretary of State **Pavel Poncyljusz** who singled out knowledge, innovation, research and information as well as telecommunication technologies as the driving forces for economic growth and job creation.

Ministers, in general, concurred with Croatia’s Minister **Branko Vukelic** on the pivotal role of “science, innovations and new technologies for raising competitiveness” and with “increasing the attractiveness of the country for foreign and domestic investment” (as the Macedonian Minister **Vera Rafajlovska** pointed out).

Ms. **Brigita Schmoegnerova**, speaking for the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, demonstrated that EU accession had been the strongest motor of reforms and that the countries of the CEI region “have shown a remarkable progress in competitiveness compared to other fast growing emerging markets”. However, according to her, the majority of the CEI countries perform poorly as to expenditures on research and development of a knowledge-based economy. The most advanced transition countries only spend 1.5 percent on R&D compared to 2.5 and 3.5 percent of the most competitive countries in the world. While transition countries have “inherited a highly skilled labour force, regularly outperforming advanced market economies in tests designed to measure quality of human capital”, their training content is already outdated and this puts at risk the skills of tomorrow’s workforce in these countries.

## Capacity Building in Serbian Communications Sector

250.000 EUR have been allocated from the CEI Trust Fund for the recently approved Technical Project at the Committee of National Coordinators meeting in November.

The project deals with “Institution and Capacity Building in the Communications Sector” and will help the Serbian telecommunications sector to implement working processes consistent with the EU standards. It will last for nine months (March- November 2007).

To this end, the competent Serbian authorities will devise and implement strategies for further sector development; review and analyse the current and potential demand for telephony / ITC services and elaborate a framework for managing and monitoring the radio spectrum throughout the country.

## CEI Parliamentary Assembly Implements New Rules of Procedure

On top of the Agenda of the CEI Parliamentary Assembly, chaired by Mr. Gazmend Oketa and meeting on 2-3 November 2006 in Tirana, was the further development of the CEI Parliamentary Dimension and the implementation of the new Rules of Procedure. In addition to this, the Assembly conducted an exchange of views on “Regional development of higher education in the CEI Member Countries”.

In 2007, the three General Committees (on Political and Home Affairs, Economic Affairs and Cultural Affairs) will be chaired by parliamentarians from Italy, Romania and Albania respectively.

The participants reaffirmed the positive role the Parliamentary Dimension is playing in the EU enlargement process as well as in the implementation of European projects at the local level. The Final Document of the Assembly, tabled at the CEI Summit of the Heads of Government,



not only acknowledged the cohesive role of the CEI in the European Integration process among its Member States and their advancement towards EU membership but also the importance of close cooperation among the three CEI Dimensions (Governmental, Parliamentary and Business).

## Youth: Promoter of Values



Participants during plenary session of the VI CEI Youth Forum in Durres, Albania (Adriatik Hotel)

Around 60 young people from all CEI Member States gathered in Dürres, Albania on the occasion of the main annual event in the field of youth affairs, the VI CEI Youth Forum.

Under the title "Youth: Promoter of Values", the meeting witnessed two main themes of discussion on "Youth Participation and Active Citizenship with Respect to Human Rights" and "Youth and Sustainable Development".

The former, through a workshop on "Establishing Youth Councils" and the participation of experts from the Council of Europe, gave special attention to youth policy development at local level as well as to enhancing the involvement of young people in the elaboration and implementation of these policies in order to encourage new concrete youth initiatives in the social and cultural fields.

The latter was developed within a workshop on "Youth: Active Promoter of Sustainable Development" (see photo), inspired by a project under the INTERREG III B CADSES Programme, the RAVE Space Project - "Raising Awareness of Values of Space in the Process of Education"



- aiming at improving education processes in the issues of spatial planning and sustainable development, in which the CEI is involved as a partner. The workshop, through contributions from experts and good practices as well as brainstorming sessions among the participants, discussed the relevance of values of space and the role of youth in spatial planning as well as that of individual awareness and responsibility in the process of sustainable development and life style adoption. The link established between the VI CEI Youth Forum and the R.A.V.E. Space project offered the opportunity to involve the young people attending the Forum in a European key debate.

In summary, the Final Declaration tabled at the CEI Summit (24 November, Tirana), recommends "to recognise the need for and / or develop national youth strategies and youth policies and to involve young people in decision-making in all other policies affecting them" as well as "to promote sustainable development not just as a future need but as a strategic and tangible goal that can be achieved today through education and participation based on the protection of the environment and social justice".

The event was organised by the Albanian Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sport, in cooperation with the CEI Executive Secretariat.

## Prague: Special Focus on Human Resource Development and Training

### *CEI WG on Human Resource Development and Training*

Held on 9 November, participants from 12 CEI Member States discussed the implementation of the core issues specified in the new CEI Plan of Action 2007-2009 on "Lifelong Learning, Training Programmes for Young Entrepreneurs" and on "Quality of Training Programmes and Training Institutions".

In particular, the Working Group, following a suggestion of Ms. Jarmila Modrá of the Czech Republic, agreed to pay special attention to training for public administration and training related to the labour market. Other crucial themes for future activities such as training guidance, training of unemployed people, equal opportunities and transparency of qualifications were highlighted.

### *CEI Human Resource Development Forum on "Financing Further Professional Training"*

Back to back with the CEI WG meeting, the Forum, held on 10 November, gathered about 80 participants from 14 CEI Member Countries as well as from Finland, Germany, the UK and South Africa. Special attention was paid to finding effective ways of financing further professional training with an aim of raising competitiveness at all levels (i.e. personal, professional and governmental). Emphasis was put on the need to perceive training and life-long learning as an investment rather than an expense. This wrong perception, in fact, represents one of the root obstacles in the efforts of financing further professional training.