



CEI MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON SCIENCE AND RESEARCH

Trieste, 13 December 2019

TRIESTE DECLARATION ON SCIENCE

The Ministers in charge of Research, Innovation and Higher Education of the Member States of the Central European Initiative (CEI) met on the occasion of the CEI Ministerial Conference on Science and Research in Trieste on December 13th, 2019.

H.E. Minister Lorenzo Fioramonti, representing the CEI Presidency held by Italy in 2019, chaired the Conference.

The CEI Ministers

in charge of Research, Innovation and Higher Education

Being aware of the challenges and opportunities facing the CEI Member States and **underlining** the importance of research, innovation and higher education for addressing grand societal challenges through regional cooperation, in order to promote sustainable economic growth, increase employability and social inclusion and create new opportunities for youth across the CEI area;

Acknowledging the recommendations included in the Trieste Declaration, endorsed by the CEI Ministers of Foreign Affairs, gathered in Trieste on June 12, 2019, which *inter alia* highlight the need for “strengthening scientific research and innovation through academic cooperation, exchange programs and joint ventures”;

Emphasizing the decisive role that international scientific cooperation, plays for the implementation of the CEI political mission as well as to attain the goals summarized in the CEI Plan of Action;

1. RECOGNIZE the importance of the CEI as a well-established forum for dialogue and platform for result-oriented cooperation, in which context interactions between scientists, diplomats and policy-makers shall be facilitated with the goal to tackle complex, science-driven issues of common interest;

2. WELCOME the initiatives undertaken by the CEI in the field of Science Diplomacy and encourage exploring this concept further, including through the implementation of trainings, capacity building actions, research activities and networking;

3. STRESS that cooperation between the CEI and the United Nations (UN) should be enhanced through a stronger connection with the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this context, welcome the presentation of the CEI at the margins of the High Level Political Forum (New York, 17 July 2019) as a valuable step;

4. ACKNOWLEDGE the necessity to establish closer links with the European Commission (EC) and with other strategic players such as the Joint Research Centre (JRC) and the European Cooperation in Science & Technology (COST). To this aim, welcome initial steps such as the participation of the CEI, with an observer status, in science-related multilateral *fora* as in the case of the Steering Platform on Research and Innovation for the Western Balkan Countries and of the Steering Group on Knowledge Society of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, as well as within the framework of Eastern Partnership;

5. CONSIDER that the CEI shall support the setting up of partnerships and collaborative networks, also aiming to promote the participation of its non-EU Member States in Horizon 2020 and in future Horizon Europe;

6. WELCOME cooperation among centres of excellence and science and innovation systems across the CEI area, with a specific focus on topics such as natural risk mitigation and adaptation, blue growth, capacity building and training on Science Diplomacy, including through the support of CEI Member States researchers' mobility;

7. ENCOURAGE the participation of CEI Member States, their scientific and business communities, in the Euro Science Open Forum (ESOF), scheduled in Trieste on 5-9 July 2020;

8. EXPRESS support to regional initiatives such as the establishment of the South East European International Institute for Sustainable Technologies (SEEIIST) and the Western Balkans Research Foundation (WBRF), as well as to the programme cooperation with Elettra/Fermi or the cooperation within CERIC ERIC, given the importance of science and international research infrastructures as essential tools for uniting nations and bridging political and developmental divides;

9. MANDATE the CEI-Executive Secretariat to design actions and initiatives in line with the content of this declaration, with a focus on Science Diplomacy, mobility of researchers, staff exchange, promotion of transnational collaborative networks and scientific panels on topics relevant to the CEI membership;

AGREE

On the relevance to meet regularly in this format, as part of the annual calendar of the CEI Presidency.

To task the CEI-Executive Secretariat to elaborate a proposal concerning the establishment of a CEI Network of Experts on Science Diplomacy aimed at promoting synergies with Ministries of Foreign Affairs and developing initiatives of mutual interest of CEI countries. The Network shall meet periodically, ahead of the CEI Ministerial Conference on Science and Research.

To support the CEI-Executive Secretariat in its future endeavours with the ultimate goal of strengthening cooperation in research, innovation and higher education for promoting economic growth, social inclusion and creating new opportunities for youth across the CEI area.

To engage in promoting, in the schooling systems of their countries, knowledge concerning the challenges of sustainable development and to exchange views and elaborate common projects in this regard.

To support the CEI-Executive Secretariat in promoting actions finalized to improve cross-border and transnational cooperation, starting from prevention and mitigation of natural disaster, based on existing initiatives as in the case of the seismic network of the National Institute of Oceanography and Applied Geophysics (OGS), aiming to create a real-time impact estimation system in case of earthquakes in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe.

The Ministers congratulate Italy for the work accomplished during its Presidency of the CEI and thank Montenegro for having enthusiastically accepted to hold the next CEI Presidency in 2020.

The Ministers express their deep appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Italy, to the Region Friuli Venezia Giulia and to the City of Trieste for the warm welcome and hospitality and all arrangements that contributed to the success of this Conference.