

Call for Papers

CEFTA - regional trade area and beyond: Call for Innovative Policy Proposals

in light of 15 years of the CEFTA agreement, European Policy Centre (CEP) and CEFTA **are launching a competition for policy papers on the theme “CEFTA - regional trade area and beyond: Call for Innovative Policy Proposals”**. Interested policy researchers, think tanks and policy research organisations are invited to submit papers for the competition of policy papers (research, analysis, recommendation for improving the CEFTA policies, etc.) on a number of topics relevant for trade and trade related issues, analysing an aspect of CEFTA’s implementation to date and/or providing inputs for further development of CEFTA.

Central European Free Trade Agreement 2006 (CEFTA) was signed in December 2006, and it has marked 15 years in 2021. In the 15 years of its existence, CEFTA achieved significant results and the trade between its Parties notable improved.

The trade in goods and services plays a crucial role in the economies of the CEFTA Parties, not only in terms of the development of the intra-regional agenda, but also the European integration agenda of the CEFTA Parties. This type of cooperation further creates an attractive environment for future investments which contributes to the overall economic development of the Parties and contributes to the better cooperation and development in the region.

From achieving the full liberalisation of trade in goods and further liberalisation in trade in services, via reducing trade related costs, harmonising the policies within the Parties based on the EU legislation, to expanding trade between Parties through electronic exchange of information, CEFTA has ensured transparent trade relations between the Parties that can enable the businesses to improve their capacities for different markets and become a competitive actor in the regional market.

So far, CEFTA has achieved significant results in promotion of free trade in goods and services in the region. The CEFTA perspective was reaffirmed endorsing the Multi-annual Action Plan on a Regional Economic Area (MAP REA) in 2017 and succeeding Common Regional Market (CRM) Action Plan 2021-2024¹,

¹ Common Regional Market Action Plan 2021 – 2024: <https://cefta.int/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Common-Regional-Market-2021-2024-Action-Plan.pdf>



acknowledging CEFTA as one of the key regional actors for facilitating the region's further economic integration.

CRM adopted in November 2020 by the leaders of the Western Balkans, provides the policy framework for regional economic integration. The Action Plan was prepared by the Regional Cooperation Council and CEFTA, in cooperation with other regional actors. It lays out the steps towards the establishment of the Common Regional Market with a regional trade area based on the four freedoms at its core and enriched with digital, investment and innovation and industry areas. It identifies CEFTA as a leading actor for implementation of actions related to the regional trade area.

This initiative also will bring new mechanisms to facilitate trade in CEFTA which will include mutual recognition of certificates and testing for industrial and agricultural products, professional qualifications and financial services. COVID-19 crisis triggered discussions and actions related to free trade in services, free movement of persons, regional e-commerce, and Green Lanes to ensure unimpeded flow of goods. Further measures are being taken to remove non-tariff barriers and support competition regulators.

Furthermore, the European Union's Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans, adopted in October 2020, welcomes the complementarity of the Common Regional Market with the EU integration process, as it will pave the way for a deeper economic integration with the EU Single Market. Importance of CEFTA has been stipulated clearly as the implementation of sectoral agreements in CEFTA will be taken into account in the assessment of how prepared Western Balkan (WB) economies are for participation in the EU Single market in the given sector. Integrating the region more closely with the EU Single market before WB economies accede to the EU is the guiding principle of the Plan.

To promote 15 years of the CEFTA agreement and stimulate discussions on its future work, European Policy Centre (CEP) and CEFTA are inviting policy researchers, think tanks and policy research organisations to participate with the original policy papers that address any issues relevant to the theme of the competition. Suggested topics include, but are not limited to, the following:

- How to improve:
 - trade in goods: agricultural and industrial?
 - trade in services (for example: finance, tourism, postal services)?
 - cooperation in trade related areas (for example: competition, consumer protection, IPR)?
 - digital trade?
 - CEFTA governance?
- How to manage trade in Covid-19 context?
- How to better link CEFTA with the EU integration?
- Relevant lessons from other (multilateral) FTAs

How to increase benefits from CEFTA for companies, in particular SMEs?



Papers tackling new potential areas of CEFTA's development and future work are more than appreciated.

The competition is open to papers from all fields of policy making, i.e., papers which will include practical policy options, policy solutions and policy recommendations which will support CEFTA Parties to make evidence-based decisions on future CEFTA development.

Eligible Candidates

The competition is open to think tanks and research organisations, as well as individual policy researchers dealing with public policy issues. Co-authored papers are eligible but, to be considered for the award, the lead author should meet all eligibility criteria. It is important to note that papers from all geographic regions are eligible for the competition, not only from the CEFTA Parties.

Rules and guidelines for the open Call for Papers:

1. The open call involves written policy papers which are submitted using [online application form](#), no later than 30 November, at midnight.
2. Each participant is allowed to submit one policy paper to the competition, alongside a short Curriculum Vitae (maximum 2 pages). In addition, policy papers can be co-authored in which case both authors need to submit their CVs.
3. Length of the submission
 - a. The policy paper shall be no longer than 15,000 words, including footnotes, tables and references. There is no down limit, although papers shorter than 5,000 words are not encouraged.
4. Language of the submission
 - a. Submissions should be written only in English
5. Topic of the submission:
 - a. The policy paper is required to follow CEFTA related topics and is required to contribute with relevant recommendations.
6. Format requirement:
 - a. Typed on a A4 size electronic page;
 - b. Font size shall be 11 points and font used should be Arial;
 - c. 1 interlinear space;
 - d. All submissions shall be in Word electronic format.
7. Prizes²:

² Budget for the prizes has been secured by the CEFTA Secretariat



- a. The prize for the first place is in the amount of 3000 €
 - b. The prize for the second place is in the amount of 2000 €
 - c. The prize for the third place is in the amount of 1000 €
 - d. The author(s) should provide full acknowledgement to the CEFTA award in all future publicity and outputs stemming from the winning papers.
 - e. Top 5 selected papers will be presented at the final conference that will be held in November/December in Belgrade.
8. Copyrights:
- a. Copyright in all contributions accepted will remain with the author, and the authors are free to re-use their own material.
 - b. CEP retain editorial rights to review, in cooperation with CEFTA, all papers before publishing. Possible edits would only be form oriented.

Submission

All interested candidates should submit a single file containing a short Curriculum Vitae (max. 2 pages) and the proposed policy paper for the competition, by **November 30, 2021**, at the latest, using [online application](#) form on the EuropeanPolicy Centre website or to the e-mail address: office@cep.org.rs.

NB: Receipt of policy papers will be confirmed via email, in case there is no confirmation within 24 hours from sending your application, please contact us back at office@cep.org.rs.

Selection Process

Papers will be reviewed by a Selection Committee of 3 experts proposed by CEP and the CEFTA Secretariat. To avoid biased grading of papers and potential conflict of interest, it is important to note that members of the Selection Committee will evaluate competition papers anonymously, without knowing the author or organisation of the competing policy paper. One 'best paper' award (worth €3,000³) will be awarded to the paper that is deemed to be of the highest quality on basis of clarity of analysis and presentation, evidence, and policy relevance and in line with the guidelines for development of policy papers. The Selection Committee will also grant up to two commendation awards (worth €2,000 and €1,000) for runner-up papers. The Committee reserves the right not to make any awards or to adjust the number of awards it makes. The decisions of the committee are final. Top 5 selected authors (one per paper) will be invited to present their papers and promote their work during one-day workshop which will be organised

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in November/December 2021, in Belgrade⁴. Winner papers will be considered for publication, with the agreement of the authors, and will be published and promoted online.

Evaluation Grid

The Selection Committee will use the following evaluation form in order to grade all of the submitted policy papers fairly and efficiently:

	Yes	No
ADMINISTRATIVE CHECK (Phase 1)		
Application was submitted within the specified deadline		
The application is complete and contains all attachments published in the Call for Papers (CV of the author/s, policy paper written in English, in Word format, not exceeding 15,000 words)		
Contribution to the CEFTA field of work: the submitted paper clearly explains how it will contribute to the body of knowledge relative to CEFTA related issues and themes.		
EVALUATION OF THE SUBMITTED POLICY PAPERS (Phase 2)	Total	Awarded
Evaluation of the policy paper submitted for the competition	100 points	
- The proposed policy paper enables mutual consistency. The relationship between purpose, analysis, results and proposed recommendations is visible and clear.	30 points	
- The issue has been successfully and precisely addressed in the introduction. The theme of the paper follows and contribute to CEFTA related topics and the submitted paper will make a meaningful contribution to the field with clear and precise recommendations.	25 points	
- Overall presentation the analysis, tackled issues and proposed recommendation is clear and understandable. The valid reasoning demonstrates good judgement and an awareness of the topic's complexities.	20 points	
- The submitted paper used relevant references	10 points	

⁴ Costs of accommodation in Belgrade and travel costs will be covered for up to 5 participants, based on available funding



- The writing is clear, readable and the CEFTA relevant terminology has been used.	15 points	
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Online information session Info day on the Call for Paper will be organised on September 22, in order to provide additional information and reply to all questions potential applicants may have. The session will be held online, using Zoom platform, and all interested applicants should apply for participation to the following e-mail address: office@cep.org.rs. Upon application, the participants will be sent an e-mail with precise time and relevant link for the event.

Programme and Practical Information

Participants will be informed in due course about the online thematic panel discussions that will be organised in addition to the best paper competition. These panel discussions will aim to further promote CEFTA work and the results, ensure networking and cooperation between policy makers and practitioners, and involvement of civil society and policy researchers, and collect valuable inputs for development of CEFTA and fostering of regional economic cooperation.

We are looking forward to your proposals! Should you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact us at office@cep.org.rs

