CEELI INSTITUTE
PRAGUE
ADVANCING THE RULE OF LAW
Mission of the CEELI Institute

VISION:

Globalization of the rule of law

MISSION:

The mission of the CEELI Institute is to advance the rule of law in the world in order to: protect fundamental rights and individual liberties; promote transparent, incorruptible, accountable governments; lay the foundation for economic opportunity and growth; and encourage peaceful resolution of disputes.

IMPLEMENTING THE MISSION

The Institute implements its mission by:

• providing world-class, interactive training and skills development to legal professionals and others committed to the rule of law, both at the Institute’s state-of-the-art facility in Prague and locally in other countries, as requested,

• convening professional conferences, exchanges, and retreats and serving as a private venue for international meetings, discussions, and negotiations,

• continuing its historical readiness to respond promptly to emerging threats to the rule of law and a willingness to partner with other organizations that complement the Institute’s resources and further its mission,

• remaining committed to the pro bono ethic of the Institute’s founders and distinguished faculties, and

• maximizing the relevance, effectiveness, and impact of the Institute’s programs.

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What’s in a Name:

We are often asked, “What does CEELI stand for?” Our acronym reflects our roots and our history: “CEELI” stands for the Central and East European Law Initiative, a pro bono public service project started by the American Bar Association (ABA) in 1990 shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The CEELI project was intended to advance the rule of law by assisting the law reform process in the aspiring democracies of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. More than 5,000 American lawyers, judges, and legal scholars, as well as distinguished professionals from Canada and Europe, served without pay as CEELI volunteers in more than 30 countries and have provided nearly $90 million in pro bono legal services and assistance. Today, the CEELI Institute proudly carries on that legacy, not just in Central and Eastern Europe, but throughout the world.
A Message from the Chair and Founder

Homer E. Moyer, Jr.
Founder and Chairman of the Board

This past year has seen the Institute move into new areas, broaden its reach, and move further towards becoming a self-sustaining, as well as distinctive, rule of law institution. To date, Institute programs and projects have reached thousands of individuals in some 45 countries on 4 different continents. This year, the Institute’s boards adopted strategic vision and mission statements that crystallize what have long been the ideals and objectives of the Institute. These statements, which appear on page 2 of this report, will continue to guide the CEELI Institute as it further matures and broadens its global impact.

Highlights of the year include both innovative new projects and established signature programs for which the Institute has become known. Our joint project with the International Bar Association, which brought together young Israeli and Palestinian lawyers at the Institute, culminated in a remarkable program at the IBAs annual conference in Washington in September. This ground-breaking program will continue and perhaps be replicated for young leaders from other regions in conflict.

As I head into my fourth year at the CEELI Institute I continued to be energized by the innovative nature of our programming, the diversity of programs we have developed, posed to the rule of law in this region and the possibilities on the horizon are greater than ever, and we continue to try to rise to the new challenges that are being posed to the rule of law in this region and beyond.

At CEELI we pride ourselves on the diversity of programs we have developed, the innovative nature of our programming, the world-class excellence of our faculty, and our ever expanding geographic reach. Our lawyer training programs have reached countries as diverse as Burma, Iran, and, most recently, Azerbaijan. The Institute also provides critically needed programmatic lifelines for lawyers working to promote human rights and protect the rule of law in repressive countries. The Institute remains an international leader in promoting judicial independence, a cornerstone of the rule of law, through its Judicial Exchange Network, its support for judges adjudicating terrorism and other high-profile matters, its comprehensive judicial training in Tunisia, and the annual conference of Chief Justices of Central Europe. And the Institute continues to set the standard of excellence in anti-corruption training for investigators, prosecutors, and judges through highly acclaimed programs such as its popular, one-week anti-corruption training course.

We look forward to what lies ahead. With continuing support from an exceptional staff and a board to which we have made distinguished additions this year, we are well-positioned to move ahead. Among the possibilities on the horizon are a new partnerships and collaborative projects for which the Institute has become known. Our joint project with the International Bar Association, which brought together young Israeli and Palestinian lawyers at the Institute, culminated in a remarkable program at the IBAs annual conference in Washington in September. This ground-breaking program will continue and perhaps be replicated for young leaders from other regions in conflict.

A Message from the Executive Director

Christopher Lehmann
Executive Director

In 2016, we were able to conduct over 60 individual programs, both here in Prague at the Villa Grebovka and abroad in Burma, Croatia, Macedonia, Malta, Serbia and Tunisia. A week rarely goes by without some kind of event happening here in Prague; it is wonderful to see the Villa being fully utilized, pulsing with life and activity.

I have also been heartened by our many new partnerships and collaborative programs, which this year included work with organizations such as Freedom House, Internews, the Voice of America, the Federal Judicial Center, and the Malta-based Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law, as well as our ongoing support from the U.S. Department of State, the Czech Foreign Ministry, the National Endowment for Democracy, and others. If you haven’t recently visited us in Prague it might be time to return! We are changing and growing every day, and we invite you to be a part of our amazing transformation.

CEELI BY THE NUMBERS

Since its founding, the CEELI Institute has engaged over 5000 participants from over 45 countries worldwide.

- Programs conducted in: Burma, Croatia, Czech Republic, Macedonia, Malta, the Netherlands, Serbia, Tunisia, and the United States
- Participants/Faculty: Algeria, Albania, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Egypt, France, Germany, Georgia, Hungary, India, Iran, Italy, Israel, Kenya, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Moldova, Montenegro, Morocco, Palau, Palestine, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the UAE, the UK, and Ukraine

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CEELI engaged over 160 volunteer faculty members from 20 different countries.
The Brijuni Statement of Principles of the Independence of the Judiciary

“The Brijuni Statement represents the unwavering commitment by the Judiciaries of Central and Eastern Europe to the rule of law, and to a shared belief in judicial independence.”

Branko Hvratin, President, Supreme Court of Croatia
Central and Eastern European Judicial Exchange Network

The CEELI Institute is now in its fifth year of support for the Central and East European Judicial Exchange Network, comprised of some of the best and brightest young judges from eighteen countries in the region who have come together to share best practices on issues of judicial independence, integrity, and accountability. In June, the CEELI Institute hosted the Network’s annual roundtable in Prague, examining current challenges faced by the judiciary in Network member states as well as appropriate efforts to promote and strengthen judicial independence and accountability. Particular attention was given to the issues of independence and separation of powers, protection for judges from removal without cause, and public pressures on judges.

In the coming year, particular attention will be focused on supporting judicial efforts to combat corruption both within and without the profession. In addition to examining issues of transparency in the conduct of the judicial profession, participating judges will also focus on issues related to the adjudication of corruption cases, including the unique evidentiary issues presented in such cases, and the need for judges to understand complex financial documents and testimony by experts versed in forensic accounting techniques.

CEELI Publications: The Network’s Manual on Judicial Independence

The Manual on Independence, Impartiality and Integrity of Justice: A Thematic Compilation of International Standards, Policies and Best Practices. The Manual – first conceptualized by the Network judges themselves – represents a systematic effort to survey relevant international standards applicable to the judiciary. The judges undertook a comprehensive review of 130 relevant international documents, and then organized relevant standards according to thematic areas.

The Manual constitutes an easy-to-use reference tool to facilitate day-to-day work of judges both in the region and worldwide. It is particularly useful in societies still undergoing transitions, and where the judiciaries are still struggling to assert and establish their full independence. The Manual provides easily accessible, substantive legal support for issues related to the status, work, rights, and responsibilities of judges. It has proved useful to judges who are pushing back against governmental infringements on their functions. For example, Section II of the Manual assembles all relevant international standards which establish and clarify the principle of judicial independence in the administration of justice. Judges needing to justify their role in administration can quickly access the necessary underlying legal support.

The IACA Spotlight on the CEELI Manual at The Hague

The Manual on Independence, Impartiality and Integrity of Justice continues to draw wide practitioner attention as a useful tool for judges and court officials. Among those organizing programs around the Manual this year was the International Association of Court Administrators (IACA), which highlighted the Manual at their Annual Conference in the Hague. An opening day panel was devoted to the Manual and was attended by over 70 international practitioners. The attention is a testament to the Manual’s utility in societies still undergoing transitions, and where the judiciaries are still struggling to assert and establish their full independence.

The Manual represents an extraordinary commitment of time and effort by the Network judges who participated in this project. They undertook extensive independent research and editing, coming together periodically at the Institute to coordinate and collaborate on their work. We are deeply indebted to them for their commitment, skill, and insight both in the conceptualization and actualization of this project.

This project has been made possible through the support of the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) at the U.S. Department of State.

“The Manual on Independence, Impartiality and Integrity of Justice continues to draw widespread practitioner attention as a useful tool for judges and court officials. Among those organizing programs around the Manual this year was the International Association of Court Administrators (IACA), which highlighted the Manual at their Annual Conference in the Hague. An opening day panel was devoted to the Manual and was attended by over 70 international practitioners. The attention is a testament to the Manual’s utility in societies still undergoing transitions, and where the judiciaries are still struggling to assert and establish their full independence.”

Roger Bilodeau, Registrar, Supreme Court of Canada
Promoting Judicial Independence in Central and Eastern Europe

As part of our continuing engagement with the judiciaries from across the Central and Eastern European region, the CEELI Institute co-sponsored several events this year in the Balkans. In October we worked in cooperation with the Supreme Court of Macedonia to address ongoing challenges to judicial independence across the region. The program, held at Lake Ohrid, drew over 70 participants, including judges from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia, Kosovo, Lithuania, Poland, Serbia, and Slovenia.

The event provided a critically important platform for judges to exchange views and experiences on how best to respond to increasing external pressures on the judiciary. Particular attention was devoted to how judges can most effectively cope with pressures from the media, from the government, and from external political sources, without compromising their integrity. For judiciaries still emerging from a communist past, these issues have never been fully resolved.

Judges in the region must continue to grapple with balancing their accountability and independence.

The CEELI Institute was able to support the efforts of the Croatian Judiciary as it grapples with challenges related to the independence and impartiality of justice. Content of the program was particularly framed around Opinion No. 58 of the Consultative Council of European Judges (CCJE) addressing “the position of the judiciary and its relation with other powers of state in a modern democracy.”

Discussions were further augmented by reference to relevant case decisions of the European Court of Human Rights and the concepts of impartiality and independence articulated and defined therein. Such discussions are particularly relevant in the region, as working level judges are not, contrary to common assumption, well-versed in the broader jurisprudence of the EU or the CoE, or its application and relevance to their daily work.

The program, organized in cooperation with the Croatian Association of Judges, was attended by over 70 judges from Croatia and from other countries across the region.

Tunisia: Building an Independent Judiciary

Since shortly after the Arab Spring brought democracy to Tunisia in 2011, the CEELI Institute has been part of an extraordinary effort to train and mentor over 1800 Tunisian judges on issues of judicial independence, judicial accountability, and the role of a judge in a democracy. Funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), and working in partnership with the Tunisian Ministry of Justice, the International Legal Assistance Consortium (“ILAC”), and the International Bar Association (“IBA”), this program brings together judges from all ranks and courts in Tunisia at regular meetings designed to improve professional skills, and to build the public’s confidence in the judiciary. The program addresses key issues affecting judges as their roles change profoundly due to the transition from a totalitarian to democratic society.

The bi-monthly programs run by the CEELI Institute and the IBA each consisted of approximately 25 judges. The course stressed the leadership role courts play in society, the importance of judicial independence, and political issues of leadership, consistent with these ideas, the course provided training in a variety of areas, including the role of a judge in a democratic society, tools required to make courts fair and efficient, judicial independence, and political issues of leadership. Consistent with these ideas, the course stressed the leadership role courts play in society, the importance of judicial independence, and political issues of leadership consistent with these ideas, the course provided training in a variety of areas, including the role of a judge in a democratic society, tools required to make courts fair and efficient, judicial independence, and political issues.

This course was led by the CEELI Institute’s Senior Advisor for Judicial Affairs, Joel Martin, together with other rotating faculty. Program faculty teams pair “western” judges (American or Western European) with judges from Central and Eastern Europe, who themselves had to negotiate similar transitions and reconfigure their judicial roles as their societies went from communism to democracy in short order.

In 2016, the Institute began using a follow-up curriculum, developed in cooperation with Tunisian judges and other stakeholders and focusing on efforts to build and promote public trust in the judiciary. These “advanced” sessions brought together smaller groups of highly experienced Tunisian judges who have previously worked with CEELI on other judicial projects. The judges addressed problems created for judges in Tunisia by the continuing lack of public trust in state institutions, a lingering legacy left of the Ben Ali era. Judges often have difficulty dealing with the intense media scrutiny, which distorts the picture of what is really going on in the courtroom. The program aims to encourage the judges to develop tools to effectively communicate and interact, focusing especially on their relationship with the media, communication with schools and universities, and enhancing courthouse user-friendliness for the citizens.
Setting Standards for Judicial Monitors: A Report and Recommendations

The CEELI Institute partnered this year with a team of NGOs from across Central and Eastern Europe in a landmark effort to promote and define the role of NGOs in monitoring court proceedings and judicial functions. The final project report, NGOs and the Judiciary: Watchdog Activities, Interactions, Collaboration, and Communication, was recently published by the Warsaw based Polish NGO, the Institute for Law and Society, and is available on the CEELI Institute website. The report establishes key recommendations, emphasizes the important role that NGOs and civil society play in assuring the transparent and effective operation of the judiciary, the need for cooperative engagement by NGOs and courts in the process of judicial monitoring, the role of NGOs in judicial training and education, and the need for NGOs to engage in shaping and informing public debate and discourse on the operation and reform of the judiciary. The recommendations will have general applicability well outside the context of Central and Eastern Europe, and are models for NGO watchdog activities, and NGO interaction with the judiciary. The effort was generously funded by the Visegrad Fund (www.visegradfund.org) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea.

Working With Judges to Bolster Counterterrorism Adjudication in the Balkans and Beyond

The CEELI Institute recently began a multi-year program that will engage judges handling complex cases involving issues of terrorism and national security, including the increasingly serious threats posed in Europe by the transit of foreign fighters. In particular, the program aims to promote understanding and use of relevant international “good practices” for judges on these matters, including particularly the Global Counterterrorism Forum’s (GCTF) The Hague Memorandum Good Practices for the Judiciary in Adjudicating Terrorism Offenses. The program effort is being undertaken in partnership with the Malta-based International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law (IIJ) and with funding from the US State Department. Participating judges will be drawn primarily from the Western Balkans and Middle East/North Africa (MENA) regions.

In light of the increased terrorism across Europe, the vast transit of refugees to Europe from Syria, the continuing conflicts in Syria and Iraq, and the particular burdens this puts on both the Balkan countries and countries throughout MENA, the issues encompassed by the GCTF Good Practice documents are more important than ever. Judges across the region will benefit from greater training and preparation on how to handle cases involving both domestic terrorism and the new phenomenon presented by foreign fighters. This year’s sessions under this program were conducted both at the CEELI Institute facility in Prague and at the IIJ facility in Malta, and include intensive 3-day workshops that aim to familiarize the judges with the “Good Practice” documents and expand on their meanings, implications, and relevance to cases the judges might find themselves presiding over in the near future. Workshops are regionally specific and the Institute intends on training no fewer than 80 judges over the course of this project. International experts from both Europe and the United States will be engaged throughout the project to help create a thorough, yet understandable curricula that will help participating judges gain a solid understanding of relevant best practices and how to incorporate them into their future work.

An increasingly important aspect of the CEELI Institute’s continuing engagement with judges across the region involves exploration of the relationships between the judiciary and the media. Discussions and materials addressing this topic are in high demand among judges who are facing increasing media pressures, especially while handling politically sensitive cases and high level corruption cases. Judges must also increasingly negotiate the potential pitfalls surrounding the use of social media platforms. Judges are concerned about their rights to privacy in an age of increasing media attention, and are also unclear on where the boundaries should be set in dealing with the press. They are also challenged in balancing the public’s interest against the rights of the parties before the court. The CEELI Institute has been honored to work with an increasingly diverse cadre of experts in this field to explore these critical issues. We also work to foster communication skills of courts and judges in dealing with the public, and in responding to outside scrutiny. These issues are increasingly incorporated into many of the judicial programs now organized by the Institute.
Intensive Anti-Corruption Training Programs for Prosecutors, Investigators, and Judges

The CEELI Institute’s highly acclaimed training program on “Investigating and Prosecuting Official Corruption” continues to be in high demand, and the Institute again conducted spring and fall sessions of the week-long course. The program brings together an extraordinary faculty line-up consisting of some of the world’s most experienced anti-corruption prosecutors, forensic accountants, and practitioners.

The CEELI Institute anti-corruption programs are designed as highly interactive trainings which walk participants through the actual investigation of a case involving official corruption in the public procurement process. Participants work in small groups to develop their own investigation strategy, learning to use time-tested investigative tools along the way, and ultimately making a recommendation to the larger conference on whether this was a case they would pursue to prosecution or not. The course is designed to develop and improve practical skills as the participants pursue the investigation, augmented by expert guidance and instruction.

The CEELI Institute puts great emphasis on designing and conducting programs that use case-based, interactive curricula. Using practical case scenarios as learning tools demands that participants take an active role in the workshop. With each session, participants are presented with additional facts and legal obstacles to confront and overcome as the fact pattern becomes more complicated. Participants start with a few red flags, indicating a possible case involving corrupt activities. They work in small groups to pursue their investigation. The case studies are designed to expose participants to all aspects of an investigation – initial allegations or suspicions, preliminary inquiries, development of an investigation plan, collection and analysis of documentary materials, forensic accounting analysis, interviews of witnesses and targets, and preparation for trial or other disposition. The use of a case scenario as a teaching tool allows the participants to form close bonds as the training progresses, challenging their intellect and expanding their skills and knowledge base as they are exposed to new approaches in the investigation and prosecution of complex high level corruption cases. The case scenario is supported by relevant faculty presentations on key topics. Our highly experienced faculty provide mentoring to the small groups, as well as one-on-one mentoring throughout the program.

This year’s programs drew together investigators and prosecutors from a number of countries in the region, and beyond, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kenya, Montenegro, Serbia, and Tunisia. Participants were funded by a number of donors interested in promoting anti-corruption efforts, especially as official corruption has emerged as one of the most prevalent and pernicious threats to the rule of law around the world. Sponsors included the US Department of Justice, the State Department’s INL Bureau, USAID funded projects, and various US embassies in the region.

Feedback from Participants:

–This is the best training I have ever participated in. I really admired the step-by-step approach through [the] hypothetical case continued on the mini-lectures and experiences of the faculty and the group.

–One of the best experiences of my professional life

–My skills for investigation of corruption have been greatly enhanced upon completion of this course.

–It was [a] pleasure to participate in this training. I especially appreciated the balance between [the] practical and theoretical part of [the] seminar which were organized in a really good way.

–This was an exceptional experience. There was complete understanding among participants, regardless of the differences between legal systems, and we all share a mutual goal of preventing corruption through efficient and proactive investigation.
Training focused on corruption and fraud in the financial and banking sector, fraud in securing government permits and licenses, and fraud in tax administration. The Institute also partnered with the International Association of Women Judges to provide specialized training on “sextortion” crimes, i.e. abuse of power by government officials (often police) seeking sexual favors in exchange for safety, security, or access to government resources or services.

Through the course of these programs, Tunisian participants were familiarized with strategies employed for the investigation and prosecution of corruption cases. The CEELI Institute’s efforts are designed to support INLUCC staff and a broad cross section of other Tunisian government agencies and non-government agencies responsible for combating corruption in the public and commercial sectors as partners as they take on these roles. With funding from the Swedish International Development Agency and in partnership with the International Legal Assistance Consortium, the CEELI Institute’s programs are specifically designed to assist Tunisian stakeholders in their efforts to identify and investigate corruption and to build cases for prosecution.

This year’s programs again brought together representatives from a wide range of Tunisian stakeholder agencies and other bodies with anti-corruption and compliance responsibilities, including the INLUCC, the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies, Ministry of Industry and Commerce, the High Commission for Administrative and Financial Control, various banks, the Association of Internal Auditors, academics, and journalists. The CEELI Institute was able to work closely with INLUCC to continue to develop highly specialized sessions based on the agency’s stated priorities. Institute programs in 2016 included training focused on corruption and fraud in the financial and banking sector, fraud in securing government permits and licenses, and fraud in tax administration. The Institute also partnered with the International Association of Women Judges to provide specialized training on “sextortion” crimes, i.e. abuse of power by government officials (often police) seeking sexual favors in exchange for safety, security, or access to government resources or services.

Through the course of these programs, Tunisian participants were familiarized with strategies employed for the investigation and prosecution of corruption, with emphasis on how to identify, acquire, and preserve relevant information for investigation. Special emphasis was given to the use of forensic accounting tools and on new trends in computer forensics. The Institute also included a Tunisian delegation of participants selected by INLUCC at our course on “Investigating and Prosecuting Official Corruption,” held in Prague in April.
The CEELI Institute continues its ongoing efforts to assist Burmese lawyers as their society begins its transition towards implementation of the rule of law. Since 2013, we have been working closely with the Myanmar Lawyers Network (MLN), a national grassroots association that was organized to provide pro bono legal services, as well as provide professional development and support services for its own membership.

The MLN fills important gaps, both in helping otherwise disenfranchised parts of society access needed legal services, and in training and mentoring young lawyers in a country where there is little access to professional support. Cases that the MLN members take on include some of the most prominent recent human rights cases, including groups of students jailed for participating in peaceful protests, and journalists jailed for their reporting. The MLN is also active in the representation of poor village communities trying to assert legal claims to the lands they have farmed for centuries – which also typically involves fighting off attempted “land grabbing” by officials and their cronies. Other cases involve human rights and human trafficking.

The need for trainings and education and the lawyers’ enthusiasm are vast. With support from the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and in close partnership with Burma Center Prague, the CEELI Institute is assisting the MLN through a series of training and program development efforts.

In 2016, we continued to take special efforts to provide more direct support to grassroots lawyers in the regions outside of the main cities, with the result that the trainings were held in the regional cities of Pyay, Pyapon, Myiktyina, and Dawei for the first time. The training curriculum is primarily designed to provide practical skills development on matters such as case development and organization, the use of relevant legal materials in support of legal arguments, and basic advocacy skills. The program also addresses the changing political and legislative environment in Burma, the parallels with similar experiences in Central and Eastern Europe, and what these changes mean for the legal profession. The CEELI Institute is also engaged in mentoring a small cadre of dedicated MLN trainers, helping to prepare talented young lawyers to act as trainers in their own communities. Special efforts are made to include participants from the ethnic and rural regions of Burma, where lawyers traditionally have little opportunity for training or peer development, despite having to bravely persevere under the most challenging conditions.

The Institute was very pleased this year to be able to continue to work with young Iranian legal professionals. The Institute has offered an intensive one-week program for the participants. The curriculum provides an introduction for young lawyers to relevant European and international legal standards and instruments, along with such issues as the meaning of the term “rule of law,” the importance of the independence of the judiciary, international protections relevant to gender rights, and the use and application of comparative law principles. The program also looks in detail at the Czech experience in transitioning to a democratic society, maximizing our locale in Prague, and our ability to call on Czech experts.

The legal profession itself remains under distress in many countries of the region. Our programs continued to bring leading criminal defense lawyers together to discuss current challenges to the independence of their profession, mechanisms for maintaining the rule of law, strategies for providing access to counsel and for questioning repressive laws, and tools for using international law as a check on repressive domestic actions. The CEELI Institute work is also designed to bolster technical legal skills and assist in developing effective litigation strategies.
With generous support from a variety of donors, the CEELI Institute is continuing its program, begun in 2013, to provide respite and sabbatical opportunities in Prague, at Institute facilities, for human rights lawyers and defenders working under stressful and challenging conditions in their home countries. The ongoing project, named “CEELI Lawyers’ Respite and Sabbatical Program,” is designed to help mitigate the damaging effects of the severe stress and untenable workloads carried by many among the community of human rights lawyers. Often working in hostile and authoritarian environments, these lawyers work tirelessly to defend their clients—often at great risk to themselves and their families. Participants in the program have included lawyers working on difficult cases of human rights abuse, and those defending NGOs and civil society activists, who came for short- to medium-term stays of up to three months. The specifics of each sabbatical are tailored to the individual needs of the participating lawyers.

The CEELI Institute conducts a wide range of workshops for lawyers and civil society representatives from Ukraine and other Eurasian countries, focusing on mechanisms for enhancing government accountability to civil society, strengthening the public’s capacity to demand transparent government, and supporting efforts of lawyers engaged in representing and defending NGOs and journalists.

The Institute’s efforts are designed to support civic-minded organizations in their efforts to access and obtain public information, to undertake public oversight activities, and to use such information to conduct advocacy campaigns, investigative efforts and legal actions aimed at increasing government accountability. The Institute puts particular emphasis on developing capacity to successfully request and obtain public records from government sources, and to use that information in creative public information campaigns designed to present public information in clear and accessible formats. The Institute also provides support for lawyers who are defending such NGO efforts, often against increasing public pressures.

Among this year’s activities:

- In partnership with the Kyiv-based Ukrainian Center for Civil Liberties (a grassroots organization which came to the forefront of Ukrainian civil society for their work during the Maidan uprisings of 2013-14) the Institute has trained a network of Ukrainian citizens engaged in monitoring the conduct of law enforcement agencies, courts, and local government throughout the country. The ongoing project, named “OZON” to signify its aim of promoting transparency, brings together regional leaders from across Ukraine to study best practices for projects promoting government accountability. This year’s efforts focused particularly on communication strategies, including the development of useful and tangible reports as part of an accountability campaign, and effective communication of their efforts with the public and media.

- The Institute provided ongoing training and support for lawyers defending Ukrainian journalists and bloggers who, despite recent reforms in the country, continue to suffer from a variety of legal and governmental restrictions on their activities. The programs gathered participants from across Ukrainian regions to address challenges faced under current Ukrainian media legislation, with reference to comparative international standards. The support and protection provided by Ukrainian lawyers for journalists, bloggers, and media in Ukraine is critical to the larger anti-corruption efforts now underway in the country, and will ultimately contribute to the creation of more transparent and well functioning public institutions in this critical phase for Ukraine.
Voices of the Next Generation: Bringing Change to the Middle East

Over the past year, the CEELI Institute and the International Bar Association (IBA) partnered to organize a groundbreaking program bringing together young lawyers from the Middle East to discuss the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the role international law can play in resolving this conflict. This diverse group of young lawyers has met quarterly at the Institute in Prague for a series of three-day meetings, during which participants came to know one another, and employed communication techniques that enabled them to speak honestly, exchange views, examine applicable principles of international law, and jointly explore difficult, emotional issues affecting Israel and Palestine.

On Friday, September 23, in the context of the IBA’s annual Rule of Law Forum, in Washington, the two organizations co-hosted a panel that examined, for an audience of over 300 people, this unusual process and the experiences of some of the young lawyers who participated in this dialogue. The Israeli, Arab, and American mentors who conceived, organized, and facilitated these discussions also shared insights about what they observed and learned from their engagement in the project. Together with a panel of experienced former diplomats and negotiators who have dealt with the complex issues that plague the region, the group addressed how international law can help lead to potential solutions and compromises, which could bring about change in one of the most persistent conflicts and gravest threats to the rule of law in the world.

US and Pakistani Judges Meet at the CEELI Institute

Sitting in Prague at the crossroads of Europe, the CEELI Institute offers a perfect venue for convening groups from disparate regions. This year, we were delighted to host the first of what we hope will be an ongoing series of meetings between US and Pakistani judges to discuss topics of mutual interest and concern, including court efficiency, case management techniques, mechanisms for alternative dispute resolution and continuing education for judges. All agreed that the Institute’s comfortable setting and efficient support greatly facilitated the dialogue. This program is organized by the State Department’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement and the US Department of Justice (OPDAT), and came to reality through the concerted efforts of both the US Federal Judicial Center and the Lahore High Court (Punjab Province, Pakistan).
Cyber Security: Citizens’ and Customers’ Data Protection, this was one of several events organized and held at the Institute by the Prague Security Studies Institute, a Czech NGO.

Medical Law in the Czech Republic, a program addressing legal and bioethical issues organized by the Czech Academy of Health Care Management.

The Institute arranged to make its visiting legal experts available for lectures and programs at the Anglo American University in Prague.

The CEELI Institute Annual Meeting, the Institute’s Annual Meeting is always a highlight of the year, bringing together the Institute’s US and Czech board members, along with prominent judges, lawyers, civil society representatives, and diplomats from throughout the region. This year, US Ambassador to the Czech Republic Andrew Schapiro was among those joining the events.

The theme of the meeting was “Strategies for Delivering Development Assistance in Difficult Political Environments,” focusing on several aspects of the topic, including the ways in which international donors and implementers can continue to support lawyers, human rights advocates, and civil society organizations who are working in such environments. The meetings were rounded off with a number of social events.

“Weakening the Rule of Law in the Post-communist Region?” CEELI hosted a panel at the “Festival of Democracy” organized by the Forum 2000 conference in Prague, focused on the increasingly frequent attempts by various state actors across the region to weaken or bend the rule of law and mandates of institutions for political means, and to interfere with judicial independence by executive influence.

Throughout 2016, the CEELI Institute was pleased to work with a cross section of diverse implementing organizations to host a wide variety of events devoted to fighting corruption and to advancing the principles of rule of law, human rights, and democracy. These included:

- **Behind the Scenes of the Democratic Process: Election Observation Missions**, a joint panel format program organized with the International Foundation for Election Systems.
- **Safety and Security Programs for Human Rights Defenders**, organized in cooperation with the National Endowment for Democracy.
- **Journey: An International Journalism Bootcamp**, a two-week program for internationally selected university students, sponsored by the Bakala Foundation, Prague.
- **Brdy: The Unknown Land in the Middle of Bohemia**, organized in cooperation with the local Czech outdoors group, Discovering Prague.
- **Parliamentary Elections in Slovakia: Parties, Campaigns and Their Implications on the Election Results and Post-Election Scenarios**, a joint program with the International Foundation for Election Systems.

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- **Journalism Training in Audience Research**, in cooperation with the Broadcasting Board of Governors/ Voice of America (BBG/VOA). This three-day program in September 2016 focused on audience research for 19 television journalists from affiliates from countries of the Former Soviet Union. The program participants hailed from Ukraine, Georgia, Latvia, Moldova, Lithuania, and Israel.
- **The Czech Fundraising Centre conducted events in support of non-profit organizations operating in the Czech Republic.**

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### Behind the Scenes of the Democratic Process: Election Observation Missions**

A joint panel format program organized with the International Foundation for Election Systems.

### Safety and Security Programs for Human Rights Defenders**

Organized in cooperation with the National Endowment for Democracy.

### Journey: An International Journalism Bootcamp**

A two-week program for internationally selected university students, sponsored by the Bakala Foundation, Prague.

### What Lies Ahead for Burma: A Discussion with Aung San**

Co-hosted with the Burma Center Prague.

### Brdy: The Unknown Land in the Middle of Bohemia**

Organized in cooperation with the local Czech outdoors group, Discovering Prague.

### Parliamentary Elections in Slovakia: Parties, Campaigns and Their Implications on the Election Results and Post-Election Scenarios**

A joint program with the International Foundation for Election Systems.

### Crimean Cultural Festival**

CEELI worked with the organizers to host a program on the arts, culture, theatre, literature, and history of the Crimean peninsula.

### The Czech Fundraising Centre**

Conducted events in support of non-profit organizations operating in the Czech Republic.
The CEELI Institute is housed in the historic Villa Grebovka, nestled above a vineyard in the heart of Prague, Czech Republic. The spacious Villa is a Czech national historic building that dates back to 1871. In a unique partnership, the CEELI Institute has leased the Villa from the city of Prague 2 for 50 years. In return, the Institute has renovated the building back to its original splendor.

The CEELI Institute completed the Villa’s transformation into a state-of-the-art conference and residential center in June 2008. The renovations were made possible with a seed grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development and key financial support from individuals and corporations, including the construction firm SKANSKA (Czech Republic), which also served as general contractor. In 2014, the city of Prague 2 completed its own stunning renovation of the surrounding park which serves as the setting for the Villa.

In addition to its substantial classroom and function space, the Villa has a residential capacity for 44 guests, and an on-site dining facility. All Villa facilities are fully handicap accessible.
The CEELI Institute frequently opens its doors to the surrounding community and to Prague’s not-for-profit community for a wide range of programs and events. This year’s activities included jazz and classical concerts, documentary films, architectural tours, and theatre productions, all of which brought the community into the Villa. Larger events included the City of Prague 2’s annual wine festival, educational programs, and several gourmet food festivals. The Villa and surrounding park are also becoming increasingly popular for use as film sets; 2016 saw a number of feature film productions and marquis stars at the Villa.
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For information on how you can donate to support the rule of law around the world, visit www.ceeliinstitute.org/give