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.
In a year when the rule of law has faced challenges across the globe, the CEELI Institute’s programs have continued to provide world-class training and skills development to legal professionals dedicated to promoting judicial independence, protecting fundamental rights and individual liberties, combating official corruption, and otherwise strengthening the rule of law. Today, the CEELI Institute is reaching more people, in more countries, than ever before.

We use Villa Grebovka, our unique facility and location, not only to continue to conduct established, innovative training programs, but also to develop and incubate new projects. As in years past, the Institute provides programmatic lifelines to lawyers working to protect the rule of law and promote human rights in repressive countries. The Institute also continues its core focus on promoting judicial independence, which it does through work with young judges, support for judges fighting to maintain independence and integrity, and ongoing support for the annual Conference of Chief Justices of Central Europe, which the Institute launched several years ago.

The CEELI Institute’s interactive anti-corruption courses continue to be over-subscribed. Early in 2018, we will inaugurate a training program on anti-corruption compliance programs, a complement to our signature course for prosecutors and investigators. A UN official who recently visited the Institute reported that the Institute’s anti-corruption training programs “are considered to be the best in Europe.”

In partnership with the International Bar Association, the CEELI Institute has also continued its successful project of bringing together courageous young Israeli and Palestinian lawyers, who have become professional and personal friends and who have together analyzed difficult legal and political issues that persist in the Middle East. Other Institute initiatives this year have included work with exiled Syrian judges hoping to return to rebuild their country, organizing judicial exchanges with Indian judges, and, with European Commission funding, creating a partnership with the Croatian Judges Association to provide regional judicial training on relevant EU criminal law directives.

The work of the Institute has resulted in expanded donor recognition and support for both long-standing projects and new initiatives. Supporters include a number of new organizations and, for the first time, an expanded base of European donors. Increased programmatic support has allowed us to broaden the scope of our course offerings, strengthen their impact, and increase the number of participants we are able to reach.

Over the last year, the Institute updated its mission statement and its governance structure, making several distinguished additions to our governing boards and to our talented staff in Prague. We also continue to be deeply grateful to the accomplished, public-spirited faculties of our programs whose dedication and expertise empower the rule of law work of the CEELI Institute.

We thank them and all of the friends of the CEELI Institute for your continued support for joining in the vital work of building and strengthening the rule of law. That work has never been more important.

A Message from the Chair and Founder

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

We understand now that it is not enough simply to introduce democracy and the rule of law into a society and declare victory. These institutions require continued maintenance, nurturing, and development—much like a gardener’s work that continues year in and year out, through every season.

In the face of such challenges, the mission of the CEELI Institute is more relevant than ever. Our work is increasingly urgent, our partners increasingly challenged and repressed. At the CEELI Institute we are able to provide a safe space for training, sharing, dialogue, and advocacy. Last year we brought together over 1,000 participants here for programs, through them and their ongoing work, we touched thousands more in countries where the rule of law, transparency, and even basic democratic values are under assault.

We are not alone in our mission. Our work in supporting independent legal voices and civil society has increasingly attracted support from donors, allowing us to expand our efforts. It continues to be an honor for us at the CEELI Institute to work with our brave and committed colleagues from across this region and the world.

Christopher Lehmann
Executive Director

When I first began working with ABA/CEELI, almost 10 years ago, I would not have imagined that the need for programs and efforts dedicated to advancement of the rule of law in Central and Eastern Europe would continue into 2017. In the early post-Cold War days we envisioned a linear path towards the implementation of open, democratic societies, and were indifferent to the possibilities of backsliding and populism.

From our base here in the heart of Central Europe, we now see that this perspective was naive and short sighted. History does not come to an end, nor does it move only in one direction. Recent events in Poland, Hungary, Russia, Moldova and elsewhere across this region have demonstrated this backsliding all too well.
Since its founding, the CEELI Institute has engaged over 5000 participants from over 45 countries worldwide. In 2017, we conducted over 60 individual programs, reaching over 1200 participants, from over 40 different countries. CEELI engaged over 150 volunteer faculty members, from over 20 different countries.

Programs conducted in: Burma, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, India, Malta, Tunisia, Turkey, and the United States.

Participants/Faculty: Algeria, Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Estonia, France, Germany, Georgia, Hungary, Iraq, Italy, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Morocco, the Netherlands, Palestine, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Syria, the UAE, the UK, and Ukraine.
The Conference of Chief Justices of Central and Eastern Europe

In 2007, the CEELI Institute helped launch the Conference of Chief Justices of Central & Eastern Europe, which brings together the senior judges from the region’s highest courts to share and develop strategies and best practices to promote judicial integrity and accountability, to improve court management, and to combat corruption in the courts. The CEELI Institute’s efforts have supported the work of the Conference since its inception.

The Conference was launched in Prague, at the Institute, with support from the U.S. Department of State, and with personal involvement and commitment of United States Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts and Associate Justice Sandra Day O’Connor. The Conference is now a self-sustaining body that meets annually in one of the countries represented. The Conference continues to flourish and since its inception has rotated between member states, each year hosted by a Chief Justice from a different country. Conferences over the past several years have been hosted by Chief Justices from Albania (2012), Montenegro (2013), Georgia (2014), Croatia (2015), Serbia (2016), and, most recently, Hungary (2017). The Supreme Court of Lithuania will host in 2018, and the Supreme Court of Slovakia in 2019.

The CEELI Institute continues to provide guidance and expertise to the Conference through CEELI Institute Board member, Judge John M. Walker, former Chief Judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. Judge Walker is joined in this effort by Judge Clifford J. Wallace, former Chief Judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, whose extensive experience includes establishing a similar conference for the countries of Asia and the Pacific. Both judges, who are active in rule of law development, have an ongoing role in supporting and advising the Conference on behalf of the Institute.

Among the notable achievements of the Conference was the signing, in 2015, of a Statement of Principles of the Independence of the Judiciary (known now as the Brijuni Statement after the name of the seaside Croatian town where the document was drafted). The Brijuni Statement represents a reaffirmation of a long-held and shared belief amongst its signatories in judicial independence as critical to upholding the rule of law. As of 2016, 18 courts had signed the Statement, and it has been translated into six languages.
Central and Eastern European Judicial Exchange Network

The CEELI Institute is now in its sixth 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, transparency, accountability, efficiency, and ethics. The young judges are increasingly concerned about coping with the external pressures—political, societal, and media—that work to undermine judicial independence in the region. To date, the Network has brought together over 100 young, reform-minded judges from across the region on an ongoing basis to pursue projects designed to promote judicial independence and institutional reform.

“Among the specific topics addressed within the Network are judicial ethics; management of conflicts of interests and outside activities, comparative procedures for discipline and dismissal of individual judges accused of corruption or malfeasance; appropriate communication with the press and public; the impact of social media on the judiciary; the degree to which judges as public officials must sacrifice some degree of privacy in the interest or transparency; the implications for judges of asset disclosure requirements; the manner and degree to which judges should be required to disclose their personal information; the standards and conditions for lustration procedures.

CEELI Publications: The Network’s Manual on Judicial Independence

The CEELI Institute is proud to coordinate the production of a ground-breaking publication which was compiled by judges from the Central and East European Judicial Exchange Network: 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 have undertaken a comprehensive review of more than 140 relevant international instruments, and organized the material 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 judiciary is 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 infringement of 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 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. They continue to keep the Manual up-to-date, incorporating relevant new source material. 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.”

“We are deeply impressed by the Manual on Independence, Impartiality and Integrity of the Judiciary and we believe this is the most thorough and profound compilation of relevant documents regarding judicial ethics and deontology we’ve read.”

National Institute of Justice, Bulgaria

“In many parts of the world today, sufficient institutional safeguards are not in place to ensure the independence, integrity, and impartiality of the judiciary. Judges and court officials must continue to work to ensure greater respect for these core principles governing the judiciary. In that context, the Manual serves as an invaluable resource.”

Roger Bilodeau, Registrar, Supreme Court of Canada

BALKAN SPOTLIGHT: PROMOTING PUBLIC TRUST IN THE JUDICIARY

As part of our continuing engagement with the judiciaries from across the region, the CEELI Institute co-sponsored several events this year in the Balkans. Among them was a September program in Zadar, Croatia, organized in cooperation with the Croatian Association of Judges, and framed around the theme “The Modern Judiciary and Public Trust.” The topic is a pressing one, given the need to strengthen public support for the concept of an independent judiciary—particularly in the face of rising populist attacks on judges. Judges in the region struggle to balance independence and accountability. They must 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.

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Partnering with the Association of Croatian Judges

The CEELI Institute this year began a partnership with the Association of Croatian Judges to deliver continuing legal education programs for judges of EU member states, including specifically the Czech Republic and Croatia. The project, funded by the European Union’s Justice Program (2014-2020), is designed to strengthen judicial respect and protections for the legal rights of defendants in criminal proceedings. The project will promote greater understanding among EU judges charged with applying the EU’s Charter of Fundamental Rights in the field of criminal justice, and will specifically address the right to information in criminal proceedings (Directive 2012/13/EU), and the right of access to a lawyer in criminal proceedings (Directive 2013/48/EU).

This effort is particularly significant because it is designed to make language accommodations for non-English speaking judges from both Croatia and the Czech Republic, and thereby directly address issues of under application of EU criminal justice standards and guarantees in some national courts. The partnership on this project with the Association of Croatian Judges is a natural extension of our long cooperative relationship. That partnership has included participation of Croatian judges, both as participants and as faculty, at numerous Institute programs, as well as collaboration by the Institute and the Association to conduct an ongoing series of international judicial conferences in Croatia.

SECTION I. STRENGTHENING JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE AND INTEGRITY

An increasingly important aspect of the CEELI Institute’s continuing engagement with judiciaries 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 faced with 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 a 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.
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 has brought together judges from all ranks and courts in Tunisia at regular trainings designed to improve professional skills, and to build public confidence in the judiciary. The program addresses key issues affecting judges as their roles change profoundly due to the transitions from a totalitarian to democratic society, stressing the leadership role courts play in society, the importance of judicial independence, the role of a judge in a democratic society, tools required to make courts fair and efficient, ethics, relations with the public and with other branches of government, court administration, human rights principles, and transparency in procedure and decisions.

Since 2017, the Institute has begun using a follow-up curriculum, developed in coordination with Tunisian judges and other stakeholders and focused specifically on efforts to build and promote public trust in the judiciary. These “advanced” sessions bring together smaller groups of highly experienced Tunisian judges who have previously worked with CEELI on other judicial projects. The judges address 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.

Working With Judges to Bolster Counterterrorism Adjudication

The CEELI Institute this year continued its multi-year program to 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 has aimed to promote understanding and use of relevant international “good practices” for judges on these matters, including particularly the Global Counterterrorism Forum’s (GCTF) 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 are drawn both from the Western Balkans and from the 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 Western Balkan countries and countries throughout MENA, the issues encompassed by the GCTF Good Practice documents are more important than ever. Judges across the region benefit from greater training and preparation on how to handle cases involving both domestic terrorism and the new phenomenon presented by returning foreign fighters.

Programs were conducted both at the CEELI Institute facility in Prague and at the IIJ facility in Malta, and included intensive 3-day workshops that aim to familiarize the judges with the “Good Practice” documents and expand on their meanings, implications, and relevance. Judges were provided with materials for the judges 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.
Facilitating Judicial Exchanges: India

In 2017, the CEELI Institute initiated a multi-year partnership with the National Judicial Academy (NJA) in India and the U.S. Federal Judicial Center (FJC), promoting exchanges between U.S. and Indian judges. The effort, generously supported by the US Department of State’s Counterterrorism Bureau, will focus particularly on judges who are responsible for adjudicating complex cases involving terrorism and national security crimes.

As with our past work in organizing judicial engagement on this subject matter, the Institute will again make particular use of relevant good practice documents generated by the 30-member Global Counter Terrorism Forum (GCTF), a body which includes both India and the United States (www.thegctf.org). Of particular relevance for framing the discussions in this effort is the Hague Memorandum on good practices for the Judiciary in Adjudicating Terrorism Offenses, a good practice document drafted by the GCTF with extensive international input, and reflecting relevant international standards (the CEELI Institute is proud to have participated in the drafting of the Hague Memorandum, which was approved in plenary by the GCTF in 2015).

The Initial exchanges under this project between Indian and American judges took place in October 2017 in Bhopal, at the NJA, and will continue in 2018 both in Washington at the FJC and in India at the NJA. This project reflects the CEELI Institute’s ongoing commitment to work with judges in countries on the front lines in the fight against terrorism, and builds off of our previous efforts with judges in the Western Balkans and MENA regions. This work has resulted in the Institute creating a comprehensive curriculum, and amassing a diverse and talented pool of counterterrorism experts who frequently act as program faculty. The Institute is honored to facilitate this program, that for the first time brings together the FJC and NJA in what is expected to be a tremendously beneficial partnership.

Providing Lifelines for Syrian Judges in Exile

The CEELI Institute partnered this year with the Swedish-based International Legal Assistance Consortium (ILAC) to begin programs that will offer a professional lifeline to Syrian judges who are now in exile in Turkey but who hold on to the hope of one day returning to their country to rebuild the justice system. Many of the exiled judges remain actively involved with international organizations that are working with refugees in Turkey, for example, by assisting with efforts to maintain basic public records of births, death, and marriages, in the absence of any formal mechanism for recording such crucial life events. All of these Syrian judges are looking ahead to possible scenarios that might occur in Syria after the conflict ends.

The Institute convened an initial program in Gaziantep, Turkey, to facilitate discussions among the judges and to explore core issues related to their role in the emerging post-conflict society, where both the rule of law and democratic values will not be firmly established. Our goal is to promote discussion and engagement on the challenges Syrian judges face, and on the ways in which the judges can begin to prepare for their roles in an immediate post-conflict environment. The roundtable allowed us to frame priorities for further programmatic efforts, as we hope to continue and expand this work over the next several years.

At present, the Syrian judges feel cut off and removed from the larger world. Our efforts are intended to support their morale, and to also provide opportunities to engage with our networks of judges from other countries that have emerged from conflicts. We will also explore challenges and scenarios that have taken place in other countries following an armed conflict (including Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia). Ultimately, the success of post-conflict processes in Syria will depend on the expertise and readiness of Syrian actors, such as these judges, who are prepared to lead reform efforts. The project is funded by the Swedish International Development Administration (SIDA).
FIGHTING CORRUPTION

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’s 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 a learning tool 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 Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, and Ukraine. 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 United Nations, the US State Department’s INL Bureau, USAID funded projects, and various US embassies in the region.
CEELI Launches New Initiative to Support Anti-Corruption Activists

In late 2017, the Institute was able to launch a new initiative to support civil society organizations, journalists and lawyers striving for greater public accountability and transparency in Central and Eastern Europe. The project is supported by a grant from the US Department of State. It will allow us to provide training, assistance and guidance to anti-corruption civic activists from across the region as they work to access publicly available government information, thereby highlighting and exposing official corruption. The project will include civil society participants from the Visegrad, Baltic and Balkan regions, as well as the Eastern Partnership countries.

Official corruption is often perceived as a major factor in undermining public trust in democracy and the rule of law; public corruption strengthens oligarchies and autocracies, bolsters populist responses, undermines the rule of law and deteriorates state institutions, and weakens legal and judicial systems. This project will tackle the problem from two angles. First, we will work to train journalists, civic advocates, lawyers and civil society organizations on methods of conducting research about governmental activities, on researching and collecting publicly available data, and on using that data in the design of advocacy efforts aimed at promoting public accountability, including public interest litigation. Second, because successful efforts by activists often draw retaliation from powerful public officials or from the oligarchs, we will also work to equip lawyers to effectively represent bloggers, activists and investigative journalists who are exposing corruption, and who are attacked as a result of their efforts. We look forward to developing and expanding this effort over the next several years.

FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS:

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

“Absolutely outstanding course; exceptionally well-conceived.”

“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.”

“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.”

“The instructors are amazing experts in their field.”

“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.”
Building Legal Skills and Capacity

Working with Burmese Human Rights Lawyers and Parliamentarians

The CEELI Institute continued and expanded its long term program in Burma. Building on a four-year track record, CEELI - together with partner organization Burma Center Praque - continues to provide support and mentoring to networks of independent human rights lawyers engaged in pro bono defense - above all the Myanmar Lawyers Network, and Union Lawyers and the Paralegals Association. To date, the CEELI Institute has undertaken training programs in 11 different cities around the country.

In 2017, the CEELI Institute expanded its efforts to also include support for members of the Burmese Parliament who are working to reform a range of outdated or repressive legislation. Many of these Members of Parliament are former dissidents and political prisoners who are now adjusting to new roles as legislators and drafters. Progress in changing these laws and paving the way for a genuine democracy is critical to securing democratic changes in Burma. The MPs are also increasingly aware that the results of the next general election in 2020 will be partly dependent on success in reforming repressive laws.

A special focus of our work is to educate new parliamentarians on their little-understood constitutional rights to bring cases to the Constitutional Court. While the current constitution, which was drafted by the previous military regime in 2008, contains many provisions that can be used to restrict a democratic environment, the largely inactive Constitutional Court has broad powers to interpret the Constitution in ways more compatible with a modern democracy. The court is an underused resource, and one that the MPs are capable of using to more democratic ends.

In 2017, the CEELI Institute organized trainings for independent lawyers in Stwe and Yangon, and legislative roundtables in Yangon, Nay Pyi Taw, and Prague. CEELI also worked with members of the Yangon regional parliament, facilitating professional engagement between MPs and lawyers.
Supporting Defense Lawyers

The legal profession itself remains under distress in many countries in the region. Our programs, this year, continued to bring criminal defense lawyers together to discuss current challenges to the independence of their profession, mechanisms for maintaining the rule of law, strategies for providing defendants with access to counsel, and tools for using international law as a check on repressive domestic actions. The CEELI Institute also worked to bolster technical legal skills and assist in developing effective litigation strategies for questioning repressive laws.

Substantive Legal Skills Training

Since our inception, the Institute has worked to provide relevant in-service training and education for legal professionals. These efforts continued in 2017 with the organization of new substantive legal training programs for practicing lawyers from our core region. Using a comparative law approach, our initial programs this year addressed (1) personal insolvency law for an audience of bankruptcy lawyers, and (2) anti-corruption compliance laws and regulations for an audience of legal counsel who have responsibilities for advising on corporate and individual compliance with international anti-corruption standards, as well as the broader international context in which multinational corporations must function.

Exploring EU Law and Legal Topics

The CEELI Institute was delighted to continue its cooperation this year with the Law Faculty of Masaryk University in Brno, one of the Czech Republic’s leading academic institutions. We hosted several programs with them this year, including a February session devoted to “Legislating from Strasbourg: How International Human Rights Law Influences Domestic Legislation” and an October program investigating “European Standards Governing Judicial Independence.” The two programs serve to foster discussion on these important topics, which underpin the development of European jurisprudence. The programs brought together leading jurists and scholars from across the EU.
The CEELI Institute conducts a wide range of workshops for lawyers and civil society representatives, focusing on mechanisms for enhancing government accountability, supporting civil society, strengthening the public’s capacity to demand transparent government, and aiding 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.

The CEELI Institute is continuing its program, begun in 2015, to provide respite, fellowship, and sabbatical opportunities in Prague for human rights lawyers and civil society activists who are working under stressful and challenging conditions in their home countries. Our program is designed to help mitigate the damaging effect of the severe stress and untenable workloads carried by many among the community of human rights lawyers and activists. 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. This year, the program was also expanded to include investigative journalists and others in need of respite. The specifics of each sabbatical or fellowship are tailored to the individual needs of the participants.
In 2014, the International Bar Association (IBA) and the CEELI Institute began exploring opportunities for change in the Israel-Palestine conflict for which, one hundred years after the Balfour Declaration was signed, a sustainable solution has yet to be found.

When a group of young Palestinian and Israeli lawyers sat down together for the first time just over two years ago, some of them had never met with anyone from the other side. At least, not with anyone who wasn’t wearing army fatigues. Some of them feared there would be arguments, or silence. Yet, quickly, the young men and women realised how much they had in common.

The lawyers were brought together under a joint program of the IBA and the CEELI Institute, entitled ‘The voice of the next generation: Bringing change to the Middle East’. Yotam Blaushild, an Israeli lawyer who says he hardly ever interacted with Palestinians before joining the program, is proud of what the group managed to achieve. ‘A lot of things can be solved by meeting people from the other side. You find out that these are people you can both speak with about professional issues, but also laugh with and talk to about hobbies, friends and family,’ he says.

The participants expressed a strong desire to continue with the project, to ensure that others in their communities could benefit from it as well. Yasmin Mansour, who grew up as a Palestinian in Israel, explains that the marginalisation she faces has contributed to her resolve to contribute to a solution to the conflict. ‘Every boundary that I break through comes with the responsibility to help others break through those as well,’ she says.

Acknowledging the sensitivity regarding personal repercussions for those involved in the project, discussions are now held about how to build on the project’s success, says IBA Director, Mark Ellis. ‘We are not likely to change the world, but we hope to create momentum. We are throwing a pebble in a pond and letting the ripples move forward.’

(Excerpt from Global Insights Magazine)
CEELI Convenes

Throughout 2017, 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:

- Journey: An International Journalism Bootcamp, a two-week program for internationally selected university students, sponsored by the Bakala Foundation, Prague
- Political and Legal Transformation in Myanmar, Roundtable with the Chief Minister of the Yangon District and his delegation, Prague (June 29)
- Roundtable on Legislative Reform in Myanmar, with a Burmese parliamentary delegation headed by the Deputy Speaker of the Myanmar Parliament, Prague (September 7)
- Forum for Indigenous Peoples (Russia), in cooperation with HURIDOCS, Switzerland, Prague (October 6-8)
- Medical Law in the Czech Republic, an ongoing, monthly series of programs for Czech lawyers addressing legal and bioethical issues, organized by the Czech Academy of Health Care Management
- “Building Success: The Power of Ethical Leadership,” A lecture presented by CEELI Institute Advisory Board Member Roman Wieczorek, in partnership with the Czech NGO People In Need
- The Institute arranged to make its visiting legal experts available for lectures and programs at the Anglo American University in Prague
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Villa Grebovka

The CEELI Institute is housed in the historic Villa Grebovka, an Italian Renaissance revival masterpiece, located above a vineyard in the historic Prague neighborhood of Vinohrady. It is considered one of the finest 19th century villas in Bohemia, dating from 1871.
In a unique partnership, the CEELI Institute has leased the Villa from the city of Prague for 50 years. In return, the Institute has renovated the building back to its original pre-war splendor.

The CEELI Institute completed the Villa’s transformation into a state-of-the-art conference and residential center in June 2007. 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 completed its own stunning renovation of the surrounding park which serves as the setting for the Villa.

Villa Grebovka

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.
Community Events

The CEELI Institute frequently opens its doors to the surrounding community and to Prague’s non-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
June 8, 2017 marked the tenth anniversary of the formal dedication of the renovated Villa Grebovka as the home of the CEELI Institute. Czech President Václav Havel and U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor joined together at the ceremony in cutting the ribbons on that historic day. Their legacies continue to inspire us. Havel’s remarks at the dedication ceremony remain as meaningful today as they were then:

“I come here to congratulate the CEELI Institute for the completion of this beautiful building, and for the new seat of this institution. It also seems important to remind us how difficult it is and how much time it takes to build the rule of law, especially in a country which was long ruled by a totalitarian regime. Law is to serve justice. In a country where people were accustomed to injustice and a lack of human dignity, it is very difficult to build a new system. Everyone knows that the judiciary is one of the three pillars of a democratic state. They say so, but it is not clear whether this is what they really believe. I very often encounter situations in which the executive power seems to believe that the judiciary is subject to them. I appreciate the CEELI Institute, which devotes energy in many countries to the education of judges so that they become really independent and just judges. So I wish your Institute much success in your future work.”

Václav Havel
The CEELI Institute
June 8, 2007