CEVES – Statement of Commitment to Sustainability

The Center for Advanced Economic Studies (CEVES) is committed to sustainability across the environmental, social and economic dimensions identified in the UN Sustainable Procurement Framework. As a Belgrade-based, non-profit economic policy research organization, our largest impact lies in the evidence and policy advice we produce; our own operations are small, office-based and low in material footprint.

Our mission is to contribute to the development of a society where economic growth is based on knowledge, innovation, entrepreneurship and solidarity. Serbian small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are our most important target group. We do this through independent research, policy dialogue with government and EU institutions, capacity building for civil society, and practical tools for small businesses. This statement is CEVES's formal sustainability policy and applies to all CEVES staff, consultants and suppliers. It sets out our commitments under each dimension, with examples of recent, tangible results.

Founded in 2004, CEVES is an independent, non-partisan think tank whose special focus areas are sustainable development, the SME sector and European integration. Sustainable (Green) Economic Development is one of our four programme areas. We work with partners including the European Union, the World Bank, UNDP, the ILO, GIZ and USAID.

1. Environmental sustainability

CEVES contributes to climate change mitigation and pollution prevention mainly by shaping Serbia's green transition policy, and secondarily by keeping its own operational footprint low.

Results through our work

- **Climate and green industrial policy.** In 2026 CEVES published the report "CBAM Readiness and the Green Industrial Transition in Serbia". It documents Serbia's exposure to EU carbon pricing (Fiscal Council estimates of EUR 46.6 million in 2026, rising to EUR 145.4 million in 2030, for goods excluding electricity) and sets out concrete steps Serbia can take on its own to decarbonise industry.
- **Public dialogue on decarbonisation.** In June 2026 CEVES and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia co-organised the conference "CBAM is just the first test: Why does Serbia need a green industrial policy?", supported by the Open Society Foundation – Western Balkans. It brought together the Ministry of Finance, energy-intensive industry and independent experts, and its findings were shared through press releases and our newsletter in Serbian and English.
- **Green readiness of businesses.** CEVES's SME Compass platform includes an ESG Readiness Monitor, which tracks how prepared Serbian companies are for the environmental, social and governance requirements of markets, banks and supply chains.
- **Circular economy.** For the GIZ project "Waste Management in the Context of Climate Change (DKTI)", CEVES assessed in 2018–2019 the impact of introducing the circular economy in three sectors: plastic packaging, electrical and electronic equipment, and

hospitality (HORECA). The studies estimated waste volumes and modelled policy scenarios (published 2020).

- **Green jobs and e-waste.** In the ILO Green and Just Transition project (09/2024–01/2025), CEVES examined the missing framework for green jobs in Serbia and the weak enforcement of rules in the electronic waste sector.

Our own operations

- **Paperless by default.** Our 2026 reorganisation of the CEVES SharePoint system set naming conventions, folder templates and digital workflows, so that documents, contracts and reports are drafted, reviewed and archived electronically.
- **Low-carbon working.** Our team works from a single central Belgrade office (Višnjićeva 5) well served by public transport, and we use online meetings with regional and international partners to reduce travel. Our hybrid schedule, with two remote working days a week, further reduces commuting. We use recyclable paper and recycle all of our paper waste. We filter tap water instead of purchasing bottled.

2. Social sustainability

CEVES upholds human and labour rights in its own workplace and works to make economic policy fairer and more inclusive, with gender equality as an explicit priority.

Human rights and labour

- All staff and consultants are engaged under written contracts that comply with Serbian labour law, with clear Terms of Reference, fair remuneration and defined deliverables. Under our EU operating grant (project No. 2016/490-421) we issue bilingual Serbian–English contracts so every engagement is transparent to both parties.
- We do not tolerate discrimination, harassment, forced or child labour, and we expect the same of our partners and suppliers.
- Our research also strengthens labour rights: the ILO Green and Just Transition project assessed Serbia's weak collective bargaining and the lack of evidence on employer practices, to inform social dialogue.

Gender equality

- In 2026 CEVES developed the concept note "Economic evidence for implementing the Law on Gender Equality in Serbia", proposing research that quantifies the economic case for implementing the law, and submitted it to a German Embassy Belgrade funding call.
- We apply equal opportunity in recruitment and promotion.

Health, wellbeing and civil society

- We support a healthy work–life balance: all CEVES staff work on a hybrid schedule, online on Mondays and Fridays and in the office from Tuesday to Thursday.

- **Strengthening civil society.** On 2–4 October 2026 CEVES's in-house experts delivered a three-day budget analysis training for civil society organisations under an EU-funded project. Applications far exceeded available places, and the training materials are being published as a free, public toolkit for all interested CSOs.

3. Economic sustainability

Supporting micro, small and medium enterprises and local economies is at the core of CEVES's mission, and we apply value-for-money and life-cycle thinking in our own spending.

Small and medium enterprises and local communities

- **SME Compass and Springboard (MSP Odskočnica).** CEVES develops a platform, built on several years of data, that analyses the competitiveness of Serbian SMEs through three modules: the SME Compass Index, the ESG Readiness Monitor and Compass BizMap (financial benchmarking based on Business Registers Agency data). In 2026 we began exploring partnerships with commercial banks, including UniCredit, to bring the platform to more businesses.
- **MSP100.** The MSP100 initiative showcased about 100 exemplary Serbian SMEs, mostly in traditional industries. CEVES maintains direct relationships with around 150 of the country's 200–300 best exporting SMEs and turns their experience into policy recommendations.
- **Local expertise.** We engage local consultants, trainers, researchers and service providers wherever possible, keeping project spending within the Serbian and regional economy.
- **Sustainable enterprises.** For the ILO, CEVES updated Serbia's Enabling Environment for Sustainable Enterprises (EESE) assessment (2015–2021), identifying constraints on MSMEs through surveys, benchmarking and stakeholder consultations.
- **Green and digital transition of SMEs.** In a GIZ project (09/2022–12/2023), CEVES delivered ESG training, a Summer School for SME leaders and practical sustainability tools to help Serbian SMEs meet the sustainability requirements of their buyers and supply chains.

Whole life-cycle costing

- When purchasing equipment and services we consider total cost of ownership, including durability, energy use, maintenance and end-of-life disposal, not only the purchase price.
- Our procurement under EU-funded projects follows the applicable EU procurement rules, which require value for money, competition and transparency.

Supply chain sustainability

- Every consultant and supplier engagement is governed by a written contract and Terms of Reference that set out scope, deliverables and expected conduct.
- We favour suppliers who respect labour rights and environmental standards, and we will not knowingly work with suppliers involved in corruption, forced labour or serious environmental harm.

4. Governance, transparency and continuous improvement

Good governance and public accountability underpin all three dimensions, and CEVES actively promotes them in Serbia and the region.

- **Fiscal transparency.** CEVES leads Working Group 17 (economic and monetary policy) of the National Convention on the European Union and coordinates the inter-sectoral working group monitoring the Reform Agenda for budget and finance. We also work with partners on budget transparency linked to the Open Budget Survey.
- **State aid transparency.** As a partner in the WEBEcon network project "Establishment of a Platform for Dialogue and Transparency on State Aid Policy in the 6 Western Balkans" (2025–2027), CEVES delivered Serbia's country inputs on institutional capacity, monitoring and evaluation, and the state aid registry in September 2026.
- **Public investment oversight.** In 2026 CEVES launched a project on democratic accountability in public investment with the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN), using interactive Power BI tools to monitor major infrastructure projects.
- **Accountability to funders.** CEVES manages EU grants, including its EU operating grant, and projects funded by the Open Society Foundations and other donors, under strict financial reporting and audit requirements.
- **SDG localisation.** Commissioned by GIZ (BMZ and SDC funding), CEVES supported UN-Habitat's Voluntary Local Review initiative in nine Serbian municipalities (07–12/2025), through data mapping, policy review, alignment of SDG indicators and expert training.
- **Monitoring the 2030 Agenda.** CEVES takes part in the civil society platform "Sustainable Development for All", which monitors Serbia's preparedness for the 2030 Agenda. The platform's fourth monitoring report, "Is the Goal in Sight?", was published in December 2024.

This statement is adopted by the Director of CEVES and published on the CEVES website. CEVES will review it annually, build its commitments into internal procedures, staff and consultant contracts and procurement, and report on progress to partners on request.

Kori Udovički