

# CEEweb Membership

STRATEGY

OCTOBER 2020



# **CEEweb Membership Strategy**

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## Executive Summary

In 2019, the CEEweb Office started working on restructuring and revitalising its regional network by providing services that the member organisations really need and deserve. Thus, it started to harmonize adequate distribution of its services, such as policy work, advocacy, and lobbying activities; fundraising and project proposals; capacity building and working groups' activities, and so on.

In order to create a meaningful, vivacious, and tangible network, better and more effective services need to be provided to our members; a membership scheme, recruitment and an outreach methodology must be reviewed and revised — not to mention the size of the network, as it was recommended by the monitoring team of the LIFE NGO Operating Grant, as well. Based on the 'needs assessment' the CEEweb Office team performed during 2019, it was found that, besides the overall current scheme, working groups, communication channels and the membership fee model need to be rethought as well.

During the 'CEEweb beyond 2030' Strategic Retreat — held in Vácraót, Hungary, on 21-22 January 2019 — CEEweb for Biodiversity's Board Members and the CEEweb Office team agreed to work on these issues and start refreshing and updating the membership network.

This membership strategy is developed to set the main objectives of the aforementioned assignment and to put them on a strategic level, setting them, moreover, in line with CEEweb's next five-year-strategy for the 2020-2025 period — planned to be completed by the end 2020.



## Introduction

### Aim

The aim of the membership strategy is to determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, challenges and needs of the current membership network, based on the feedback of the board and active members. Drawing conclusions and learning lessons both from the 'CEEweb beyond 2030' Strategic Retreat with the Board Members of the network, and the membership survey shared between the members, a common vision of the membership has, thus, been defined. This vision sets new smart objectives, actions, and a timeline to accomplish this new perception.

This membership strategy is prepared as a recommendation for CEEweb for Biodiversity and will be presented to and discussed with the network members and Board Members on the upcoming annual meeting.

### State of the Art

CEEweb for Biodiversity is a network of 53 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from 18 countries, which has been committed for the past 25 years to the conservation of biodiversity in the Central and Eastern European region. Currently, we have 15 financially stable member organisations paying their membership fee on an annual basis. There are, moreover, a total 20 members — out of the 53 — with whom the CEEweb Office has regular communications with and which are willing to continue developing the work of the network, attend its activities, and pay for the services provided for the members.

Currently, as per the Articles of Association of the organisation, member applications can come from NGOs from the Central, Eastern and South-Eastern European region. NGOs from any other country actively working in this region,



as well as individuals, are also accepted to join as full members, honorary members or supporting members.

Full members can be non-governmental organisations that are legal entities in their own right, and active in the fields of environmental protection and nature conservation aimed towards public good with a view to sustainable development.

Honorary members are individual members or NGOs on whom the association wishes to confer this status in consideration of the voluntary or professional work or support they provide.

Supporting members are NGOs or individual members who support the organisation with financial contributions but do not wish to take part in the activities of the organisation as full members.

The active members currently cover 14 countries — Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, North Macedonia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Ukraine — but not the entire CEE region.

## **Problems and Challenges**

In the past years, capacities of the CEEweb Office were not really used for the maintenance of CEEweb's membership; status, contacts and information on members were not up to date on the website of CEEweb either.

Due to internal challenges — e.g. financial, managerial — and several changes of the CEEweb Office staff, there was a drainage of capacities for proper care of membership services, including a gap in the handover and registration of member details not having been properly carried out, resulting in outdated information. Moreover, a dedicated Membership Liaison Coordinator position was missing in the organisation.



Due to the aforementioned lacks, as well as to the work overload of the General Secretary — responsible, overall, for the membership — during the last years, mailing lists of the working groups, as well as the general CEEweb membership newsletter, became outdated; feedback and inputs on the membership was not collected; termination and withdrawal of members was not registered properly — or not registered at all — among others. Therefore, the current membership and mailing lists include not only paying members, but terminated and, even, unknown members, as well. Under these conditions, the CEEweb Office cannot provide proper, fair services for its paying members.

Furthermore, membership categories, and the application, selection and member registration process are too complex — as currently drawn in the Articles of Association of the organisation, as well as on the website of the organisation.

Financial challenges of the members are critical due to the outdated processes and amounts of the membership fees. In 2020, the CEEweb Office, as the head of this network, is carrying several thousand Euros of outstanding membership fees. Due to the lack of common activities, our network and cooperation has been quite passive in the past years.

In July 2019, the CEEweb Office circulated among the network's members the '2019 CEEweb Members Questionnaire'. It was done using the CEEweb member mailing list, as well as via individual contact details of the members. Only 20 members, out of the 53, completed it.

Based on the information received from these 20 members, the mission of our organisation, i.e. 'Conservation of biodiversity through the promotion of sustainable development', has not changed (see Figure 1). In that line, there is no need to fundamentally modify CEEweb's mission.



How important and relevant do you think CEEweb's mission is today?

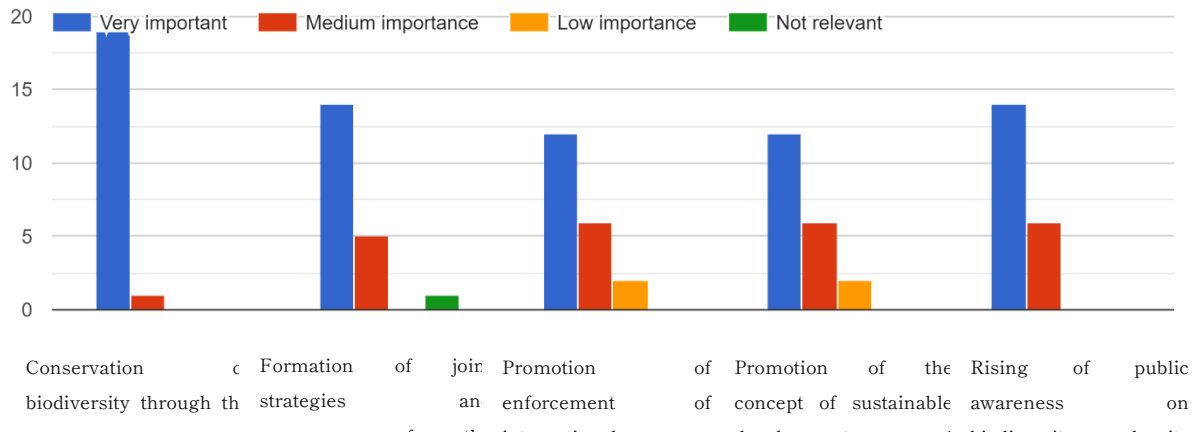


Figure 1. CEEweb for Biodiversity's original mission is still the main issue considered by the network members.

## Needs Assessment

Through a frequent review of our members' feedback, CEEweb can identify and prioritize members' needs, measure its responsiveness to members, and determine areas for expansion. Based on 'CEEweb beyond 2030' Strategic Retreat, the Board Members of the network agreed that, for the efficient and successful membership network, the needs and priorities of members must be defined by a survey; that CEEweb should liaise with all members and revitalize its working groups in order to give the services its members need and deserve.

As the first step of this restructuring process, the CEEweb Office distributed among members the '2019 CEEweb Members Questionnaire' in order to screen the needs of the network and define how to improve CEEweb's services.

According to the information received, CEEweb members would like to use our umbrella organisation for lobbying, campaigning, consultancy, information, and expertise exchange (see Figure 2). All of these not only require better



communications and information flows with the CEEweb Office, but among members themselves.

Activities: as a member of CEEweb, what is/are your expectation(s) from the organisation (as currently outlined in our statutes)?

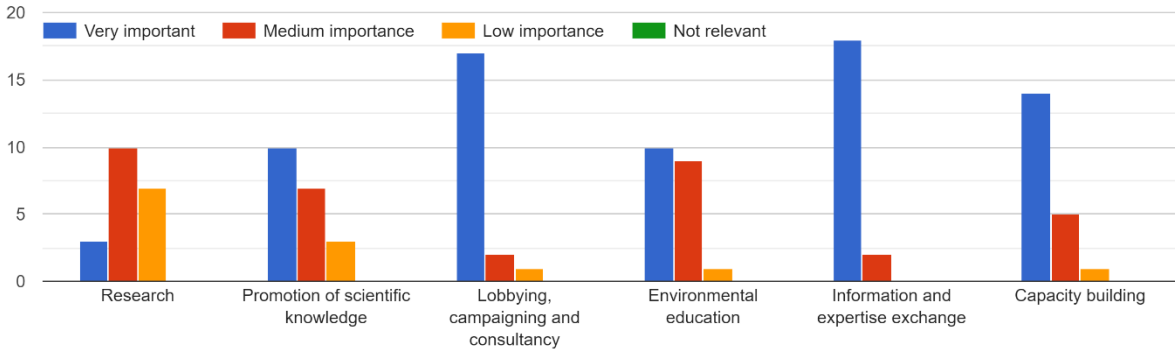


Figure 2. A majority of responding members consider that the CEEweb Office’s most important tasks are the exchange of information and expertise, activities related to lobbying, campaigning, and consultancy, and capacity building for the members.

Additionally, the membership states that it is necessary to create a transparent list of activities within the network to share opportunities with each other and to involve other members in joint projects.

The member network wants the CEEweb Office to focus on regular communications (e.g. newsletters, social media) with its members and bring support in fundraising, proposal writing, and implementation activities. Moreover, it is expected from it to promote members and their activities, carry out joint lobbying activities in Brussels, perform joint campaigning, and develop courses and training programs in the fields of environment and biodiversity conservation.

Besides the fulfilment of its mission, what kind of services do you expect CEEweb to bring you in the future?

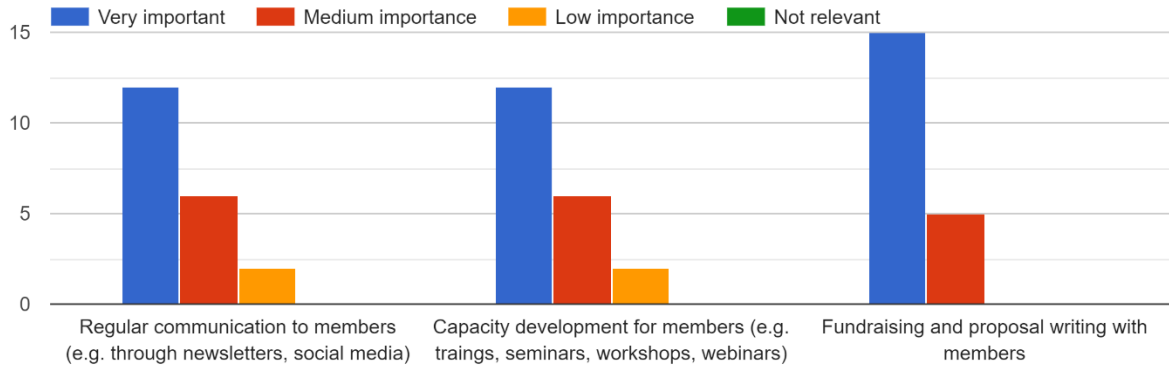


Figure 3. In line with the ever-growing challenges CEE non-profits face, CEEweb members expect from the CEEweb Office to fulfil a role of as a competent aid/leader/partner on fundraising and proposal writing activities, as well as to help build and develop members' capacities.

### Competence Matrix of CEEweb Members

As joint fundraising and project development is a vital part of a successful cooperation, the CEEweb Office also assessed the members' competences and what they can offer in common projects (see Table 1).

Table 1. Current developed expertise, thematic interests, and willingness/desire to build capacities of CEEweb Members.

### Capacity Matrix

	We have strong expertise / We can lead such work	We have some expertise/experience	We are not interested	We do not have expertise but are keen to learn and participate
Field work	14	4	0	2

Education/capacity building	13	6	1	0
Writing/leading work packages in general	12	7	0	1
Being external experts/subcontractors	11	8	0	1
Proposal writing as such	11	8	0	1
Financial monitoring / Project accounting	9	6	5	0
Communications/dissemination	10	8	1	1
Lead partner	8	10	1	1
Publishing (e.g. designing publications, copy-editing, proofreading)	8	4	3	5
Project evaluation	6	12	2	0
Policy related work	6	11	2	1
Campaigning	6	6	6	2
Business uptake	1	11	7	1



Based on the information of the ‘2019 CEEweb Members Questionnaire’, a majority of the members have strong experience on field work, education, and capacity building activities. On the other hand, expertise in the field of publications (e.g. designing publications, copy-editing, proofreading) is mentioned to be an overall lack. Since one of the members’ most important aims relate to their image and positioning (i.e. publicity/branding), it is desired that the CEEweb Office brings support to members to develop their publishing tools.

Moreover, the survey highlights that the majority of members has a strong experience on the fields and topics related to Natura 2000, biodiversity and nature conservation, and agricultural and rural development policy topics (see Table 2). At the same time, they show an interest on building their expertise and capacities in the fields related to the Water Framework Directive (WFD), ecosystem services, and Green infrastructure.

Table 2. Current developed thematic capacities, interests, and willingness/desire to build upon them.

### Thematic Capacities

	We have strong expertise / We can lead such work	We have some expertise/exp erience	We are not intereste d	We do not have expertise but are keen to learn and participate
Natura2000	10	7	0	3
Biodiversity and nature conservation	9	11	0	0
Agricultural and rural development policy	9	5	3	3



Green infrastructure	9	5	1	5
Sustainable tourism	8	6	3	3
Ecosystem services	6	8	0	6
Sustainable development goals (SDGs)	6	7	3	4
Water Framework Directive	3	4	4	9

The survey also revealed that members have the most experience in the following funding mechanisms: LIFE, Interreg and EuropeAid.

**Membership fee<sup>1</sup>**

The majority of the current, active membership is satisfied with the current membership fee; however, 6 out of the 20 respondents think the membership fee scheme should be reviewed.

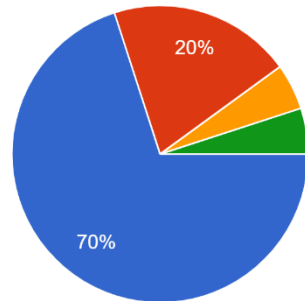
70 percent of CEEweb members are satisfied with the services that they receive as a return of their annual payment. Non-paying is always resulting from the lack of funds. These results indicate that no fundamental change of the organisation’s nature is needed; however, our services could be improved, especially regarding supporting members in fundraising and project development.

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<sup>1</sup> To date, the annual membership fee is calculated by the average of the previous 3 years’ operational cost from the member organisation’s current year (fee categories ranging from 40 to 300 EUR).

Membership fee: please, choose one of the below statements with which you agree the most.

20 responses



- I am fully satisfied with CEEweb's membership fee scheme; no change is needed
- The fee scheme is OK, but it could be better, e.g. better services for the money
- A major reform of the membership fee is needed. I am ready to take part in a discussion about it.
- I can't/don't want to pay the fee

## Strategic approach

### Vision

CEEweb's vision on EU policy is to become a stronger player and proactive policy influencer on the EU level; a driving force of cross-sectoral cooperation on biodiversity and nature conservation in the CEE countries; and a builder of channels to represent members in the EU.

To represent our vision, our institutional focus is to have a stable, sustainable, and renewable financial basis and operations with board members — who are actively supporting the organisation — as well as to represent the civil society and revitalize the cooperation and networking with members, thus creating a strong and active community.



## Objectives

Based on the vision we have set up, CEEweb aims to create a strong and active network community. To achieve that, we listed the following SMART objectives<sup>2</sup> of the membership strategy:

- To dedicate a single point of contact as a Member Liaison Coordinator from CEEweb that can follow up the updates, needs, evaluations and requests of the members in one place.
- To create an up-to-date membership database, including profile pages, contact database and other information, and upload it in a new designed membership page on CEEweb's website.
- To rationalise the number of the member organisations, to break the contact with the inactive members, and to boost the contact and cooperation with the active and responsive ones.
- Outreach to new potential members — especially in CEE countries where no or too few members are present.
- To simplify and revitalize membership-related procedures, such as the application process, membership fee, set of services and requirements, consequences of non-responding, and/or non-paying members.
- To follow up the operation of the membership network via an annual evaluation and monitoring procedure, including an annual revisit and update of the Strategy.

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<sup>2</sup> Smart objectives must be Specific, Measurable, Aligned, Realistic/Relevant, and Time-bound, detailing the goals, their measurement, the performance expectations, and timeline of the process.



## Actions and Timeline

Action	Steps	Timeline/deadline
To provide a more engaging member experience with carefully selected and developed, informative newsletters, materials, studies, and events.	To circulate the “2019 CEEweb members’ questionnaire” among the members.	2019 fulfilling
	To personalize the contact with each member organisations via face-to-face meetings, regular Skype and phone calls, e-mail exchanges.	2019-ongoing
	To update their contact details, follow up their financial balance, their needs, suggestions, and evaluation about the network.	2019-ongoing
To present to the board an updated status of the membership, the new membership strategy, and the suggestions for changing the Articles of Association of the organization.	To send an official invitation to the board members, including the topic and the agenda of the meeting.	2020 July
	To organize the meeting online.	2020 August
	Board approves the proposal.	2020 September
To update the membership network and the Articles of Association of the organization based on the result of all consultations	To have it adopted by the General Assembly — followed by informing all members about the changes (e.g. new membership categories,	2020 October



done and the decision of the board.	services, the decision made on the inactive members).	
	Annual Meeting to adopt updated Articles of Association, remove/include members.	2020 November
	Upload the new Articles of Association to CEEweb's website.	2020 December
	The new membership fee will be made effective.	2021 January
To renew the membership page on the CEEweb website.	To make it more clear and easy-to-handle by including a new design of the coverage by countries, the logo of the member organisations and an updated link to each member.	2020 August
	To make an option to download the members information in a database file.	2020 August
	To simplify the application process with an online, updated application form.	2020 September
	To introduce an easy-to-carry-out fee payment method — using CEEweb's new website, web shop, and PayPal).	2020 September



<p>Member outreach: to recruit new members to cover the whole Central and Eastern European region, especially Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, Montenegro, Slovenia.</p>	<p>To create an outreach database accessible for all CEEweb employees, and to continuously collect new contacts of potential members.</p>	<p>2020 June</p>
	<p>To circulate the call for networking among the active members (via CEEweb Members Newsletter) and in public on social media.</p>	<p>2020 August – ongoing</p>
	<p>To review and filter the applications.</p>	<p>2020 August – ongoing</p>
	<p>To interview the applicants based on the questions of the “2019 CEEweb members' questionnaire.”</p>	<p>2020 August – ongoing</p>
	<p>To present new member applications to the Annual Meeting to make decision.</p>	<p>Before every Annual Meeting</p>
	<p>To inform the applicants about the decision.</p>	<p>When applicable</p>
	<p>To circulate the information of the new members among the active members.</p>	<p>When applicable</p>



	To upload the new members' contact on CEEweb website and database.	When applicable
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## Membership Scheme

CEEweb will create two membership categories.

The Basic Membership category will include all members that are part of CEEweb's community and wants to be informed on EU environmental policy with a CEE regional implication.

The Professional Membership category will mean a closer bond to CEEweb, actively taking part in decision making, common fundraising, and project implementation. Professional members can expect major financial benefits in case of successful proposals and awarded applications. CEEweb, as an umbrella organisation and regional network, assumes to work on mutuality, shared communications, and joint fundraising.

Switching membership category will be easy and would not require AM decision.

SERVICE PROVIDED BY THE CEEweb OFFICE	BASIC MEMBERSHIP	PROFFESIONAL MEMBERSHIP
The organisation is marked as a member on CEEweb's website, including the logo, basic information, links to the member's website and communications channels.	√	√
Contacts will be reviewed by CEEweb annually.	√	√
The organisation can participate to the Annual Meetings and Academy with a legal representative or delegate.	√	√



The organisation can initiate discussions regarding any issues relevant to the objectives and tasks of the organisation.	√	√
The organisation can take part in the decisions through active/passive voting right.	√	√
Participation in workshops, training, and other capacity building events of the network.	X	√
Inspection of records and documents of the organisation.	√	√
Monthly CEEweb Members Newsletter.	√	√
Joint lobbying representation, positions/statements/policy proposals.	√	√
The representative or delegate of the organisation can be elected to the Board and the Supervisory Committee.	X	√
Monthly Policy Update.	√	√
Social media contents of the members shared by CEEweb.	X	√
Receiving regular fundraising updates (e.g. call alerts); invitations to project consortiums based on available competences.	X	√
Ad-hoc publishing services based on agreement (e.g. designing publications, copy-editing, proofreading).	X	√
Membership fee	50 EUR/year	100 EUR/year

## SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis is a listing of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats for the membership program.



INTERNAL FACTORS	
STRENGTHS (+)	WEAKNESSES (-)
Quite big membership with remarkable expertise and different types of organizations (experts, umbrellas)	Hectic finances (lack of funding of the members)
Fluent contacts with the active members	Many inactive member organizations
Joint projects, campaign & policy experience	Lack of cohesion within CEEweb membership
Some active and committed members (in the board, as well)	Low level of cooperation and networking (with members)
	Network of “financially challenged organisations”
EXTERNAL FACTORS	
OPPORTUNITIES (+)	THREATS (-)
International projects with members (DEAR, EEA grants).	Appearance of pseudo NGOs.
Lot of potential CEEweb members	Ignorance/opposition from the public, lack of interest and understanding of the citizens.
Network as a power to develop into professionals	A climate where NGO positions and views are often downplayed, ignored, or derided by decision-makers.



## Conclusions and Recommendations

For umbrella associations like CEEweb, the membership network is the most important existential driving force. Getting and keeping members truly engaged in the organization is critical for survival. A simple equation for looking at engagement: **Engagement = Relationship + Action**. To provide an engaging member experience, it is important to deliver the benefits that matter most to members, but also the mutual nature of this required/desired engagement is a must.

In the past several months, we have visibly multiplied our communication, info sharing, etc., towards members, and we expect to have more active, dedicated members to respond to our offers, calls to action, mutual fundraising, and to mutual cooperation. This is how CEEweb intends to continue its work with the membership network in the future.

Having established a strong team and a relatively stable financial basis, the CEEweb team is ready to provide a more engaging member experience to its member organisations. With the actions detailed in this draft strategy, our recommendation is to revitalise and update our network and partnership, to make our work attractive for the public, and to ensure the fulfilment of CEEweb's mission — namely, the conservation of biodiversity.

To make our relationship/engagement with the members mutual/reciprocal, the responsibilities should be shared. Our network will be successful only if our members make efforts to keep it alive. It is especially important on a practical level for joint policy positions and project applications.



## Annex I

### Suggested Changes in the Articles of Association

5) To divide the membership in two main categories, including a new, fixed amount of membership fee:

a) Basic Membership: fixed 50 EUR/year

Services included:

- Organisation is marked as member on CEEweb's website, including the logo and the link to the member's website and social media channels. Any changes of the member's contact must be reported to CEEweb to be able to provide a better and more effective service to our members. Contacts will be reviewed by CEEweb annually.
- Organisation is allowed to participate to the Annual Meetings and Academy through legal representative or delegate, to initiate discussions regarding any issues relevant to the objectives and tasks of the organisation, and to take part in the decisions through a voting right.
- Organisation has an active/passive voting right. In case the member delegates more than one delegate, the document verifying the delegated person's legitimacy must state the name of the delegated person who is entitled to vote. The delegate can be delegated by an authorization from the legal representative of the member organisation — with an authentic act or a documentary



legal proof. Such authorization shall contain the duration of the mandate or delegation, the possible restraints, and all issues with relevance to the procedure. The representative registered with a copy of the document verifying the representative right shall be considered as the representative of the member, as long as no other person announces his/her representative right in the same form or it is found by an official document (e.g. notarial document, private document with full probative value) that the right of representation of the representative was/is/has been terminated.

- Inspection of records and documents of the organisation.
- Joint lobbying representation, positions/statements/policy proposals.
- Receiving a monthly CEEweb Members Newsletter with the following topics:
  - Announcements: highlighted topic of the newsletter related to the network or the organisation.
  - Institutional news: report to the members about the operations of the CEEweb office, including HR related news (e.g. open positions, new staff members, internships), donations, etc.



- Project updates: report to the members about the running projects (e.g. implementation, events, publications, etc.) updated by the Project Coordinators.
  - Policy updates: highlighted topic coming from the monthly Policy Update Newsletter (sent separately on the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month) and summarized by the policy team.
  - Miscellaneous area: any other issues of recommended reading for the members (e.g. webinars, events, questionnaires, calls for proposal).
  - From Members to Members: news, successes, publications, projects, events, calls for partnership, open positions of the members, et al., coming from the members.
- Receiving monthly detailed Policy Update Newsletter.
- b) Professional Membership: fixed 100 EUR/year

Services included:

- Organisation is marked as member on CEEweb's website, including the logo and the link to the member's website and social media channels. Any changes of the member's contact must be reported to CEEweb to be able to provide a better and more effective service to our members. Contacts will be reviewed by CEEweb annually.



- Organisation is allowed to participate to the Annual Meetings and Academy through a legal representative or delegate, to initiate discussions regarding any issues relevant to the objectives and tasks of the organisation, and to take part in the decisions through voting right.
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- Participation in workshops, trainings, and other capacity building events of the organisation.
- Inspection of records and documents of the organisation.



- Joint lobbying representation, positions/statements/policy proposals.
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- From Members to Members: news, successes, publications, projects, events, calls for partnership, open positions of the members, et al., coming from the members.
- Receiving a monthly detailed Policy Update Newsletter.
- Social media contents of the members followed and shared by CEEweb.
- Receiving regular fundraising updates (e.g. calls alerts), invitations to project consortiums based on available competences.

Ad-hoc publishing services based on agreement (e.g. designing publications, copy-editing, proofreading).



During the 'CEEweb beyond 2030' Strategic Retreat – held in Vácrátót, Hungary, on 21-22 January 2019 – CEEweb for Biodiversity's Board Members and the CEEweb Office team agreed to work on these issues and start refreshing and updating the membership network.

This membership strategy is developed to set the main objectives of the aforementioned assignment and to put them on a strategic level, setting them, moreover, in line with CEEweb's next five-year-strategy for the 2020-2025 period – planned to be completed by the end 2020.

