Introduction to the CEE meeting 2023

About the Central and Eastern European Wikimedia meeting

The Wikimedia CEE Meeting is an annual conference centered on Wikimedia projects (Wikipedia and other related projects) in countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and, more recently, also of Central Asia (CA). It features presentations on Wikimedia projects, other wikis, free/open source software, free knowledge and free content, and the social and technical aspects of these topics. Compared to similar Wikimedia meetings, CEE Meetings tend to be more work-intensive and less focused on presentations, resulting in more tangible outcomes (like the article writing contest CEE Spring or the CEE Hub).

The idea was conceived at an informal meetup that took place on 6 August 2011 at Wikimania 2011 in Haifa. Most of the attendees from the region's countries were present and shared their experiences in establishing a more global community. The history of CEE meetings is already 11 years old, starting from the first meeting in Belgrade (2012). The following meetings were organized in Modra, Slovakia (2013); Kyiv (2014); Voore, Estonia (2015); Dilijan, Armenia (2016); Warsaw (2017); Lviv, Ukraine (2018); Belgrade (2019), two online meetings during the Covid pandemic and the last one took place in Ohrid, North Macedonia (2022).

With the creation of the CEE Hub, the importance of the meetings increased. The goal of this regional hub is to formalize the ongoing collaboration within the CEE region, provide services for communities in their work, and enable them to grow and develop capacities according to their needs. Thus, the meeting serves as a sustainable platform for cooperation and the exchange of experience in the context of the Hub.

About WMCEE meeting 2023 in Tbilisi

In 2023, the CEE meeting will be held in the capital of Georgia, Tbilisi. The meeting is organized by Wikimedia UG Georgia in cooperation with the CEE Hub. The announcement of the next meeting and the announcement of Georgia as the organizer of this meeting took place during the previous CEE Meeting in October 2022 in Ohrid, North Macedonia. Wikimedia UG Georgia announced its interest in organizing the CEE meeting in the summer of 2022 via a Facebook group and Telegram channel for the CEE community. The meeting will be held for the second time in the Caucasus after the 2016 meeting in Dilijan, Armenia.

Wikimedia UG Georgia will also cooperate with local partners during the organization of the meeting, primarily with Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, which provides their facilities for free for the duration of the conference, and the Administration of the President of Georgia, which facilitates the establishment of relations between Wikimedia UG Georgia and other organizations and public institutions during the conference.

Timeline

All dates are preliminary, but most likely, they will be confirmed by our partners.

- Submissions: from 1 April to 20 May; If needs to extend, 10 June
- Registration: 1-31 July 2023
- Learning days/CEE Hub preparation meeting: Thursday, 14 September 2023
- Conference dates:
    - Friday, 15 September 2023
    - Saturday, 16 September 2023
    - Sunday 17 September 2023

Venue

The Wikimedia CEE Meeting will take place in the first (main) building of the Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, located in the city center, near which there is all the necessary infrastructure for a successful conference.

Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University (TSU) is the oldest university in Georgia and the Caucasus, founded in 1918. Over 23 500 students are enrolled, and the total number of faculty and staff (collaborators) is 5,000. According to the U.S. News & World Report university rankings, TSU is ranked 398th in the world. The university has five branches in the regions of Georgia, six faculties, 60 scientific-research laboratories and centers, a scientific library (with 3,700,000 books and periodicals), seven museums, a publishing house, and a printing press.

Participants

Representatives of the affiliations of the region (CEE and CA) and all interested persons can participate in the conference. Wikimedia UG Georgia and the organizing committee, based on a grant from the Wikimedia Foundation, provide scholarships for representatives of regional affiliations and language communities (1-2 representatives). All other interested persons can participate in the conference at their own expense.

We prioritize language communities and affiliations. Affiliations representing the country (as a whole) and language communities may send 2 representatives from the affiliation. All other affiliates (and communities) are allowed to send 1 representative. Also, a scholarship for 1 representative will be received by those communities that organized CEE Spring in their communities.

The selection of scholarship recipients will be carried out in two ways where:

1. The first is recipients who are active members of already established Wikimedia chapters or affiliations (UG). Representatives of the Board or the Executive Committee will be required to submit them to us, and after checking, we will confirm them for participation.
2. The second one is groups of active members of the Wikimedia community who are not members of any Wikimedia chapters of affiliations. The local Wikipedia community will select them via discussion or selection process on Wikipedia (through the village pump). In addition, conference organizers will check their editing history, their contribution to the Wikimedia movement and projects, and their submitted self-evaluation and Wikimedia experience.

Goals of the meeting

The main goals of the conference are:

- Promotion of free knowledge and free access to knowledge for the wider population and audience in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and Central Asia (CA),
- Strengthen the cooperation capacities and improve the collaboration between different Wikimedia affiliates/organizations/communities no matter the geographical or cultural distances,
- Provide help and support for small-size Wikimedia affiliates and organizations and language communities encouraging them to expand their scope of work and international collaboration,
- Exchange knowledge and experience in terms of Wikimedia Projects and activities concerning those projects and GLAM-oriented activities,
- Promotion of the idea of establishing collaboration and mutual projects or activities between affiliates and communities that have no such experience,
- Improve problem-solving skills and techniques for avoiding non-friendly behavior or conflicts on Wikimedia Projects and actual activities related to those projects,
- Share ideas and experience about team building capacities, leadership, communication, and social skills, as well as organizational and logistic skills.
- Work on the creation and implementation of fundraising and freedom of the panorama in the countries of the region,
- Present activities that the CEE Hub implemented during 2023 discuss the project plan for 2024, and select the new steering committee.

Objectives and Outcomes

The WMCEE 2023 meeting will be successful if we achieve these objectives:

- To have at least one or two participants from the expected affiliations and communities
- To have prepared speakers who will cover the topics from which the attendees can benefit
- To have shared ideas and motivated attendees to apply what has been learned and start the presented projects as new projects in their communities
- To initiate new collaboration and strengthen existing work between the Wikimedia affiliations and communities from the CEE region
- To have external partners in the conference participants who will contribute to developing free knowledge
- Know what to expect, what can help, and in what direction the CEE Hub will develop