Building impactful partnerships

The CEB seeks to leverage its financing and expertise capacities by further strengthening European and international cooperation. Raising additional funds from donors can also make the CEB’s actions more impactful.

Engaging in meaningful cooperation for the long term

In 2018, the CEB deepened its partnerships, through both targeted cooperation with organisations and participation in expert gatherings, on topics at the heart of the Bank’s business: sustainable urban development, climate change, health and education, affordable housing, and employment through support to MSMEs.

When engaging and partnering with other organisations, the CEB looks at how this cooperation can potentially contribute to the Bank delivering even higher quality and more impactful project financing. A selection of initiatives the Bank engaged with in 2018 is presented below.

Stepping up cooperation on climate change and resilience

Partnering with 100 Resilient Cities

Sustainable development will be hard to achieve without rethinking and transforming the way urban communities are built and managed. With this in mind, the CEB and “100 Resilient Cities - Pioneered by The Rockefeller Foundation” (100RC), signed a Memorandum of Understanding in July 2018. The agreement marks the first important partnership between the CEB and a major philanthropic initiative.

In line with the CEB’s social mandate, the aim of the partnership is to help cities finance resilience-building initiatives that benefit the most marginalised and vulnerable population groups.

Through this partnership, the CEB can provide eligible cities with technical assistance, direct funding for selected projects, workshops on thematic areas, and engage in the joint development of innovative urban finance solutions.

The memorandum will help cities across Europe prepare for and respond to one-off shocks such as natural disasters, and to chronic stresses such as water shortages, homelessness, and unemployment.

Observer to UN Framework Convention on Climate Change

In 2018, the CEB obtained permanent observer status to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UN FCCC).

With over 120 intergovernmental organisations admitted as observers, the CEB was in good company at the 2018 Conference of the Parties (COP24) in Katowice, Poland. The Bank took the opportunity to endorse the multilateral development banks’ initiative for aligning project portfolios with the goals of the Paris agreement. The CEB has been supporting these goals through its specific partnerships with other financial institutions such as the Climate Action in Financial Institutions initiative to catalyse low-emissions and climate resilient development.

Stepping up cooperation with sector-specific partnerships

Cooperation with HIPSO to advance support for SMEs

In 2018 the CEB joined the initiative on Harmonized Indicators for Private Sector Operations (HIPSO), a network of 26 multilateral finance institutions including the IFC, EIB, EBRD and national development banks. The aim of the initiative is to agree on a set of harmonised indicators with which to assess project results, thus providing a recognised framework, reducing the reporting burden for borrowers and increasing the capacity of IFIs to learn from each other.

The CEB participated in HIPSO’s annual meeting in October 2018, with very interactive sessions highly relevant to the CEB’s efforts to measure the performance and sustainability of the projects it finances, such as gender-related data and initiatives, SDGs, and the measurement of indirect effects on jobs.

Other IFIs showed strong interest in the CEB’s active field monitoring of individual SMEs, which provides the Bank with a solid understanding of its end-borrowers and their needs, thus enabling it to integrate monitoring feedback into the design of new operations.
Health and social care partnerships in 2018

Having connected for the first time in 2017 with the Social Health Protection Network (P4H), initiated by the World Health Organisation (WHO), and with the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD), the CEB this year strengthened its ties with these two initiatives.

More specifically, by engaging with P4H and EASPD, the CEB spread its first hand insights on health and social care systems in various European countries and shared expert knowledge on how to get capital investments to work for social services and infrastructure. While the Bank sees these partnerships in health and social care as an opportunity to raise the awareness of CEB expertise and services, the key driver for teaming up is ultimately to improve the quality of projects financed and to increase the CEB’s positive impact on the lives of Europeans even further.

A common IFI approach to education investments

The CEB spearheaded and organised the first “Meeting of Education Experts from Development Agencies” involved in the financing of education infrastructure in Europe. The meeting took place in April 2018 at the CEB’s premises and brought together representatives from the European Investment Bank (EIB), the French Agency for Development (AFD), KfW Development Bank and the World Bank.

The CEB and its partner institutions are to develop a common comprehensive approach to education investments with a special focus on learning outcomes. This builds on the idea that physical infrastructure per se is not sufficient for learning environments to be effective. Going forward, the link between infrastructure and (better) learning outcomes will be further explored by partner institutions’ experts.

Partnership on the inclusion of migrants and refugees

The CEB joined the European Partnership for the Integration of Migrants and Refugees in May 2018. Established in 2015, under the Dutch presidency of the European Union and within the framework of the “European Urban Agenda” policy initiative, this partnership is a platform bringing together five major European cities (Amsterdam, Athens, Barcelona, Berlin, Helsinki) and five member states (Denmark, Greece, Italy, Portugal and the Netherlands), the European Commission (DG Migration and Home Affairs, DG Regional and Urban Policy), the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, the European Committee of the Regions, the EIB and the CEB.

The partnership’s mission is to exchange good practices and make policy recommendations to the European Commission regarding the inclusion of migrants and refugees. The potential establishment of a loans and grants blending mechanism to facilitate the integration of migrants and refugees in cities is one of the key proposals put forward by the partnership.

Cooperation and Partnerships on Housing Issues

During 2018, the Bank’s staff were repeatedly solicited by professional associations, international organisations and national governments to share their knowledge on the lessons learnt from evaluated operations in the housing sector.

An example of the CEB’s strengthened partnership and cooperation is the European Network of Housing Researchers (ENHR) where CEB’s Evaluation Department contributes actively to the Housing and Refugees Working Group and the Policy and Research Working Group.

The CEB’s evaluation experts shared insights from the Bank’s experience with housing assistance for returnees, highlighting factors such as varying trends in policy support, equality and transparency in access to available assistance, and measures to promote attractiveness for people to return. During a roundtable focusing on affordable housing challenges and the role that technical know-how can play in policy formulation, the CEB shared its findings on the link between housing and regional development, generation of and access to data, as well as innovations for managing an increasing demand for affordable housing. Taking part in another ENHR meeting, the CEB presented its activities in the housing sector, key success factors, and how evaluation can provide relevant knowledge on the social outcomes and sustainability of social housing operations.

In December 2018, the CEB was invited to attend and contribute to the conference on “Evidence-based policies for sustainable housing and urban development in Europe and beyond” organised by United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). The discussion focused on approaches to data collection and management in the context of SDG11 “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” in the UNECE region.

The CEB presented the risks associated with the proliferation of data without a clear direction for use and described how the Bank can contribute, through its lending activities, to the creation of an evidence-based culture in which housing programmes are grounded in a solid understanding of the market and its gaps, and of beneficiaries’ needs and aspirations. Upfront knowledge and consideration of such issues are key factors for ensuring the sustainability of the investments being financed.
Cooperating with donors

The Bank cooperates with donors to make its projects more sustainable. In particular, the Bank uses donor funds to provide technical assistance to its borrowers. This assistance helps them implement their projects according to best practice. For instance, the Bank may put an engineer at the disposal of a borrower to help ensure that the project makes sound use of, for example, energy efficiency or renewable energy schemes.

In 2018, the Bank raised €41 million from donors, most of which will go to the Regional Housing Programme. The programme provides homes to vulnerable persons who were displaced in the 1990s during the conflict in former Yugoslavia and have been living in dire conditions ever since. Donors have contributed €284 million to the programme, including €234 million from the European Union. The programme also exemplifies how donor funds make CEB projects more sustainable. The funds, which are channelled through the CEB, endow the recipient countries with the resources and expertise needed to better implement the programme. Thanks to the support of donors, the recipient countries are expected to have provided homes to more than 34,000 persons by 2021.

Co-hosting conferences and workshops

Conference on Social Investment

In December 2018, the CEB and Caisse des Dépôts Group (CDC) organised a high-level conference to discuss the role of social investment in creating a prosperous and resilient Europe. With growing social and economic inequalities and a social infrastructure investment gap estimated at €1.5 trillion for the period 2018 to 2030, as CEB Governor Rolf Wenzel indicated in his opening remarks, the challenges faced by the continent are considerable.

A debate on how to address such challenges appropriately was timely as was the European Commission’s proposal to put in place a guarantee of €4 billion for social investments under the next EU budget. During the course of the conference speakers and participants discussed the principal challenges to social cohesion across Europe, such as globalisation, technological disruption, population ageing, migration, and climate change. The debate then focused on means to drive sustainable social policies as well as specific social investment programmes. Lastly, attention moved to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to the rise of nationalism and to innovative ways to provide for the needs of vulnerable populations.

The conference brought together twenty speakers ranging from Ambroise Fayolle, EIB Vice President, Anna Triandafyllidou, European University Institute, Manuela Gelen, European Commission DG EMPL Director, to Joséphine Goube, CEO Techfueges and philanthropist Alexandre Mars, and some one hundred and fifty participants from across Europe.

Workshop “Migrant Women Entrepreneurship” during European Development Days

During the European Development Days 2018 in Brussels, the CEB organised a roundtable on the topic “Investing in migrant women”. Representatives from the European Commission, the non-governmental organisation Singa France, microfinance institution PerMicro, and the CEB’s Technical Assessment & Monitoring Directorate discussed, in particular, migrant women’s challenge to generate a sustainable income. While most migrants face significant barriers to integration, women need to fight being stigmatised into low-skilled jobs and lack support. On stage, the CEB’s expert made it clear that the Bank endeavours to ensure the gender-sensitiveness of the projects it finances.

The expert roundtable agreed that there is a need for both immediate emergency response and long-term integration; both are closely linked and are supported by the CEB. Adapting a more positive discourse also seems essential: Specific opportunities exist for migrants, and should be leveraged upon in order to avoid stigmatisation. However, the political will and context matter, and they are the responsibility of every European citizen.

Thematic Roundtable – “Developing synergies: the evaluation community and the housing sector” at the European Evaluation Society conference

The European Evaluation Society’s conference in October 2018 was an opportunity for the CEB’s Evaluation Department to partner with Housing Europe, a federation of social housing providers, to organise a thematic roundtable on the housing challenges faced by European countries and the role that evaluation can play therein. For the CEB, the relevance of this initiative is twofold. First, housing is one of the central focal points of the SDGs, such as Goal 11 with the target of “ensuring, by 2030, access, for all, to adequate, safe and affordable housing”. Secondly, generating knowledge, in a timely manner, on “what works” in the housing sector entails developing a more holistic approach for evaluating performance and impact assessment.

This initiative was a significant contribution to corporate visibility, not least because it drew recognition from other European IFIs of the CEB’s competence in one of the Bank’s historic sectors of action. The latter have since reverted to CEB to gather experience, methods and practices, thus creating the basis for subsequent exchanges and fertilization of relevant knowledge.