

STATEMENT OF MOTIVATION: ADVICE FOR APPLICANTS

What Is The Statement Used For?

By the CERGE-EI Admissions Committee:

- As a screening device for typical and borderline applicants.
- To assess English writing ability
- To speculate on the applicant's readiness and potential (the past is the best indicator of the future)

By applicants:

- To show desire, competence, suitability, and preparedness for the program
- To show expected personal and professional gains from the program
- To show how the applicant and CERGE-EI are a good match (benefits for both sides)

What Should The Statement Include?

The CERGE-EI application requests a Statement of Motivation no longer than 4,000 characters (approximately 1.5 pages) explaining how you heard about CERGE-EI, your academic and research background and interests, your career goals, and how you feel the PhD program at CERGE-EI will help you meet your objectives.

Address each part professionally and directly.

The Admissions committee wants to see the human being behind the education, experience, awards, and honors. The committee wants to be able to form a relatively clear picture of the person you are: what kind of person the institution would be investing in.

Show a meaningful progression to your career. Explain what your past academic and professional experience has meant to you, and how it has shaped your current academic and professional choices, research interests, and chosen career path. This requires some mature self-reflection.

How Should The Statement Be Structured?

Statements generally move from past to present to future. Just be sure all parts of the questions are answered in a balanced way.

Your past: How your study, work, and research experience has prepared you for the CERGE-EI PhD program. Be selective in what you include (see: Things That Can Work Against You, below).

Your proposed course of study at CERGE-EI, including a description of your research interests. This should be shown to be a logical follow-up from your studies/work/research to date, and how will they prepare you for your future career. This is the place to show how CERGE-EI is a good match for your interests. Be as specific as you can.

Your future career. Do you want an academic career? A career in government or the private sector? This section should show that you have thought about it. Your career choice should be something for which a PhD in Economics at CERGE-EI will be valuable, and the information in the section should have some connection to what came before.

How Should the Statement Begin?

- How did you hear about the CERGE-EI PhD program? What made you want to apply (briefly)?
- Interesting, relevant information about you, your situation and your interests related to study at CERGE-EI.
- A description of your main research interests relevant to the types of research done at CERGE-EI.
- What motivates you to do research in the particular field you are in/wish to enter?

Ways NOT To Begin

Flattering comments about CERGE-EI, the program, Prague, etc.

Entire life history. Relevant history includes your university study and related work/research/teaching experience.

Speculating on a reader's thoughts ("You are probably wondering why would be applying for...")

Opening with at-length technical descriptions.

What About The Body Of the Statement?

Be specific and relevant to the overall purpose of the statement.

Describe your research interests with a personal spin.

Refer to research, educational experiences, and accomplishments, what you learned from them, and how they shaped you.

Name a personal contact at CERGE-EI (faculty or student) if applicable.

Be sure your statement is clearly structured and reflects your ability to communicate about your ideas and interests.

What Do I Put In The Conclusion?

Lay out your career objectives (Academia? Private sector?)

Explain how your career objectives will be a natural outcome of a meaningful progression so far.

Reiterate how the CERGE-EI program will benefit you, and how you will benefit the program and the institution.

Final Tips

Keep to the character/word limit.

Use your best professional English.

Edit and proofread the document carefully.

Things That Can Work Against You

Submitting a research proposal, instead of addressing the application questions.

Submitting an autobiography or information that basically repeats what is on your CV.

Submitting a list of accomplishments with no discussion of how they have shaped your career path.

Making a plea.

Using a standard form into which you insert a few relevant details.

Plagiarism.