

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 (this is most applicants).
- To assess English writing ability
- To speculate on the applicant's readiness and potential (the past is the best signal of the future)
- To speculate on whether the applicant and CERGE-EI are a good match (benefits for both)

By applicants:

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

What Should The Statement Include?

- The CERGE-EI application asks you to write a **“1000-2000 word Statement of Motivation explaining your academic and research background and interests, your career goals, and how the PhD program at CERGE-EI will help you meet your objectives.”**

Address each part, professionally and directly.

- Above all, the Admissions Committee wants to see the human being behind all 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 this has shaped your current academic and professional choices, research interests, and chosen career path. This requires you to do 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 question are addressed 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 research interests This should be shown to be a logical follow-up from your studies/work/research to date, and how they prepare you for your future career. This is the place to show why the CERGE-EI program 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 is essential and valuable, and should have some logical connection to what went before.

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How Should the Statement Begin?

- Interesting, relevant fact or detail about you, your situation or interests
- Your angle on the field you are in/wish to enter
- Factual statement regarding a particular problem/issue you plan to research (problem/issue relevant to the research done at CERGE-EI)

Ways NOT To Begin

- Flattering comments about the university, the CERGE-EI program, Prague, etc.
- Entire life history. Concentrate on your university (and workforce) career
- How you heard about the program. Unless this says something relevant about *you*, leave it out
- Second-guessing the reader's thoughts ("You are probably wondering why a specialist in [...] should be applying for..."). Just answer the question
- Diving straight into the specialized field (jargon, obscurity). This will only obscure *you* and will not impress.

What About The Body Of the Statement?

- Be specific and relevant to the question
- Describe your research interests with a personal spin
- Refer to research-related, educational experiences and accomplishments, what you took from them, and how they shaped you
- Name a personal contact at CERGE-EI (faculty or student), if applicable
- What you select to include in this section indicates your judgment!*

What Do I Put In The Conclusion?

- Lay out your career objectives (Academia? Private sector?)
- Explain how these career objectives are a natural culmination of a meaningful progression so far
- Reiterate how the CERGE-EI program benefits you, and how you benefit the program
- Show that your career aims plus CERGE-EI program's orientation = a good match *for both sides*

Final Tips

- Keep to the word limit
- Craft the language carefully
- Edit and proofread thoroughly

Things That Can Work Against You

- Submitting a research proposal, instead of addressing the question
- Submitting an autobiography, or information that basically repeats what is on the CV
- Submitting a description of accomplishments with no thought as to how they shaped your career path
- Making a plea
- Boilerplate
- Plagiarism

This tip sheet was produced by Laura Strakova, Assistant Professor of English at CERGE-EI. Ms. Strakova has served on the CERGE-EI Admissions Committee, and previously served for several years on the Graduate Admissions Committee at the University of Maryland, USA.