Academic Skills Center

Statement of Motivation: Advice for Candidates

What is the statement used for?

By the CERGE-EI Admissions Committee

To speculate on the applicant's readiness and potential
To assess English writing ability

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 for the Master in Economic Research program or the PhD program requires a Statement of Motivation no longer than 4,000 characters (approximately 1.5 pages) explaining how you heard about CERGE-EI, describing your academic and research background and interests, outlining your career goals, and discussing how you feel the program at CERGE-EI will help you meet your objectives.

Address each part directly and professionally.

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: who the institution would be investing in and including in our academic and professional community.

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 are usually chronological, from past to present to future. Be sure to present the stages in a balanced way.

Your past: how your study, work, and research has prepared you for the CERGE-EI Master in Economic Research program or the PhD program. **Your proposed course of study at CERGE-EI**, including a description of your research interests. You should show how this would be a logical progression from your studies/work/research to date, and how your proposed studies at CERGE-EI will prepare you for your future career. This is where you can show how CERGE-EI's study program will be a good match for your interests. Be as specific as possible. **Your future career:** Do you want to work in government or the private sector? In academia? This section should show that you have thought about it. Your career choice should clearly be something that a master degree or a PhD degree in economics will be valuable for. The information in this section should be connected to what you have done in the past also.

How should the statement begin?

How did you hear about the CERGE-EI Master in Economic Research program or the PhD program? What made you want to apply?
Interesting, relevant information about you, your current situation, and your interests related to studies 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 field you are interested in?

Ways NOT to begin:

Flattering comments about CERGE-EI, the program, Prague, etc.
Entire life history. Relevant history usually begins at university and includes related work/research/teaching experience.
Speculations on a reader's thoughts: "You are probably wondering why…"
Opening with long 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. Government, private sector, academia, other?
Explain how your career objectives will be a natural outcome of a meaningful progression so far.
Reiterate how the CERGE-EI Master in Economic Research program or the PhD program will benefit you, and how you will benefit the program and the institution.

Using AI to Generate or Edit a Letter of Motivation

AI tools are often used these days to generate or edit job market documents. A few things to be aware of:

You are fully responsible for the accuracy of all information in all of your documents, including the motivation letter. Check very carefully anything that AI produces or suggests to ensure that it is absolutely correct and true. AI tools can help to narrow the language gap for candidates with weaker English skills. But they will not help you succeed in Economics classes conducted in English or in your overall studies at CERGE-EI. You need to have genuinely strong English listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. AI tends to overstate things. You will want to ensure that the tone of your Letter of Motivation is carefully worded to reflect your skills, experience, and professional ambitions without overstatement.

AI often uses the same, boilerplate phrases that appear in many job market documents. Your own language choices for ways to describe yourself and your motivations are more likely to stand out to the Admissions Committee than common AI phrasing.

Overall, you may choose to use an AI tool in the process of writing your motivation letter, but edit the letter very carefully and make your own carefully considered choices of language in every respect!

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.
Plagiarizing or filling in a template. We want to see your own genuine writing and thoughts.