

Rules of the V4EaP Scholarship Program Financed by the International Visegrad Fund

Under Articles 2 and 20 of the Statute of the International Visegrad Fund (hereinafter the “Fund”) the Council of Ambassadors is issuing these conditions to outline the rules of procedure for the preparation, approval and implementation of V4EaP Scholarship Program (hereinafter “Scholarship Program”) in areas determined by the Statute.

Chapter I—Aims of the Scholarship Program

Article 1

The Scholarship Program is a specific program of the Fund created to facilitate academic exchanges by providing financial support to students or researchers who are citizens of the Eastern Partnership countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, (the Republic of) Moldova and Ukraine to study in the V4 countries: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia (hereinafter the “Member States”). All Higher Education Institutions accredited by the governments (ministries responsible for higher education) and Institutes of Academies of Sciences (hereinafter only “University/Institution”) are eligible to be host as well as home institutions. The aim of the Scholarship Program is to support the mobility of students and researchers among the specified countries.

Chapter II—Eligibility and Preparation

Article 2

Scholarships are provided for study/research projects specified in the submitted application form. The country of citizenship and permanent residence shall be different from the host country. The applicant’s home and host university must be different, i.e., the previous level of university studies must be completed in a country other than where the applicant applies for studies. An applicant for the scholarship support shall submit no more than one application within one deadline. In the event that the applicant submits more than one application, the Fund shall register and consider the first delivered.

Article 3

Successful applicants are eligible to apply for the Scholarship Program again; however, the Fund’s maximum term of scholarship support is 4 semesters.

Article 4

The length of the supported period of study/research shall be 10 months (2 semesters) or 5 months (1 semester). The maximum length of supported studies for applicants applying for Master’s Scholarship is 20 months (4 semesters); it is possible to support an entire Master’s study program through one application. The level of supported studies shall be:

- Master’s studies (the student must have completed at least 4 semesters at home university prior to applying),
- Post-Master’s (doctoral or other postgraduate programs)

Article 5

The Executive Director is responsible for the proper announcement of the Scholarship Program in conformity with the decision of the Conference of Ministers.

Chapter III—Application Form

Article 6

The Secretariat of the Fund has the obligation to provide each applicant with an application form. The application form is available on-line on the website of the Fund. The application for financial subsidy shall be filled out and registered in English on-line in the prescribed form and then sent in hard copy to the Fund's secretariat.

Article 7

Compulsory annexes to the application form are as follows:

- 1) A copy of the certified translation of the Master's or last obtained diploma (in the event the applicant has not finished his/her Master's studies, he/she shall submit a certificate stating current year of study at home university and expected date of obtaining his/her Master's diploma, issued by the home university). If applying for the Master's Scholarship, a transcript of academic records is also required.
- 2) A letter of acceptance from the host university/institution no older than 3 months when submitting the application. If the applicant applied for courses that require admission tests or personal interview (results of which will be known only after the deadline for the Scholarship Program applications), the applicant shall submit a proof of his/her application for studies at the host university/institution. The actual letter of acceptance shall be submitted before the signing of the contract with the Fund, by the end of July of the respective year at the latest. If applying for a Post-Master's scholarship, a letter of recommendation from the home university is needed (also stating that the supervisor at the home university agrees with the proposed stay abroad).
- 3) A working plan of the study/research period, accepted by the host university/institution which is not older than 3 months when submitting the application. If the applicant applied for courses that require admission tests or personal interview (the results of which will be known only after the deadline for the Scholarship Program applications), the applicant shall submit a draft of the working plan. The working plan accepted by the host university/institution shall be submitted before the signing of the contract with the Fund, by the end of July of the respective year at the latest.

Article 8

The application shall be registered and submitted on-line as well as sent by post or delivered personally to the following address: International Visegrad Fund, Kráľovské údolie 8, 811 02 Bratislava, Slovak Republic. Contact details: <http://www.visegradfund.org/>.

Chapter IV—Selection and Approval

Article 9

The Secretariat of the Fund shall register all applications in the order of receipt. The Secretariat of the Fund shall review the received applications to check their compliance with the formal requirements. Deadline for the applications—the latest date of the postmark and e-mail communication—is January 31 each year. The earliest date for commencement of the study/research project is September of the respective year.

Article 10

The Executive Director shall review each application with regard to its content and its compliance with the regulations of the Fund in particular. The Secretariat shall be entitled to verify the data given in the application. The Executive Director shall prepare a written statement in which he/she shall present his/her position on the eligibility of the applicant. The Executive Director shall provide the complete list of received applications to the members of the Council of Ambassadors.

Article 11

The Selection Committee shall consist of four members from academia (one from each Member State) and four from the ministries responsible for higher education (one from each Member State). The Committee shall decide upon the ranking of candidates acting on the basis of consensus. The Selection Committee will evaluate the applicants based upon their scientific merit and originality; in case of Master's Scholarships, the applicants' motivation and transcript of records will also be considered.

Article 12

Sessions of the Selection Committee shall be organized in the Member States by the respective Ministry of Education in close cooperation with the Fund's Secretariat before April 30 each year. The official language of the Selection Committee Meeting is English.

Article 13

The Selection Committee shall prepare, after each session, a list ranking the successful applicants, starting with the best and indicating the host country. The Executive Director of the Fund shall summarize the records from all selection sessions and present to the Council of Ambassadors a final list of recommended applicants, taking into consideration the principle of equal distribution of applicants among the Member States.

Article 14

At its session (by May 15 each year), the Council of Ambassadors shall approve the final lists of successful applicants. Decisions made by the Council of Ambassadors are final. Those decisions shall present no grounds for legal proceedings and require no detailed reasoning.

Article 15

In the event that the distance between the present university/employer and host university/institution of the scholar is more than 1,500 km, the Fund can, in reasoned cases, give a travel grant to selected scholars. The travel grant is a one-time contribution of the Fund towards the travel expenses of the scholar, related to the approved study/research project. The travel grant will be provided at the beginning of the scholarship period together with the 1st installment of the scholarship, after the Fund receives a written confirmation of the scholar's arrival from the host university/institution. The scholar cannot accept any other travel grant from any of the V4 member states for the same study/research project.

Article 16

In case of an approval of the scholarship application, the Council of Ambassadors shall authorize the Executive Director to sign a contract with the scholar and host university/institution (samples of which are available on-line on the Fund's website). In case of an approval of the travel grant, the Council of Ambassadors shall authorize the Executive Director to sign an amendment to the contract with the scholar. In the event of failure to sign the contract or the amendment, the Fund shall contact the next applicant according to the selection ranking.

Article 17

The scholarship application shall be considered definitely approved after the signing of the contract.

Article 18

The contract between the Fund and the scholar must be signed before September 15.

The Fund's Executive Director shall have the obligation to inform the applicants of the rejection or approval of their applications for scholarships by the Council by May 15 of the respective year.

Article 19

The Fund's Secretariat shall cover expert fees, transport and accommodation costs for academic members of Selection Committees.

Chapter V—Scholarship Disbursement**Article 20**

The Conference of Ministers shall set out and announce financial conditions of subsidies provided by the Scholarship Program in advance (presumably in October each year).

Article 21

The scholar shall have the obligation to study or to conduct research in compliance with the time limit and financial conditions agreed upon in the contract. The payments from the Fund will be transferred at the beginning of each semester (a 5-month period in the case of researchers) after the Fund receives a written confirmation stating the date of arrival of the scholar; further installments (if relevant) will be transferred to the account of the scholar after the Fund receives a written confirmation containing the following information:

- the dates of planned completion of the supported studies/research and
- the progress of the supported research in the case of postgraduate studies or a transcript of records/report on progress of the supported studies in the case of Master's Scholarship, issued by the host university/institution.

Article 22

The scholar shall not accept any other governmental scholarship from any of the V4 member states or the EU simultaneously with the scholarship of the International Visegrad Fund.

Article 23

In the event that the scholar fails to fulfill his/her duties toward the host university/institution through his/her own fault, or voluntarily terminates his/her studies or research, he/she shall be obliged to return to the Fund all the funding already paid within the scholarship in accordance with the relevant provisions of the contract concluded between the scholar and the Fund. The Council of Ambassadors should approve any exemption of this obligation only in exceptional cases, upon a written request by the scholar.

Article 24

These Rules shall enter into force on the day of their approval by the Conference of Ministers.