**Rules of the Visegrad Scholarship Program**

Under Articles 1 and 2 of the Statute of the International Visegrad Fund (hereinafter the “Fund”) the Conference of Ministers is issuing these conditions to determine the Rules of the Visegrad Scholarship Program (hereinafter the “VSP”).

**Chapter I—Aims of the Visegrad Scholarship Program**

**Article 1**

The VSP 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 V4 countries: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia (hereinafter the “Member States”) and for foreign citizens specified in Chapter II Article 5 to study in 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/institute“) are eligible to be host as well as home institutions. The aim of the VSP is to support the mobility of students and researchers among the specified countries.

**Chapter II—Eligibility**

**Article 2**

Visegrad 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/institute 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. The distance between the home university and host university/institute as well as between the permanent residence and the host university/institute must be above 150 km. Citizenship of the applicant and/or permanent residence of the applicant must differ from the country of host university/institute. The applicant, who is already a holder of master degree, is not eligible to apply for scholarship to cover master 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 consider the first submitted.

**Article 3**

Applicants are eligible to apply for the VSP for maximum term of support of 4 semesters for master students and 2 semesters for post-master students.

**Article 4**

The minimum length of the supported period of study/research shall be 1 academic semester (5 months).

The level of supported studies shall be:

* **Master’s studies** (the student must have completed at least bachelor degree when starting the scholarship, and during the entire scholarship period shall be enrolled in full-time master’s program),
* **Post-Master’s** (doctoral programs or independent research)

**Article 5**

The Fund is responsible for the proper announcement of the VSP in conformity with the decision of the Conference of Ministers.

The following three schemes are supported within the VSP:

1. **Intra-Visegrad Scholarships:** For scholars or researchers within the territory of the Member States;
2. **Out-Going Scholarships:** For scholars or researchers from Member States for studies at accredited universities in *Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Macedonia (F.Y.R.O.M.), Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia* and *Ukraine—*the same rules are applicable to *Kosovar* universities;
3. **In-Coming Scholarships**:

For scholars or researchers who are citizens of the following Western Balkan countries: *Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia (F.Y.R.O.M.), Montenegro* and *Serbia*wishing to study in the Member States—the same rules are applicable to *Kosovar* scholars.

For scholars or researchers who are citizens of the following Eastern Partnership countries: *Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova* and *Ukraine*.

**Chapter III—Application Process**

**Article 6**

The application is exclusively submitted via Fund´s online system before the given deadline.

**Article 7**

**Compulsory annexes** to the application form are as follows:

* scan of a valid identification document (identification card for EU citizens, passport for non-EU citizens);
1. If applying for master studies a **transcript of records** for the last two duly terminated semesters and a **letter of acceptance from the host university/institute** which is not 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 VSP applications), the applicant shall submit a proof of her/his application for studies at the host university/institute. The actual letter of acceptance shall be submitted before the signing of the contract with the Fund, by the end of June of the respective year at the latest. The letter of acceptance shall indicate that the student was accepted for the respective number of semesters within the full-time master program.
2. If applying for post-master studies, a **letter of acceptance** issued by the host university/institute indicating length and approving working plan of the study/research, which is not older than 3 months when submitting the application.

**Chapter IV—Selection and Approval**

**Article 8**

Deadline for the applications—is 15 March 12:00 (noon) each year. The earliest date for commencement of the study/research project is September of the respective year.

**Article 9**

The Fund shall review each application with regard to its content and its compliance with the requirements. Only eligible applications are to be evaluated by the Selection Committee.

**Article 10**

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 Member State).

**Article 11**

The members of Selection Committee shall evaluate all eligible applications based on their merits. 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 principles of distribution of financial resources approved in the given year Fund´s budget.

**Article 12**

At its session (by 31 May each year), the Council of Ambassadors shall approve the final lists of successful applicants together with a reserve list of substitutes used in case of cancellations. Decision made by the Council of Ambassadors is final. This decision shall present no grounds for legal proceedings and require no detailed reasoning.

**Article 13**

In case the distance between the present university/employer and host university/institute of the scholar is more than 1500 km, the Fund can, provide a travel grant to selected scholars. The travel grant is a one-time contribution of the Fund to cover 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 fulfilling the conditions of its disbursement. The scholar cannot accept any other travel grant from any of the Member States or European Union for the same study/research project.

**Article 14**

The Fund shall have the obligation to inform the applicants of the approval or rejection of their applications for VSP by the Council of Ambassadors by 30 May of the respective year.

 **Article 15**

The Fund shall cover expert fees to the Selection Committee members for evaluation of applications.

**Chapter V—Contracting and Conditions of Scholarship Disbursement**

**Article 16**

Prior to signing the contract, master students shall be obliged to provide full acceptance letter from the host university indicating that she/he was accepted for the respective number of semesters (corresponding with the amount of granted scholarship) within the full-time master program before 30 June. Non-compliance with this requirement shall terminate in cancellation of the scholarship.

The scholar shall be held responsible for the accuracy of the information inserted to the Fund´s online system based on which the contract between the Fund and the scholar shall be drawn up.

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 in the beginning of each semester (a 5-month period in case of post-master researchers) after the Fund receives a written confirmation stating the date of the start of the studies of the scholar and signed contract; further installments (if relevant) will be transferred to the account of the scholar after the Fund receives following documents:

Master students:

* Transcript of records with at least 30 credits (ECTS) obtained for previous semester
* Confirmation of continuation of studies from the host university/institute

Post-master students

* Progress report by the scholar
* Confirmation of continuation from the host university/institute indicating the dates of planned completion

**Article 17**

The Fund shall support the host university/institute by a lump sum for each semester of the studies supported by the VSP. The lump sum in case of master studies is to support the host university/institute in order not to charge additional tuition fees to the scholar. The lump sum in case of past-master studies is to provide material and personal assistance to the scholar in her/his research.

The host university/institute is obliged to conclude the contract with the Fund in order to receive the lump sum together with the 1st disbursement of the scholarship but no later than by the end of the scholarship period of the respective scholar. The lump sum is disbursed upon reception of the written contract between the Fund and the host university/institute and between the Fund and the scholar and a written confirmation stating the date of the start of the study/research of the scholar.

**Article 18**

The scholar shall not accept any other governmental scholarship from any of the Member State or the European Union simultaneously with the scholarship of the International Visegrad Fund.

**Article 19**

The scholar is obliged to submit to the Fund the following documents one month after termination of the studies covered by the VSP at the latest.

Master studies:

* Copy of master diploma in case of full master studies
* Transcript of records with at least 30 credits (ECTS) obtained for the last semester covered by the VSP

Post-master studies:

* Final report summarizing the results of the research by the scholar

In case the scholar fails to fulfill her/his duties toward the host university/institute, through her/his own fault, or voluntarily terminates the studies or research, she/he 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.

**Article 20**

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