



PRESS RELEASE

THE VISEGRAD FUND CELEBRATES 25 YEARS OF SUPPORTING COOPERATION AND SOLIDARITY IN CENTRAL EUROPE

Bratislava, 11 June 2025 – A festive gala evening was held yesterday in Bratislava to mark the 25th anniversary of the founding of the International Visegrad Fund. The event brought together the President of the Slovak Republic, the highest representatives of V4 ministries of foreign affairs, ambassadors, diplomats, civil society representatives, and other invited guests.

Among the evening's distinguished guests were the President of the Slovak Republic, Peter Pellegrini, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, Juraj Blanár, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, Jan Lipavský, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary, Péter Szijjártó, and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, Władysław Teofil Bartoszewski.

The speeches delivered during the event praised the Visegrad Fund's longstanding contribution to strengthening cross-border cooperation in the fields of culture, education, research, and civic engagement. President Peter Pellegrini emphasized the importance of the Visegrad Fund as a unique instrument that *"connects people across borders and contributes to building trust and understanding among the nations of Central Europe."*

Minister Juraj Blanár reflected on the historical context of the Visegrad Fund's creation saying: *"The establishment of the International Visegrad Fund was about more than just fulfilling official agreements. Its founders felt a strong need to strengthen human, cultural, and community ties – not only between governments, but among citizens themselves. That was key to overcoming old divisions and building mutual trust."*

He also highlighted the Fund's approach, which draws on civic initiative and empowers NGOs, universities, local governments, and cultural institutions to carry out projects with real impact on regional development.

Minister Jan Lipavský acknowledged the Fund's unique role in the region: *"The International Visegrad Fund should continue serving as a broker, a facilitator, and an advisor on project ideas. It is important for us as a region to keep identifying shared interests – the kinds of initiatives that help convince our citizens that we have more in common than we often realize. The Fund's activities should enrich everyday life, instil pride in our region, and give people the confidence to thrive both at home and on the global stage."*

Minister Péter Szijjártó emphasized the strategic role of Central Europe moving forward: *"If we are to become stronger as a region, we must fully leverage our geographic potential. The Visegrad Fund can actively contribute to greater connectivity by supporting projects in areas such as the economy, science, and innovation. Central Europe can serve as a natural meeting point between East and West."*

Deputy Minister Władysław Teofil Bartoszewski addressed the current political situation, the need for regional cooperation, and the value of the Fund as a stable pillar of partnership: *"The International Visegrad Fund is living proof that cooperation is possible, even in difficult times. Its strength lies in transforming our shared historical experiences – from transitions from communism to democracy, through EU integration, to cultural proximity – into concrete projects. And it does so while respecting national differences."*

The evening also featured the ceremonial announcement of the winner of the 2024 Project of the Year competition, which was dedicated this year to the memory of the former Executive Director of the Visegrad Fund, Petr Vágner. The winning project was selected through a public vote from among four nominated grant projects—one from each V4 country. The project "Water Renovation in Ukraine" by the University of Debrecen and its partner universities received the most votes, reflecting the continued solidarity of the Visegrad countries with Ukraine.