



PRESS RELEASE

## INTERNATIONAL VISEGRAD FUND STRENGTHENS SUPPORT FOR EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL GRANT APPLICANTS

**Bratislava, 26 March 2025 – The International Visegrad Fund recognises women in all their roles—refugees, entrepreneurs, scientists, and mothers. Under the leadership of Executive Director Linda Kapustová Helbichová, the Fund will ensure that project applications are assessed with a strong emphasis on equal opportunities for all, regardless of gender. It is essential to engage vulnerable and marginalised groups, including young people raised by a single parent and individuals facing other disadvantages. An inclusive approach is crucial for strengthening Visegrad cooperation.**

*"I am convinced that by supporting projects that are sensitive to social issues—such as gender balance, support for women, single parents, or youth from economically less developed regions of the Visegrad Group—we will foster expertise while ensuring fair access. If we want to improve conditions in the Visegrad region, we must start with ourselves,"* said Linda Kapustová Helbichová, Executive Director of the International Visegrad Fund. She added: *"The Visegrad Fund is committed to addressing these inequalities and promoting greater inclusivity in the projects it finances."*

When funding projects, the Fund will prioritise social awareness and inclusivity, ensuring the involvement of vulnerable and marginalised groups and gender perspectives throughout the entire process—from planning and implementation to evaluation. Grant applicants will be encouraged to actively incorporate these aspects into their projects and adopt concrete measures to address them. *"This is not a novelty, it is about putting European project-thinking into practice at the Visegrad Fund,"* the Executive Director further stated.

The Visegrad Fund has long supported initiatives that empower women and disadvantaged groups and will continue in this direction. Successful past projects include for example building networks of women in foreign, European, and security policy, supporting refugee women in entrepreneurship and enhancing their business skills, female-led agroecological initiatives promoting sustainable agriculture, and increasing the visibility of female artists within the Visegrad Cooperation and the Western Balkans.

*"We will encourage applicants to include underrepresented and disadvantaged groups in their projects wherever relevant,"* emphasised the Fund's Executive Director. The Visegrad Fund aims to actively contribute to the inclusion of vulnerable groups, balanced support for women, and the promotion of equal opportunities across the region.

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The International Visegrad Fund is a donor organisation established by the governments of the Visegrad Group (V4) countries—Czechia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia. Its mission is to foster closer cooperation and mutual understanding among citizens within the V4 region, as well as between the V4 and other regions, such as the countries of the so-called Eastern Partnership countries and the Western Balkans. The Visegrad Fund contributes to the development of civil society by financing joint grant projects, awarding scholarships, and providing mobility opportunities for artists. Its annual budget of €11 million is equally funded by the governments of the V4 countries. To date, the Fund has supported more than 10,000 grant projects and individual mobility initiatives, with a total funding amount exceeding €140 million.

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