

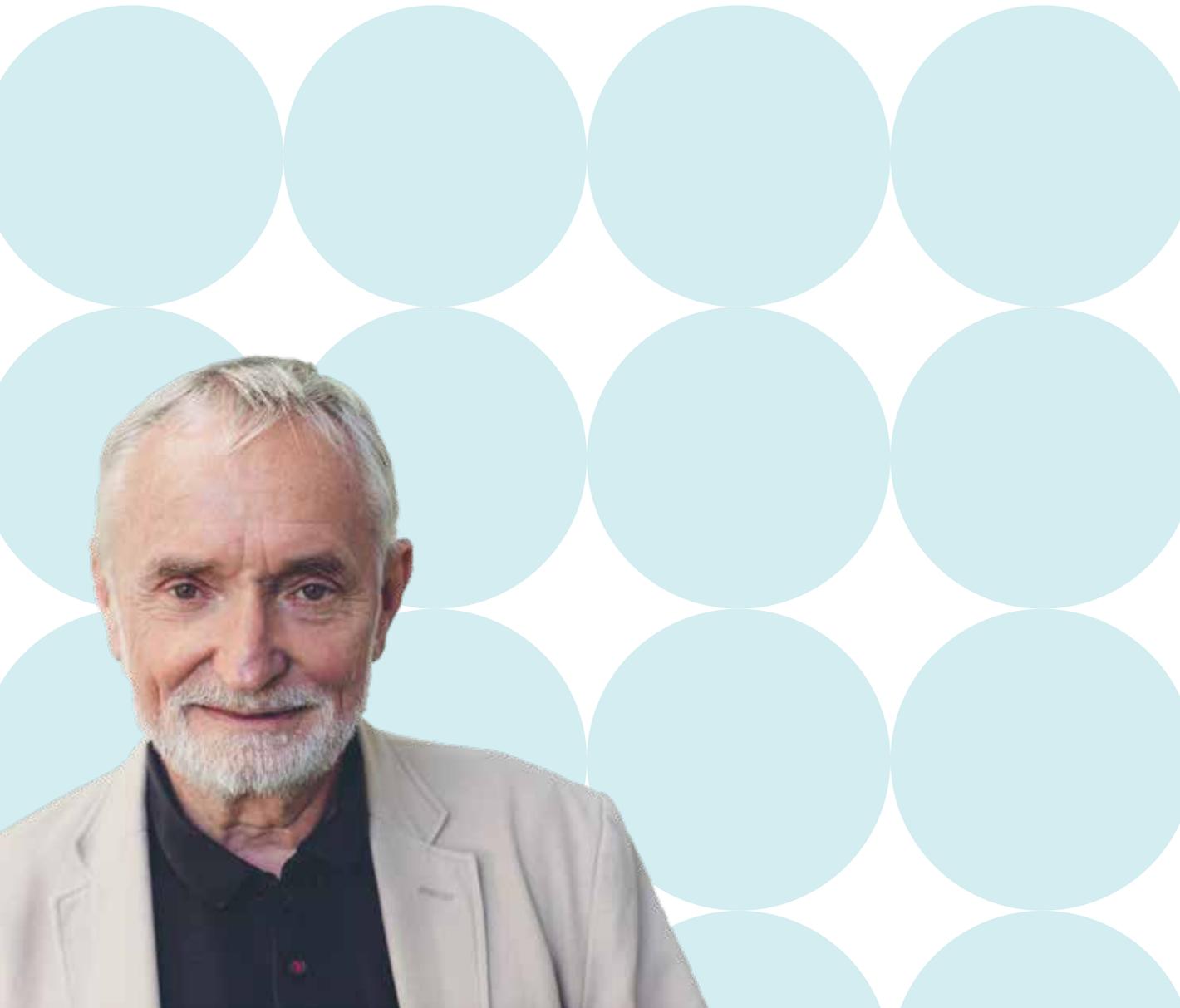
INTERNATIONAL

2023
ANNUAL
REPORT

VISEGRAD

FUND

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Slovakia and Czechia coordinated the Visegrad cooperation during 2023 and the priorities of both presidencies in the Visegrad Group were translated into the main guidelines for the International Visegrad Fund's activities.

The key focus areas for both grant programs and the mobility program were research and innovation, contacts among young people, and support for Ukraine. Thanks to projects prepared by schools and various youth organizations from V4 countries and supported through the V4 Gen Mini-Grants scheme, thousands of youngsters had an opportunity to meet their counterparts across borders. The new short-term mobility scheme—Visegrad Fellowships—enabled several dozen young academics to lecture or conduct research in partner institutions across the V4 region. Based on positive experience with both these schemes, the Fund proposed to expand them to Ukrainian citizens and institutions, and this proposal was accepted by the Council of Ambassadors in December 2023.

Cooperating with civil society organizations from the Western Balkans—and their support—has been the Fund's long-term priority. Our main partner in this field is the Western Balkans Fund, a partner donor organization based in Tirana. In 2023, the cooperation of our two organizations reached a new level. We developed and prepared for launch (in 2024) a jointly-financed reciprocal research and lecture program for young academics titled Western Balkans–Visegrad Fellowships. For the purposes of this program, both the Western Balkans Fund and the Visegrad Fund formally earmarked €40,000 and €60,000 respectively out of their 2024 budgets.

Recognizing the importance of close links with neighbors, the Fund continues to focus on the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership countries through the Visegrad+ Grants. Thanks to the generous contributions of the Government of the Republic of Korea to the Fund's budget, for which we are truly grateful, we have been able to support additional projects focusing on these two regions.

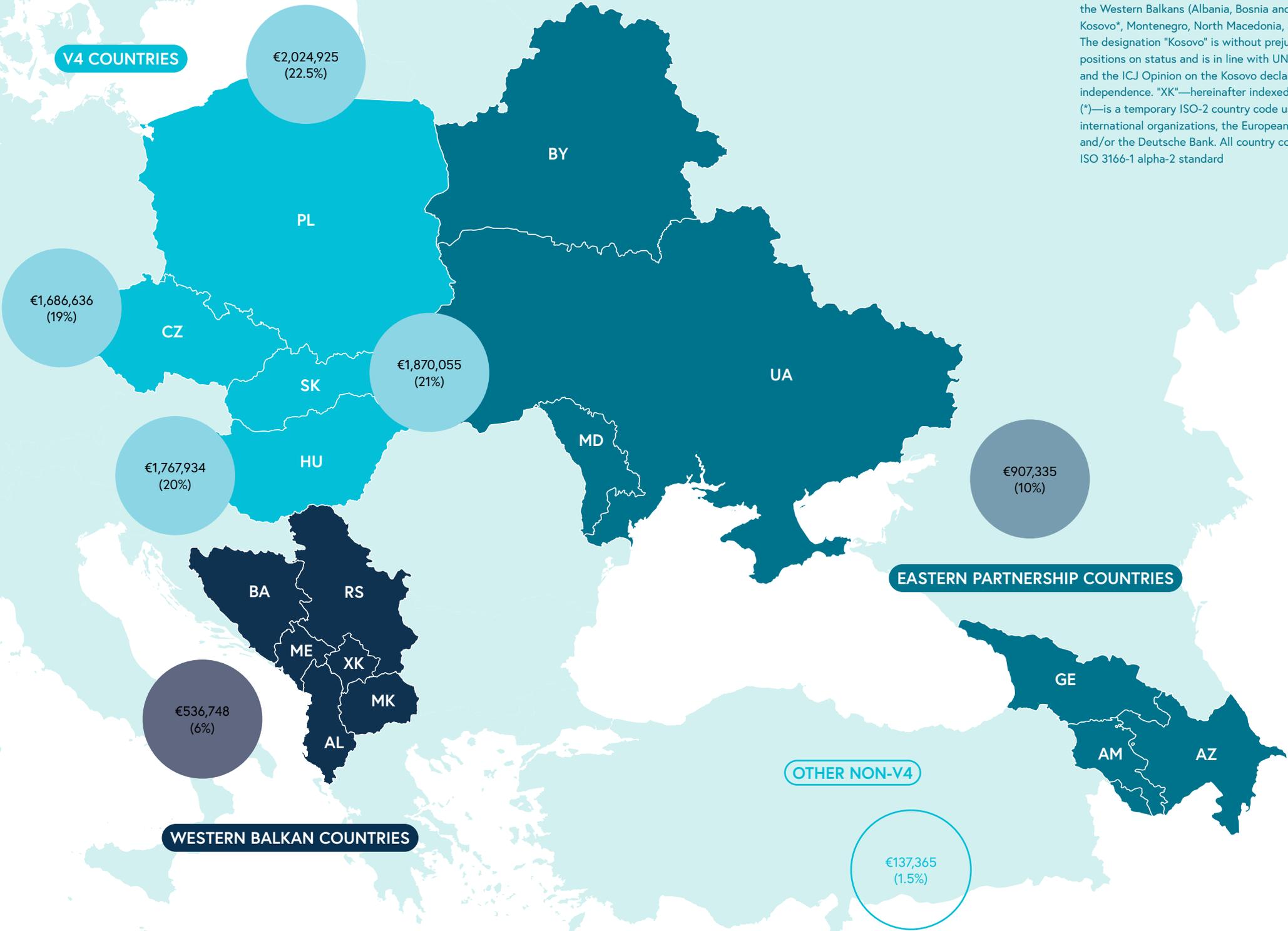
New programs and extended schemes brought additional tasks for the Fund's team, and I am proud of the performance of its members. They all displayed a great deal of devotion, flexibility, and creativity. In January, the new Deputy Executive Director, Maja Wawrzyk, arrived in Bratislava from Poland. Yet again, the management's rotation principle proved itself with positive outcomes as Maja hit the ground running, bringing with her new ideas and initiatives.

Thanks to these common efforts, the Fund was not only able to fulfil all its standard goals but also effectively further developed its mission. As a reward and appreciation of our efforts, we received the invitation to present our activities at the summit of the V4 presidents held in November 2023 in Prague.

The data in this report are, I believe, convincing evidence of our achievements.

Petr Mareš
Executive Director

APPROVED FUNDING BY COUNTRY/REGION 2023



Note: For clarity, the following abbreviations are used throughout the text: "the fund" refers to the *International Visegrad Fund*; "MFAs" refers to *Ministries of Foreign Affairs*; "NVCs" refers to the *national V4 coordinators*; "QMS" refers to the *quality management system*; "EaP" refers to the *Eastern Partnership* and "WB6" refers to the *Western Balkans* (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia). The designation "Kosovo" is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence. "XK"—hereinafter indexed with an asterisk (*)—is a temporary ISO-2 country code used by several international organizations, the European Commission and/or the Deutsche Bank. All country codes follow the ISO 3166-1 alpha-2 standard

"I met an enthusiastic and motivated team, a hilarious linguistic melting pot, and a very friendly atmosphere."



I arrived in Bratislava to hand over the position of Deputy Executive Director of the International Visegrad Fund in January 2023, holding "UFO over Bratislava" in my hand, a book about Slovakia written by a Polish author, Weronika Gogola, who benefited from the Visegrad Literary Residency Program.

Once in the office in Bratislava, I met an enthusiastic and motivated team, a hilarious linguistic melting pot, and a very friendly atmosphere.

After being introduced to all the meanders of internal administration, I could witness projects implemented by our grantees, starting with intellectually important conferences, passing by meetings with artists on our residency programs, and ending with the joy of young people getting to know their Visegrad mates, thanks to the V4Gen program (a program that proved in 2023 to be very popular and desired by youth from the region). All these direct contacts gave me the feeling of being part of an important process of building ties and mutual understanding. It was also an opportunity to hear remarks and comments that inspired us for further developments and the permanent improvement of our administration.

Along with our traditional schemes of grants and scholarships, the Visegrad Fund realized in 2023 an extraordinary help program for Ukraine and Moldova, which was focused on providing heating solutions in Ukraine and assistance to Ukrainian refugees in Moldova. Further, also in 2023, we launched a new program called "Visegrad Fellowship", which offers funding for individual short-term stays for V4 scholars, lecturers, and researchers in V4 countries other than those of their citizenship. Going beyond V4 borders, we sent a V4 team of young fashion professionals to Milan for the first edition of the Fashion Residency Program.

We spent a lot of time revising our rules and procedures, which will be reflected in the year 2024.

Maja Wawrzyk
Deputy Executive Director

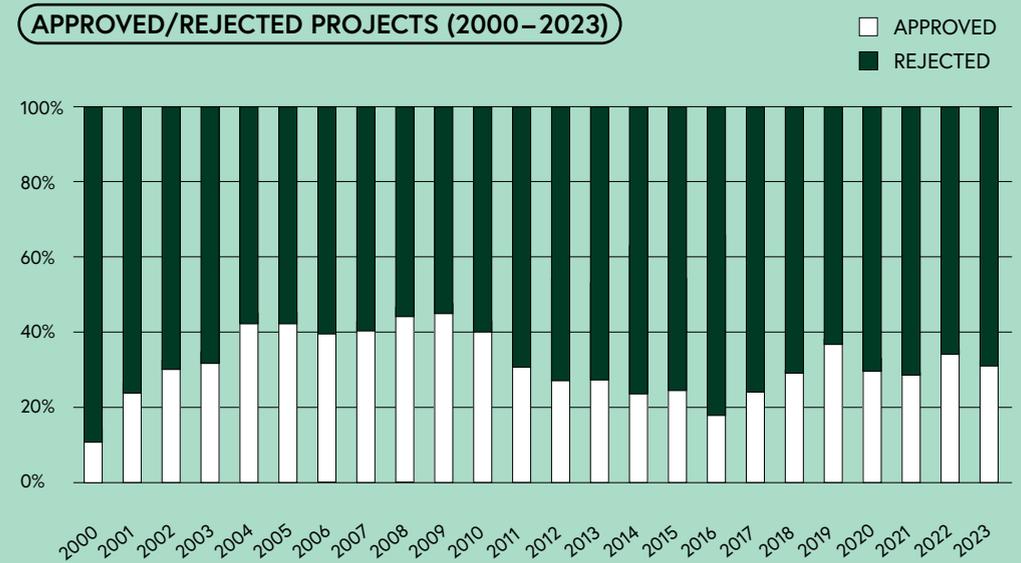
ALTOGETHER 213 REGULAR GRANT PROJECTS WERE APPROVED IN 2023.

I. GRANTS

1. Visegrad Grants/Visegrad+ Grants/ Visegrad Strategic Grants

Deadlines: February 1, June 1, October 1

Altogether 213 regular grant projects were approved in 2023. In the end, the "success" rate between the number of submitted and approved proposals fell well within the long-term trend giving the chance to roughly every third applicant (see below):



SUBMITTED/APPROVED—GRANTS 2023

<i>Deadline</i>	<i>Submitted</i>	<i>Approved</i>	<i>"Success rate"</i>
February	251	93	37.05%
June	231	80	34.63%
October	205	40	19.51%
Total	687	213	31.00%

APPROVED GRANT SUMS PER PROGRAM AND RECIPIENT COUNTRY IN 2023 (€)

Region	Country	Visegrad Grants	Visegrad+ *		Strategic	Total €	%	Sum €	%
			Visegrad+ EaP	Visegrad+ WB6					
V4	CZ	964,891	120,216	63,000	19,942	1,168,049	18.62	5,125,667	81.71
	HU	1,085,025	163,261		182,980	1,431,266	22.82		
	PL	934,956	173,481	62,310	45,540	1,216,287	19.39		
	SK	1,118,773	109,980	45,582	35,730	1,310,065	20.88		
non-V4	AM		126,769			126,769	2.02	1,147,459	18.29
	AT			29,027		29,027	0.46		
	AZ		56,910			56,910	0.91		
	BA			31,200		31,200	0.50		
	FR	18,100				18,100	0.50		
	GE		211,790			211,790	3.38		
	IT	54,738				54,738	0.87		
	ME			112,467		112,467	1.79		
	MK	52,856		62,294		115,150	1.84		
	PT	25,500				25,500	0.41		
	RS	79,985		11,640		91,625	1.46		
	UA		182,350			182,350	2.91		
XK			91,833		91,833	1.46			
Total €		4,334,824	1,144,757	509,353	284,192	6,273,126			

*** Visegrad+ Grants financed from the Republic of Korea government contribution**

Altogether 8 Visegrad+ Grants (dealing with democratization and reconciliation) were financed from the Republic of Korea government contribution in total amount of €208,977 in 2023.

With regards to the geographical distribution of the applicants (based on their official seat), the distribution has also followed the long-term trends of a relatively even distribution within the V4 region, oscillating between 19 and 23%, while the non-V4 applicants represented about 18% of the total approved sum.

As far as non-V4 countries are concerned, the EaP and WB6 regions were traditionally the biggest beneficiaries by grantee seat. While Eastern Partnership was represented by 21 grants, the Western Balkans had 15 grant projects approved.

With €6.3 million approved within the regular grants, the average granted sum per project rose by 6% to almost **€29,500** (specifically €29,451 compared to €27,718 in 2022). Another trend continued where the average size of a grant grew while, at the same time, the granted sums became similar across the vehicles (i.e., grants were similar in size regardless of whether they were Visegrad, Visegrad+ Grants, or Strategic Grants). On average, a Visegrad Grant amounted to €28,332 compared to €25,449 in 2022) and an average Visegrad+ Grant amounted to €31,810 compared to €30,766 in 2022. Strategic Grants' average grant sizes "dropped" from €43,744 in 2022 to €35,500.

As regards the supported projects thematic focus areas/objectives, *culture and common identity* remained the most frequent thematic category, with almost a third of all supported projects, *education and capacity building* representing a quarter (25.35%), and the other categories sharing the rest in similar proportions as in past years:

<i>Focus area / Deadline</i>	<i>February</i>	<i>June</i>	<i>October</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
Culture and common identity	31	24	13	68	31.38
Education and capacity building	29	16	9	54	29.26
Regional development, environment, tourism	4	14	4	22	11.70
Innovation, R&D, entrepreneurship	13	11	4	28	10.11
Social development	4	5	2	11	9.04
Democratic values and the media	9	4	6	19	5.32
Public policy and institutional partnership	3	6	2	11	3.19
Total	93	80	40	213	100

Apart from the regular project categories (objectives/focus areas), the following strategic priorities were announced for 2023:

1. Innovation and Interconnections

Support to networking, knowledge sharing and capacity building in research, development, innovation, and digitalization within the V4 region and beyond.

2. Future of the Visegrad Region

Promoting civic engagement and volunteerism of young people in the Visegrad region based on the values of human rights, freedom, democracy, rule of law, good neighborly relations, commitment to European integration and the Transatlantic alliance.

3. Visegrad Helps Ukraine and the EU Neighborhood

Support to the Ukrainian fight for territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence, support to democratic resilience of our partners in the Eastern Partnership region and the Western Balkans and their path towards European integration.

STRATEGIC GRANTS 2023

<i>ID #</i>	<i>Project title</i>	<i>Grantee</i>	<i>Approved €</i>
22310006	Developing Cooperation between Academia and Society through Knowledge and Capacity Building	Prague University of Economics and Business	9,982
22310033	Teachers for a Sustainable Future	Hungarian Association of NGOs for Development and Humanitarian Aid	42,350
22310084	V4+WB RMA Network Plus	HETFFA Research Institute, Ltd.	96,110
22310108	Innovation of Polymer Nanocomposite Materials for Electrical Engineering	University of Zilina, Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Information Technology	14,830
22310209	Early Music in Central Europe: Collaborated Research, Migrating Sources, Transregional Connections	Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences	9,960
22320035	Innovative Education According to the Needs of Industry 4.0 Principles in V4 Countries	Slovak Technical University in Bratislava	20,900
22320077	V4 Esports Coalition Cup – Gaming as an Attractive Professional Perspective for the Visegrad Youth	E-Sports Association Poland	45,540
22320117	Our EU 2024 – V4 in Action	Youth Bridges Budapest	44,520
Total			284,192

Given the general low interest in Strategic Grants over the past years and the fact the average size of an approved grant became very similar regardless of the program (i.e., €29,500 in general, while €35,500 for Strategic Grants), a discussion could be initiated in regards to the possible fusing of all three grant schemes into a single one which would significantly benefit the applicants (e.g., having a single set of rules instead of three), while still enabling projects to be labelled on the basis of their focus and budget allocation (the "+" aiming at the EaP/WB6 regions, or the "strategic" character representing the annual priorities).

"In 2023, we supported 6 strategic projects with focus on Innovation, Research & Development, and Entrepreneurship, which are currently being implemented."

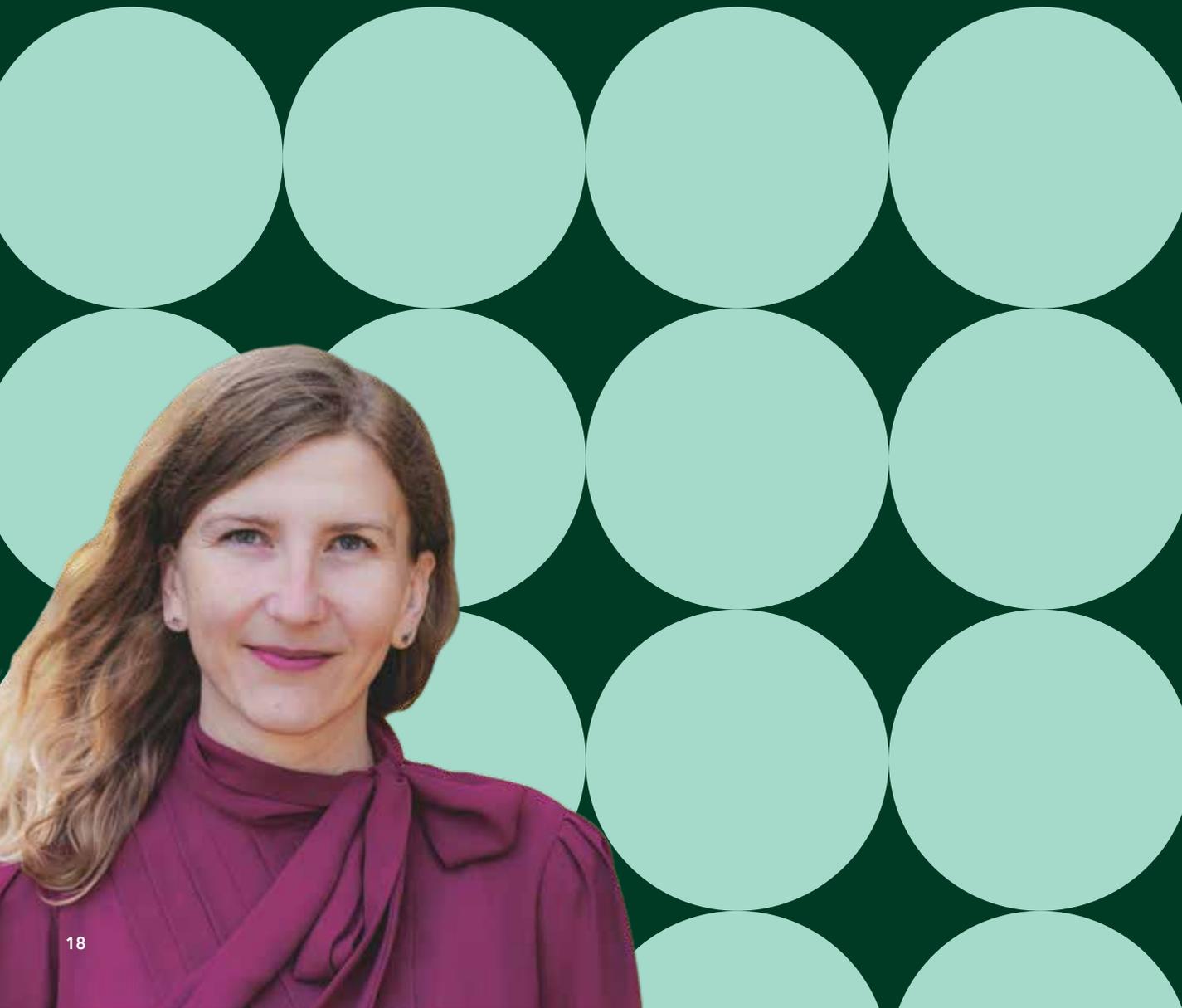


Despite Innovation, Research & Development, and Entrepreneurship being one of the Fund's seven regular focus objectives, our commitment to these topics has been further strengthened recently, thanks to the decision to elevate them to a strategic priority in the 2022—2023 period.

In 2023, we supported 6 strategic projects with this focus, which are currently being implemented. We also co-organised an expert panel discussion on the sidelines of the GLOBSEC Bratislava Forum titled "Breaking the Mould: How can the V4 Countries Overcome Innovation Challenges?". The project "Financial incentives as a tool for improving the V4 innovation ecosystem and enhancing IP protection" implemented by the Jagiellonian University in Kraków and its partners explored similar questions by providing recommendations to policymakers on national and regional RDI-supporting financial schemes.

Orsolya Rigó
Project Manager/Team Leader

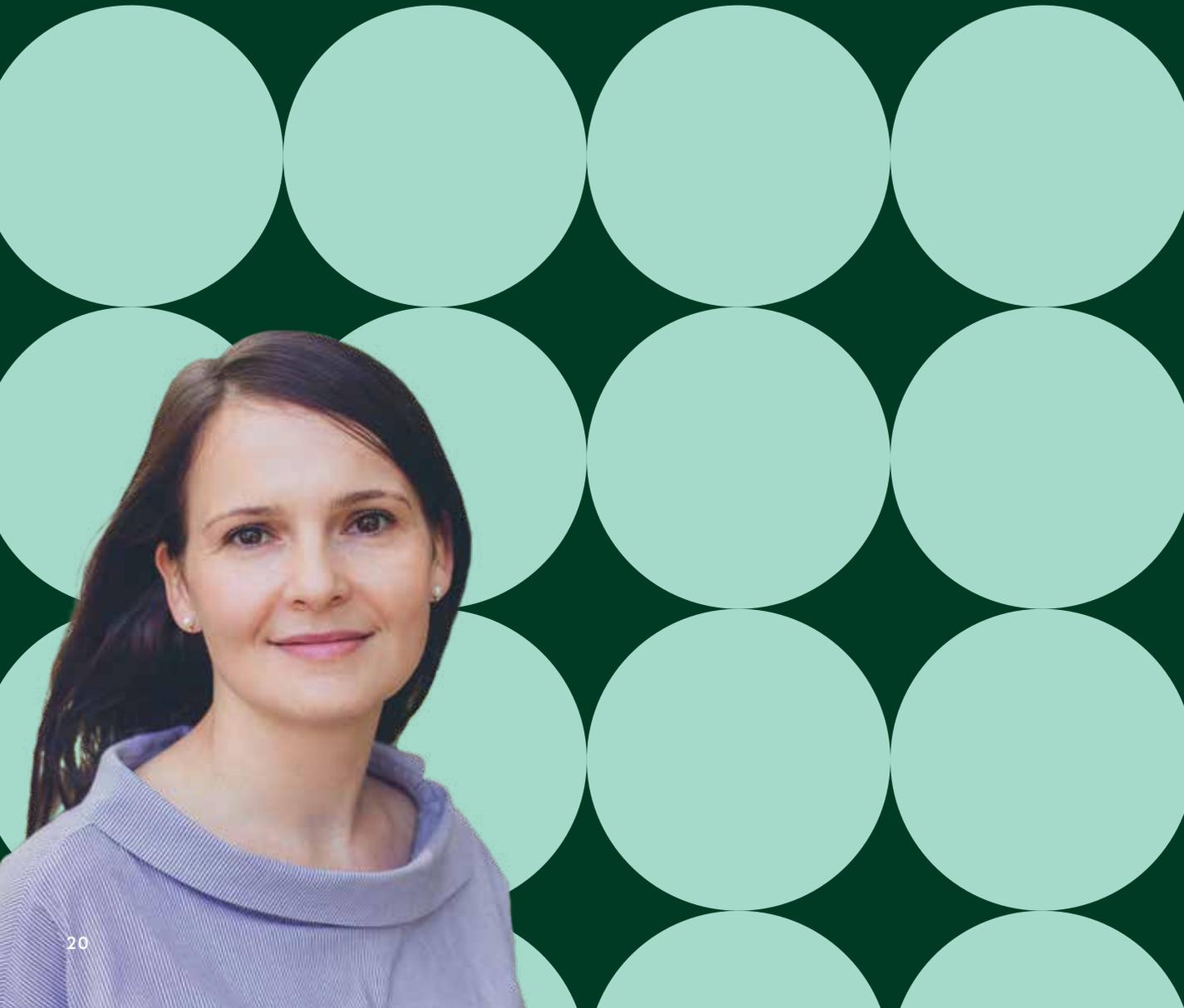
"Our grantees and their projects are building well-informed and critical communities which are active in the decision-making processes in their countries."



The democratic processes have always been the center of our grantees' attention. In 2023 we approved sixteen projects in the Democratic Values and the Media focus area, and half of them have been implemented in one of our neighboring regions: the Western Balkan or Eastern Partnership countries. A significant portion of those initiatives have been related to countering false information and improving media literacy among citizens of Central and Eastern Europe. Our grantees and their projects are building well-informed and critical communities which are active in the decision-making processes in their countries. For all those projects it is crucial to educate their participants to be able to recognize and resist disinformation around them.

Ewelina Stacherzak
Project Manager

"Connecting experts and stakeholders with decision-makers is highly desirable today as it is one of the ways in which civil society can meaningfully address the pressing issues of the day."



Projects from the Public Policy and Institutional Partnership focus area are meant to connect expert communities and relevant stakeholders with decision-makers in sharing knowledge and best practices among the Visegrad Group, Eastern Partnership and Western Balkan countries.

In 2023, projects covered a broad range of topics including minority participation in decision-making processes, addressing migration and refugees' issues or EU integration process.

Among other topics, lessons of the V4 countries learnt from the EU integration process in the field of cross-border cooperation were discussed during the annual conference of the Association of European Border Regions in Košice.

Supporting the 27th Forum 2000 Conference, held in Prague, strengthened active inclusion of youth from the Western Balkan region into the debates on civil society's potential to contribute to the process of joining the EU or conflict resolution.

Connecting experts and stakeholders with decision-makers is highly desirable today as it is one of the ways in which civil society can meaningfully address the pressing issues of the day.

Karolina Janik
Project Manager

2. V4 Gen Mini-Grants

Deadlines: March 15, July 15, November 15

Having been successfully piloted in 2023, V4 Gen mini-grants became a standard part of the Fund's regular grant calls with three regular annual deadlines and a simple project-management cycle compared to that of the Visegrad Grants.

The two-step application system (initial draft which gets "cleared" by the Fund and only subsequently does the entire application form become available) proved to be working well. A simplified form of the final submission was introduced, however, due to the fact uploading scans of the application printout (that had originally to be signed by the applicant's statutory representative) proved too difficult and offered no additional information for evaluation.

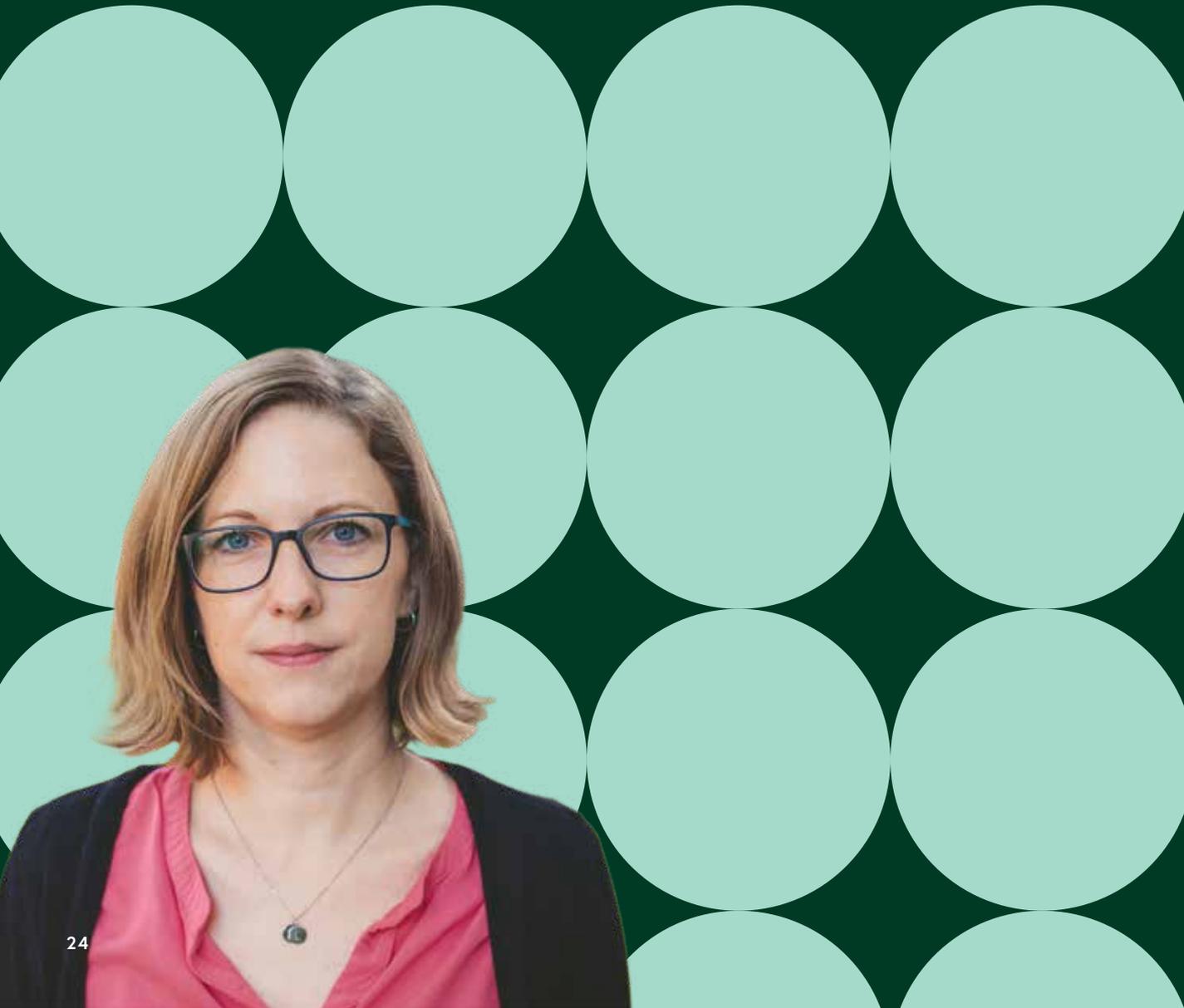
Other adjustments dealt with public schools. In several instances (e.g., in the majority of Polish primary schools), the schools themselves are not independent legal subjects in terms of being able to conclude contracts. As a result, contracting as well as disbursements only become possible with regards to the governing bodies (e.g., municipalities). For this reason, the Fund started collecting information on the governing bodies in cases where they became the contracting party.

Country balance has been relatively difficult to secure given the great interest from Poland (as a direct consequence of a wide-spread campaign initiated by the Ministry of Education), and the relatively low turnout of Hungarian and Czech applicants (e.g., see the 17 approved applications from Hungary compared to the 62 from Poland). The overall picture, however, from the perspective of recipient countries regardless of who the applicant was is a little better and reflected last year's results ranging between 14% of Hungary and 35% regarding Poland.

The biggest change was in terms of the participating Ukrainian entities who collectively received almost €25,000. Despite there not being any focused promotional campaign targeting Ukraine, the potential was recognizable through the number of consultations, submissions, as well as the participating subjects in the approved projects. Based on the positive outcome, an upgrade of the program was proposed and duly approved by the Council of Ambassadors on December 19, 2023, which would enable Ukrainian entities to also apply for, and not only be partners in projects. The pilot deadlines will start in 2024 with the March 15, 2024, deadline as the first.

<i>Country</i>	<i>Country-led Projects</i>	<i>Assigned budget</i>
CZ	21	313,217
HU	17	162,298
PL	62	419,268
SK	35	298,120
AT		1,667
DE		8,333
UA		24,516
Total	135	1,227,419

"I am pleased to see that the V4Gen mini-grant program has proven to be successful and significantly develops the potential of young people."



It has been more than one year since we started to back youth mobility projects and encourage cooperation among young Visegradians. For this period, we have supported many projects on various topics. One of my beloved projects was the cooperation of Polish and Slovak primary schools in Łędziny and Revúca, where students created a theatre play "Masks" from scratch – they wrote the script, built the scene and created masks. As a part of the project, they visited local radio stations and theatres and could gain authentic experiences.

Cooperation of sport clubs, especially in youth categories, is a crucial part of V4 Gen projects. A project titled "Learning from each other" presented all aspects of sport education. Focus on individual training, injury prevention, and maintaining a healthy lifestyle must be emphasized to all young athletes.

Looking at the inspiring projects that have been implemented and the steady increase in interest from applicants, I am pleased to see that the V4Gen mini-grant program has proven to be successful and significantly develops the potential of young people.

Katarína Palková
Project Manager

Inspiring folk elements Beboki

BUDGET

€ 10,000

LEAD ORGANIZATIONS

St. Barbara Primary School No 4 in Łędziny (PL)

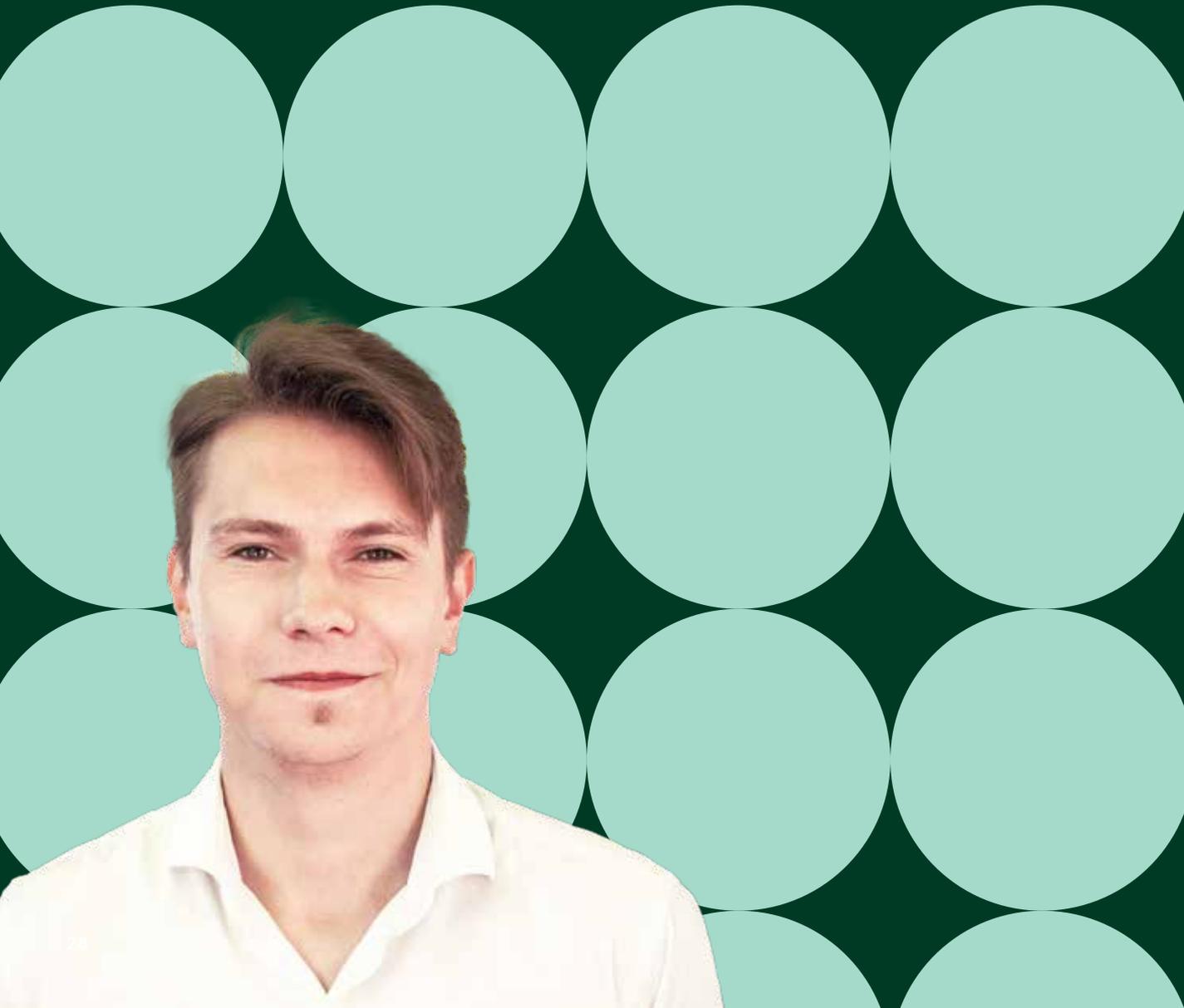
PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

J. A. Comenius Primary School in Revúca (SK)



The project is dedicated to art and culture. Educational activities and workshops for pupils and masters brought together both regions—Silesia from Poland and Gemer from Slovakia. Participating in theatre workshop classes with actors Antoni Gryzik, Jerzy Dzedzic and writer Ingrid Biolik helped them to develop a script for the performance "Beboki (Masks)" inspired by folk elements in Revuca. Preparing it from scratch, including masks, the performance was presented to a wider audience during school festivals in Poland and Slovakia. Other products produced by the pupils were bags, T-shirts, promotional leaflets, school newspapers and banners.

"It is vitally important to find a fine balance to ensure the long-term well-being of our environment and communities within and beyond the region."



Regional development, environment and tourism are closely related concepts that play a key role in shaping the future of two sustainable development areas in our region. Ranging from strictly natural aspects, preserving, and simultaneously capitalizing on the potential of our beautiful and diverse natural habitats, to environments such as human communities and forging sustainable cooperation through joint contributions, advocating for the aforementioned beauty by means of, for example, healthy lifestyles—thus complementing and reinforcing each other.

As a result, the Fund has been present in a wide variety of areas in the past year, ranging from protecting sensitive wetland forests on one hand and aiding animal protection on the other, right down to contributing to environmentally friendly tourism and sports such as snow kiting. It is vitally important to find a fine balance to ensure the long-term well-being of our environment and communities within and beyond the region.

Adam Pasiński
Project Manager

Establishment of V4 Wetland Forest Protection Network

BUDGET

€ 39,760

LEAD ORGANIZATIONS

Czech University of Life Sciences Prague (CZ)



PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Centre for Ecological Research, Institute of Ecology and Botany (HU), University of Agriculture in Kraków, Faculty of Forestry (PL), Institute of Forest Ecology, Slovak Academy of Sciences (SK)

As part of the project Establishing a V4 Wetland Forest Conservation Network, 40 monitoring plots were created, which are described in the electronic brochure "Alder Fields in Central Europe" and in the educational video "The Secret World of Alder Fields". The research carried out by the NERVE4 Action Team addressed gaps in knowledge sharing on wetland forest conservation in the V4 countries. It seeks to ensure harmonisation of recommendations for the protection of European wetland forests.



BUDGET

€ 27,000

LEAD ORGANIZATIONS

VO VILLE, s.r.o. (Slovakia)

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Via Vitae, Ružomberok (SK), Domov Dúhodců Černožice (CZ), Stowarzyszenie Akademia Seniora, Bielko-Biała (PL), Kistérségi Egyesített Szociális Intézmény, Mosonmagyaróvár (HU)



To create an Art therapy method tailor-made for newcomers to elderly houses in the V4 region



Art therapists and social workers from nursing homes brought different art techniques to try with their group of seniors in collaboration with the facilities of different groups of seniors with Alzheimer's disease, old age dementia, physically disabled seniors, as well as those who are active. They have created and developed a methodology of art therapy for seniors, especially for the adaptation process of newly admitted people in nursing homes and have disseminated the methodology through teaching and training social workers.

"It was a heartwarming feeling to see the positive impact of the project on the life of older people."



We must continue supporting underprivileged groups and minorities whose voices are often neglected by the media and wider public.

Altogether, we supported 11 projects from the social development focus area in 2023. Though all projects are diverse, each tries to make a positive change in the life of involved target groups.

"V4 Winter Games Emil Open" is a very good example of sport as a tool of social integration for young people with disabilities. Another great project was „Roma Youth Camp", which enabled 20 young Roma people to participate in a workshop camp and strengthened their capacities and social skills preparing them for a future role as Roma activists.

I personally relate most to the project "To create an Art therapy method tailor-made for newcomers to elderly houses in the V4 region" which tackles the difficult mental health situation of people living in elderly homes. The aim is to create a new art therapy methodology, to test it in practice and spread it through training social workers. It was a heartwarming feeling to see the positive impact of the project on the life of older people.

Barbora Ščepánková
Project Manager

**ALTOGETHER
120 SCHOLARS
WERE
APPROVED
FOR 222
SEMESTERS
IN TOTAL
AMOUNTING
TO €999,000.**

II. SCHOLARSHIPS AND FELLOWSHIPS

1. Visegrad Scholarship Program

The Visegrad Scholarship Program attracted 831 applications from the 16 eligible countries. Azerbaijani and Ukrainian scholars displayed, yet again, the biggest interest with 531 and 105 registered applications respectively; Poland placed third with 43 applications and became the most successful V4 country in terms of submitted and approved scholars as well as approved incoming scholars totaling €268,500€ in overall support.

Exactly as in 2023, the numbers of approved scholars holding Ukrainian, Polish, and Slovak passports respectively received the support for 46, 38 and 14 scholars (for a total of 88, 55 and 22 semesters respectively). In total, 120 scholars were approved for 222 semesters in total amounting to €999,000.

APPROVED SCHOLARS/SEMESTERS 2023

CC	Scholars	Semesters	€ Scholars	€ Lump sum	Total support (€)
CZ	4	6	18,000	96,000	114,000
HU	7	12	36,000	40,500	76,500
PL	28	55	165,000	103,500	268,500
SK	14	22	66,000	75,000	141,000
V4	53	95	285,000	315,000	600,000
AL	–	–	–	–	–
BA	1	2	6,000	–	6,000
XK*	2	4	12,000	–	12,000
ME	–	–	–	3,000	3,000
MK	–	–	–	–	–
RS	13	24	72,000	1,500	73,500
WB6	16	30	90,000	4,500	94,500
AM	–	–	–	–	–
AZ	–	–	–	–	–
BY	1	2	6,000	–	6,000
GE	1	2	6,000	4,500	10,500
MD	3	5	15,000	–	15,000
UA	46	88	264,000	9,000	273,000
EaP	51	97	291,000	13,500	304,500
Total	120	222	666,000	333,000	999,000

As per the host countries, the biggest "traditional" interest was again registered in Polish higher-education institutions. The eventual approval of 222 semesters put Poland in the lead with 69 semesters, followed by Czechia with 64 and Slovakia with 50.

FROM/TO BY THE NUMBER OF SEMESTERS 2023

From/to	CZ	GE	HU	ME	PL	RS	SK	UA	Total
BA	2								2
BY					2				2
CZ	–	1			5				6
GE	2	–							2
HU	2	2	–		4		4		12
MD	1						4		5
PL	22		6	2	–		21	4	55
RS	19		3		2	–			24
SK	4		10		5	1	–	2	22
UA	10		6		51		21	–	88
*XK	2		2						4
Total	64	3	27	2	69	1	50	6	222

Regarding the academic fields, there were no significant changes from the past editions with engineering and technology as the most popular (31 scholars), followed by biology (26), chemistry (13) and history (9).

"It was a great opportunity for scholars to expand networks and start new cooperation and regain motivation for further research."



Thanks to the Fund, a less widely supported and popular field—history—received a boost in the form of the Fifth Biennial Conference of the Medieval Central Europe Research Network. The conference, organized in Bratislava, brought together many researchers from different countries, not only from Europe. The key common denominator was "Continuity and Change—Medieval Central Europe". This conference attracted twice as many active participants as planned. It lasted for three days, and the program was dense with four sessions simultaneously. It was a great opportunity for scholars to expand networks and start new cooperation and regain motivation for further research. Students had the opportunity to present their research as well in a dedicated session.

Another example of a successful project is Trends in libraries: XXII. year of seminars for librarians and specialists in V4+ countries, which dealt with questions about libraries' role in the digital era. During this hybrid conference, participants discussed digitization practices, modifying libraries into modern multifunctional community spaces, and how to attract new readers.

Tereza Vitiz
Project Manager

Continuity and Change Medieval Central Europe



BUDGET

€ 6,650

LEAD ORGANIZATIONS

Comenius University in Bratislava, Philosophical Faculty, Department of Slovak History (SK)

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Humanities (HU), University of Gdańsk (PL), Palacký University Olomouc (CZ)



The project aimed to strengthen the professional network of academic institutions and individual researchers and students involved in research on medieval Central Europe by organising an international conference and related events to present their research results. The conference was an important meeting place to foster links for collaboration and an important forum for interdisciplinary exchange of ideas. It was MECERN's largest biennial conference to date. It focused on the problematic relationship between continuity and change in medieval history in Central Europe.



"Fellowships create opportunities linking individual students and researchers with public or private research bodies across academic disciplines."



The idea for a short-term mobility scheme that could support cross-border exchanges of scholars, lecturers and researchers has been circling around for years. The almost instant success of the V4 Gen mini-grants last year inspired us to finally have a go at it. The result is a flexible instrument that can support archival research, lab work, consultations on one's dissertation, article, or monograph, or lecturing at a partner university. With a flexible continuous deadline throughout the year, fellowships create opportunities linking individual students and researchers with public or private research bodies across academic disciplines. I am equally happy that we are testing the program with Ukrainian applicants in 2024.

Jiří Sýkora
Operations Manager

2. Visegrad Fellowships

A new program approved in 2022 was piloted in 2023 offering a long-expected short-term research mobility in the V4 region.

Judging by the initial number of consultations, the interest, especially among young researchers, was expected to be great. The actual turnout exceeded the Fund's expectations not only by the overall submissions but particularly by the country balance as well as relative balance in terms of academic fields.

CC	Scholars	Weeks	€ Total	Average length (wks)
CZ	12	70	35,000	5.83
HU	14	90	44,500	6.43
PL	26	144	72,000	5.54
SK	14	108	54,000	7.71
Total	66	412	205,500	6.24

The academic fields proved the unique advantage of this program, i.e., 1) the short response rate during which the Fund manages to "process" the submitted applications, 2) the flexible continuous deadline (the term is open throughout the year except for July and December), and the possibility to be hosted by private research bodies.

As a result, not only have we attracted a balanced group of 66 scholars but also these represent so far unsupported academic fields (e.g., material science) or research institutions, e.g., the Balaton Limnological Research Institute or Global Change Research Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences.

Academic field	Scholars	Weeks
History	17	115
Engineering and technology	9	52
Economics	5	22
Biology	4	18
Languages and literature	4	30

Negotiations took place with representatives of the Western Balkans Fund regarding a joint fellowship program which would enable reciprocal financial support of both institutions towards scholars/lecturers from each region.

The future Western Balkan–Visegrad is to be piloted in 2024 with financial contributions from each donor—the Visegrad Fund earmarking €60,000€ and the Western Balkans Fund earmarking €40,000.

3. Visegrad–Taiwan Scholarships Program

The cooperation with the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (TECO) in Prague continued with a third deadline (since its reopening in 2021) on September 30, 2023. Of the 13 registered applications, only 8 submitted their applications and 6 scholars were eventually approved for support.

Name	CC	Discipline	Host	Months	Support €
Sylwia Krzyżek-Liburska	PL	Business	Chang Gung University	1	2,000
Ivo Zdráhal	CZ	Economics	National Chung Hsing University	3	4,000
Dorka Kornelia Takacsy	HU	International relations	National University of Kaohsiung	1	2,000
Piotr Grzebyk	PL	Law	National Taiwan University	4	5,000
Stefan Tkac	SK	Architecture and design	Chung Yuan Christian University (Dept. of Physics)	10	11,000
Zuzana Dvorníková	CZ	Chemistry	National Dong Hwa University	3	4,000
Total					28,000

4. Research Grants at the Historical Archives of the EU (HAEU)

The outsourced research fellowship program operated in cooperation with the European Union Institute (EUI) in Florence continued with another edition and approved six candidates altogether for support out of 23 submitted applications.

DEADLINE: MAY 2023

<i>Scholar</i>	<i>CC</i>	<i>Topic</i>
Klodiana Beshku	AL	The European Union's role in state-building. The case of BiH and Kosovo
Tea Cvetanovska	MK	The European Parliament and Yugoslavia (1970s–1990s): Human Rights, Democracy, Integration
Bence Kocsev	HU	Molding A Common European. Future Otto von Habsburg's Two Decades in the European Parliament
Maciej Serowanec	PL	Democratic Legitimacy in the Post-Crisis European Economic Governance
Natasa Simeunović Bajić	RS	An Insight into the Beginning of pan-European Transnational Television: TV Eurikon and TV Europa
Timea Varga	HU	The United Kingdom and the European Union: Historical Roots of a Current Issue

Based on a positive evaluation of the 2-year pilot, the Fund's director signed a contract with the representatives of the EUI in October 2023, thus setting out the basic parameters for a regular annual support of six scholarships at €37,500 p.a.

5. Visegrad Scholarships at the Open Society Archives (OSA)

Under the biannual theme "Lessons of the Cold War?", there were two regular deadlines—in June and November 2023. Altogether 27 researchers were approved for funding in the two deadlines—9 in the June deadline and 18 in the November deadline.

DEADLINE: JUNE 2023

<i>Name</i>	<i>CC</i>	<i>Research title</i>	<i>Length</i>
Emese Kurti	HU	The Solitude of Revolution. Invasion as Trauma and Solidarity in the 1968 Dissident Culture in Eastern Europe and Beyond	2 months
Katerzyna Stanczak-Wislicz	PL	Narratives of Crisis. Great History and a New Emotional Regime in Polish Personal Diaries and Memoirs of the 1980s	5 weeks
Kateryna Budz	UA	Ukrainian Greek Catholics in the Underground: Faith on the Margins of Soviet Society (1946–1989)	1 month
Katarzyna Jezowska	PL	Coal Nations and Carbon Cultures	2 months
Milica Popovic	RS	The Silence of Saying "No". Narrating Desertion	1 month
Fanni Svegel	HU	Politicizing Reproductive Labor in Cold War Hungary	2 months
Ekaterina Kamenskaya	RU	Radio Liberty, Soviet Society and the Perception of the Czechoslovak Crisis of 1968–1969 and the 1968 Invasion	2 months
Dominika Badzová	SK	Diversity of Roma People in Radio Free Europe Collections: Analyzing Human Rights Discourses and their Image in Audiovisual Material	2 months
Mateusz Sokulski	PL	Mihajlo Mihajlov and Others: the Way to Support Democratic Solutions against Communist Regime in Yugoslavia in the 1980s	1 month

DEADLINE: NOVEMBER 2023

<i>Name</i>	<i>CC</i>	<i>Research title</i>	<i>Length</i>
Harold Gabel	US	Social and Cultural Connections between Poland and Western Europe in the 60s and 70s	2 months
Julia Golachowska	PL	Memory Politics in Polish Samizdat Post Stamps of the 1980s	2 months
Jonathan Jay Brunstedt	US	Cultures of Victory: Cold War Interventionism in the Shadow of the Second World War	2 months
Alexey Golubev	RU	Knowledge Propaganda: Soviet Socialism as an Epistemic Project	2 months
Stanislav Budnitskiy	RU	Information-related Activities of the Cultural Initiative (1988–1995) and the International Science Foundation (1992–1996)	1 month
Agnieszka Kubal	PL	Who Are the Humans behind Human Rights in Eastern Europe and Russia	1 month
Sergii Mirnyi	UA	A Radicalizing Event: How the Chornobyl Disaster Catalyzed the Collapse of a Totalitarian State of the USSR in 1986–1991	2 months
Veronika Hermann	HU	Nationalism Revisited—Conflicting Ideologies in Socialist and post-Socialist Eastern European Public Discourses	6 weeks
Dmitry Halavach	BY	Samizdat, Dissent, and Resistance in the Post-Stalin USSR	2 months
Iuliia Khabibulina	RU	A Cold Case of Soviet Monsters: Development of the Discourse about Snowman in the USSR during the Cold War's late 1950s–early 1980s	2 months
János Vargha	HU	The Danube Circle and the Global Civil Society in the Last Years of the Cold War	2 months
Donald Morard III	US	The Failure to Scale: Estonian Experiments in Agricultural Reform during Late Socialism	2 months

<i>Name</i>	<i>CC</i>	<i>Research title</i>	<i>Length</i>
James Cody Inglis	US	From People's Democracy to Socialist Democracy? The Afterlives of Left-Wing Republicanism in Hungary and Yugoslavia, 1945–1968	2 months
Austin Jersild	US	1959: The Cold War as International History	2 months
Ksenia Litvinenko	RU	Soviet Mobile Architecture: Enabling Colonial Resettlement, Displacement and Extractivism in Western Siberia, 1960–1993	2 months
Alexander Bala	US/PL	"Renaissance" in East Central Europe during the Period of de-Stalinization	2 months
Christopher Ewing	US	Hate: A Transatlantic History of Germany's Violent 1990s	1 month
Alessandro Ingaria	IT	War in the Eyes	1 month

THE ARTIST RESIDENCIES CONTINUED TO BE THE MOST DIVERSE MOBILITY PROGRAM THE FUND OPERATES.

III. ARTIST RESIDENCIES

Artist residencies continued to be the most diverse mobility program the Fund operates—as of 2023, five distinct chapters of the artist-in-residence schemes were implemented—dealing with *visual and sound arts*, *performing arts*, *residencies in New York*, *literary residencies*, and finally the newly formed *fashion residencies in Milan*.

Except for the Visegrad Literary Residency Program with two annual deadlines administered by Villa Decius Association, applications for the other residencies were collected within a single deadline on November 15.

Visual & Sound Arts

CC	Artists		Hosts		Total (€)
	Projects	€	Projects	€	
CZ	4	8,000	4	10,000	18,000
HU	4	8,000	5	12,500	20,500
PL	4	8,000	1	2,500	10,500
SK	4	8,000	6	15,000	23,000
Total	16	32,000	16	40,000	72,000

Performing Arts

CC	Artists		Hosts		Total (€)
	Projects	€	Projects	€	
CZ	2	8,000	2	5,500	13,500
HU	2	8,000	0	0	8,000
PL	2	8,000	2	5,500	13,500
SK	2	8,000	4	11,000	19,000
Total	8	32,000	8	22,000	54,000

The two main pillars of the residencies targeting *visual & sound* and *performing arts* followed the trend of previous years and placed Slovakia as the most attractive host country.

Regarding the prestigious *residencies in New York*, the interest was extremely high as always with 69 applicants submitting their proposals. With a 5.8% success rate, the program continues to be the most attractive and consequently the most selective of all programs operated by the Fund.

Of the total number of 98 applicants within the *literary residencies*, 32 authors were selected to conduct the 6-week compact spring residency and the 3-month autumn edition (16 in each) respectively.

COMPACT SPRING EDITION (6 WEEKS)

<i>Name</i>	<i>CC</i>	<i>Host Organization</i>
Vesna Evans	CZ	Arts Institute in Prague
Fruzsina Dézsi	HU	Arts Institute in Prague
Justyna Kulikowska	PL	Arts Institute in Prague
Ildikó Hizsnyaiová	SK	Arts Institute in Prague
Lubomír Martínek	CZ	Centre for Information on Literature in Bratislava
Péter Bódi	HU	Centre for Information on Literature in Bratislava
Aleksandra Młynarczyk-Gemza	PL	Centre for Information on Literature in Bratislava
Norbert György	SK	Centre for Information on Literature in Bratislava
Luboš Svoboda	CZ	Petőfi Literary Museum in Budapest
Anita Harag	HU	Petőfi Literary Museum in Budapest
Maksymilian Stefan Cegielski	PL	Petőfi Literary Museum in Budapest
Martina Šimkovičová	SK	Petőfi Literary Museum in Budapest
Matěj Hořava	CZ	Villa Decius Association
András Tibor Gerevich	HU	Villa Decius Association
Olga Górska	PL	Villa Decius Association
Maroš Volovár	SK	Villa Decius Association

AUTUMN EDITION (3 MONTHS)

<i>Name</i>	<i>CC</i>	<i>Host Organization</i>
Lukás Csicsely	CZ	Arts Institute in Prague
Szabolcs Benedek	HU	Arts Institute in Prague
Anna Maria Radwan-Żbikowska	PL	Arts Institute in Prague
Dušan Teplan	SK	Arts Institute in Prague
Karel Kuna	CZ	Centre for Information on Literature in Bratislava
Agnes Judit MacDonald	HU	Centre for Information on Literature in Bratislava
Konrad Niemira	PL	Centre for Information on Literature in Bratislava
Lenka Nagyová	SK	Centre for Information on Literature in Bratislava
Jonáš Zbořil	CZ	Petőfi Literary Museum in Budapest
Agnes Judit MacDonald	HU	Petőfi Literary Museum in Budapest
Marcin Mokry	PL	Petőfi Literary Museum in Budapest
Karolína Klinková	SK	Petőfi Literary Museum in Budapest
Nela Bártová	CZ	Villa Decius Association
Timea Sipos	HU	Villa Decius Association
Tomasz Jedrowski	PL	Villa Decius Association
Michaela Kučová	SK	Villa Decius Association

"I am glad to see that residencies are still a very important part of our funding."



I am glad to see that residencies are still a very important part of our funding, particularly in a time when in Central Europe we see budget cuts to artistic institutions and various forms of censorship which should not be present in democratic countries at all.

The biggest novelty from 2023 is that we introduced a whole new residency—the Fashion Residency in Milan in cooperation with Accademia Costume & Moda. The pilot program was a success as we received 53 applications, from which we chose 4 residents who spent two months in Milan.

Another step we took is increasing scholarships awarded to Visual and Sound Residents in New York by € 1,000. We clearly heard feedback from our previous residents that due to the inflation in recent years the support was not high enough for 2 months in New York City. I believe that with all different types of residencies that we provide—Visual & Sound Residencies, Performing Arts Residencies, Literary Residencies, Visual Residencies and Fashion Residencies, we support artists with fewer experiences, helping them to start their artistic careers.

Martin Marciña
Project Manager

"Initiatives for structural change in the fashion industry and informal learning activities can contribute to environmental sustainability, bring our nations together and even be a source of innovation and joy."



Initiatives for structural change in the fashion industry and informal learning activities can contribute to environmental sustainability, bring our nations together and even be a source of innovation and joy.

Our daily life is deeply affected by the modern phenomenon of overconsumption. There is probably no better example of this than the fashion industry. Thus, I would like to appreciate the effort of Fashion Revolution Poland who, together with its V4 partners—Fashion Revolution Czech Republic, National Fashion League Hungary Association, and Fashion Revolution Slovakia—with support of the Fund, conducted the first-of-its-kind research on fashion-related consumption habits in the V4 countries.

A proof that recycling can be fun is the RecyCOOL EDUgames project, which aimed to raise awareness of sustainable fashion among the youth and educators through non-formal education—games. The project implemented by Fashion Revolution Slovakia, with its V4 partners, produced three fashion consumption and production related educational games.

Lenka Bučková
Project Manager

RecyCOOL EDUgames



BUDGET

€ 41,550

LEAD
ORGANIZATIONS

Fashion Revolution
Slovakia

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Fashion Revolution Czech Republic,
Fashion Revolution Polska, National Fashion League
Hungary Association, Nitka and Lebo medved (SK)



RecyCOOL EduGames is a set of educational games that are used as informal learning activities focusing on the fashion industry and its impact on the world. The intention is to raise awareness and contribute to developing young people's competences—knowledge, skills and attitudes. The games have been translated into national languages to make them globally accessible. A new, more comprehensive board game is in development that will expand the educational offerings in the fashion industry.

IV. OTHER PROJECTS

1. Visegrad Strategic Conferences

The budget of the Strategic Conferences program continued with its €500,000 annual allocation in 2023 with existing traditional events in Czechia, Hungary, and Slovakia.

<i>ID code</i>	<i>Grantee</i>	<i>Project title</i>	<i>Budget (€)</i>
VSC23CZ1	Forum 2000 Foundation	27th Forum 2000 Conference	85,000
VSC23CZ2	EUROPEUM	Prague European Summit	10,000
VSC23CZ3	EUROPEUM	Transatlantic Policy Forum 2023	30,000
<i>CZ Subtotal</i>			125,000
VSC23HU1	Institute for Foreign Affairs and Trade	Budapest Balkans Forum	125,000
<i>HU Subtotal</i>			125,000
VSC23SK1	Globsec	GLOBSEC 2023 Bratislava Forum	95,000
VSC23SK2	Slovak Foreign Policy Association	Central European Energy Conference 2023	30,000
<i>SK Subtotal</i>			125,000
<i>Total</i>			375,000

"As a result of our effort, there was a notable increase in Ukrainian applications by year-end."



Ukraine has been among the main focus of support for the Visegrad Fund in 2023. In the mentioned year, the Fund provided assistance to 8 Ukrainian organizations that applied for funding. Additionally, 38 Ukrainian entities participated in Visegrad grants.

Beyond the routine support activities through our grant programs, the Fund facilitated the arrival of 48 Ukrainian scholars to universities in Visegrad 4 countries to foster knowledge exchange.

In 2023, conducted two visits to Ukraine to assess firsthand the genuine needs of people and explore ways for assistance. These visits encompassed engagements in de-occupied towns such as Irpin and Bucha, as well as cities like Kyiv, Lviv, Uzhhorod, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Chernivtsi. Meetings were held with local non-governmental organizations, universities, municipal authorities, and the Ukrainian Minister of Education and Sciences, Oksen Lisovyi, to enhance awareness about the Fund's initiatives. As a result of our effort, there was a notable increase in Ukrainian applications by year-end.

Looking ahead to 2024, we anticipate further collaboration and support for initiatives aimed at advancing Ukrainian society along the path of European values, a commitment we have upheld since 2014 and beyond.

Yelyzaveta Kushyk
Project Manager

2. Think Visegrad Think-Tank Network + the Mid-Term Conference

The Think Visegrad think-tank platform concluded its twelfth year of operations in February 2024. The following six papers were produced as part of the assignments in the three new categories of documents—policy briefs, scenarios, and thematic analyses:

- Top Issues to Watch after the Elections in Turkey (Policy brief)
- Scenarios of the post-war Relations of Russia with the Trans-Atlantic Community (Scenario)
- Changing Dynamics in the Middle East (Scenario)
- Approaching the Indo-Pacific in the 21st century (Thematic analysis)
- European Political Community after Chi inău (Thematic analysis)
- Western Balkans' Scoreboard 2023 (Thematic analysis)

Altogether, a total of nine **visiting fellows** from non-V4 countries received support for short-term research stays in the respective think tanks in 2023 with one being belatedly supported from the 2022 edition.

The ninth annual **Mid-Term Review Conference** was organized by the Slovak Foreign Policy Institute in Bratislava on May 2, 2023. The conference, which was thematically focused on the future vision of the EU in the context of Russian aggression against Ukraine, was preceded by the Think Visegrad coordinators meeting. The meeting took place on the premises of the International Visegrad Fund.

3. Think Visegrad in Brussels

EUROPEUM's Brussels office continued to enjoy the usual support of the Think Visegrad platform in Brussels in 2023, strengthened by the support of two additional Think Visegrad members' Brussels offices (namely PISM and GLOBSEC).

The project continued to build on the experiences from the previous years of implementation and was executed in close cooperation with all actors included in the consortium. From the organizers' perspective (EUROPEUM Prague), the 2023 project was very successful overall, which can be supported by the record number of organized events. Seven events were

organized as foreseen in the work plan for 2023 together with two ad-hoc events organized in cooperation with other Think Visegrad partners. The events received great feedback from the speakers, and the attendance rate matched the expectations. The Think Visegrad in Brussels events hosted several representatives of the European Commission, including Commissioner Jourová, members of the European Parliament, Permanent Representatives as well as wide groups of experts and private sector representatives.

The list of debates/roundtables:

- Shaping Our Digital Future: tackling Disinformation in the EU, The case of Central and Eastern Europe
- The Western Balkans' EU Perspective: New Impetus through Normalization of Belgrade-Pristina
- Relations and Inter-regional Cooperation?
- Enhancing EU–India relations: A Partnership Beyond Trade
- The Gender—Foreign and Security Policy Nexus: Can the EU be a Global Standard-setter?
- The role of Central Europe in Steering Serbia towards the EU (side event)
- Towards a Just Transition in Visegrad Countries: Mission (im)possible?
- What Future QMV in European Union's Foreign and Security Policy?
- EVs, Subsidies and the Future of CEE Industry (ad-hoc event)
- The Impact of the Russian War in Ukraine on European Security Architecture and EU's Eastern
- Neighborhood
- A Plan without Marshall: Getting Ready for Ukraine's Post-War Reconstruction

The monthly newsletter continued to be disseminated to more than 1,500 contacts from March till December 2023.

4. Civil Servant Mobility Program

This unique experience-sharing instrument took place in a full format in 2023 targeting Albania, Moldova, and Ukraine. For organizational reasons, both the Ukrainian and Moldovan visits to Hungary were postponed until 2024, as well as the Albanian visit to Poland.

As a result, the budget reserved for these three visits is being transferred to the 2024 budget and will be duly reported in 2025.

The actual visits took the following schedule in each country in 2023:

Host country	Target	Dates
Czechia	Ukraine	September 3–9
	Albania	October 1–6
	Moldova	November 20–24
Hungary	Albania	June 4–10
Poland	Moldova	October 22–27
	Ukraine	November 17–24
Slovakia	Ukraine	November 19–24
	Ukraine	November 28–December 1
	Albania	December 4–8

5. V4 Energy Think Tank Platform

The sixth edition of the energy think tank project focused on the unprecedented situation of the energy market (Russian aggression against

Ukraine, post-pandemic years) and on the challenges connected to the decarbonization of the economy.

Lead author(s)	Working paper—Title	Note
Oldřich Sklenář	V4 Fiscal Response to the Energy Crisis	Budapest workshop
Gábor Horváth, Lajos Kerekes	Decarbonization of the Household Heating Sector in the Visegrad Countries	Budapest workshop
Agata Loskot-Strachota	V4 in Times of Unprecedented Challenges and Changes on the Gas Market	CEEP Bratislava ¹
Nolan Theisen	Outlook For RES Integration in Visegrad Countries	Budapest workshop

The 2023 edition was successfully concluded. An upgrade was negotiated within the consortium to "share" the project-management burden; based on their decision, as of 2024 a system of project rotation was decided, on the

basis of which the 2024 edition would be coordinated and reported by the Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association.

¹ Central European Energy Conference (Visegrad Strategic Conference #VSC23SK2) implemented by the Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association.

6. V4 Startup Force

Design Terminál, Kft. continued with the V4 Startup Force in cooperation with DEX (CZ), Startup Hub Poland, and Campus (SK). The budgeted sum of €149,660.00 was fully utilized through the usual outputs—a hybrid lecturing program, an on-line bootcamp, one-on-one mentoring sessions, and pitching for a for an international jury.

7. Visegrad Bicycle Races

The twelfth edition of bicycle races organized under the single banner of the Visegrad Bicycle Race took place in June and July 2023. Based on the decision of the NVCs (formally approved by the Conference of Ministers while passing the 2023 budget), this edition was the last one with an €80,000 budget and the trend of gradually lowering support (€20,000 p.a.) will start with the 2024 edition amounting to €60,000. Below is the overview of the respective granted sums and implementation dates:

Grantee	Venues	Dates	Awarded sum (€)
Czech Cycling Federation, Prague	Brno	June 12, 2023	32,000
Movement Health Recreation Sport Club, Budaörs	Budapest–Pannonhalma	July 8, 2023	16,000
Dolnośląski Związek Kolarski, Wrocław	Długołęka–Oleśnica	July 22, 2023	16,000
Slovak Cycling Federation, Bratislava	Nová Baňa	July 9, 2023	16,000
Total			80,000

"Local women got the chance to learn how to create formal and informal mother centers that could be safe places for their discussions..."



Since the Western Balkan tour in the previous year was an enriching experience, we repeated our field trips to North Macedonia and Kosovo in 2023. It was our great pleasure to come back to Skopje and Prishtina where we held info sessions for our potential applicants, and we were invited to visit the city of Bitola and meet the university and city representatives.

Meanwhile, I was honored to cooperate with the Mother Center Plamen from the Zavidovići area in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Local women got the chance to learn how to create formal and informal mother centers that could be safe places for their discussions how to get included in decision-making processes within their communities.

Additionally, allow me to list another great cooperation with the Association of Open Fund Schools from Sarajevo. They organized the Leadership in sport youth camp held in Montenegro for young leaders from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czechia, Hungary, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Poland.

Kateřina Šrámková
Project Manager

Empowered Women Building Resilient Communities

BUDGET

€ 28,025

LEAD ORGANIZATIONS

Mother's centre Plamen, Zavidovići (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Mother Nature Association, Kiszombor (HU), Mother Centre "Nováčik", Nováky (SK), KreBuL, o.p.s., Prachatice (CZ)



The project supported transferring the experiences of V4 countries in establishing formal and informal maternity centres in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It focused on the education and integration of women on maternity leave, marginalised women, women in rural areas, single mothers and Roma women. Six informal maternity centres were established during the project. Through in-depth non-formal education and practical skills training, the project contributes to eliminating discrimination and inequality against women as well as disadvantaged groups.

8. V4 innovators in Israel Training Program

Given that the two pilot stages of the project were successful, it has been decided that a new edition of the training program would continue with the call opening in Q3 2023 and planned implementation in Q1 2024.

The call was finalized but before it was released, the October 7 (2023) attacks on Israel put a stop to all developments and the program was put on temporary hold.

9. Western Balkans Fund

Following the success of the Unstoppable Conference organized by WBF in Tirana in February 2023 which the Fund supported indirectly through the Technical Assistance grant, an additional conference was micro-granted by the Fund under the title "VerityCon 2023: Navigating the Disinformation Era" in December 2023.

Alongside of the event, the WBF and Visegrad Fund Executive Directors signed a continuation of the Technical Assistance grant with an additional €10,000 for two extra years. At the same time, negotiations continued between the staffs of both institutions in terms of a possible joint program which had been previously discussed on the management level.

The idea of a pilot joint **Western Balkans–Visegrad Fellowship(s)** program was developed into a jointly financed short-term (2–10 weeks) reciprocal research/lecture mobility program in which WB6 citizens could apply for support at host institutions in the V4 region and V4 citizens could apply to WB6 host institutions. For the purposes of this program, both the Western Balkans Fund and the Visegrad Fund formally earmarked €40,000 and €60,000 respectively out of their 2024 budgets.

Software development took place on the side of the Fund to accommodate both directions of applying as well as a joint evaluation which is to be conducted by staff of both institutions. Promotion of the pilot program was approved for 2024 with the deadline to take place in Q2 2024.

"The project enhanced the visibility of impaired people in Georgia and called more attention to the need for tolerance for people living with impairments."



The Fund has supported numerous projects in the fields of education and academic cooperation, public policy, institutional partnership and democratisation in the Eastern Partnership countries. Projects in these fields usually achieve a strong impact in the local communities.

At the same time, projects from other fields are outstanding for their approach or the area they were implemented in. The Slovak Wheelchair Dance Sport Federation delivered a dance training with concluding performances in the frameworks of their project "V4 Inclusive Mission for Georgia". The project enhanced the visibility of impaired people in Georgia and called more attention to the need for tolerance for people living with impairments.

The Homecare Association and AO Familia Rurală in Moldova implemented "Organizing a Placement Centre for vulnerable people who seek help and shelter at the Zabriceni monastery, including Ukrainian refugees". They implemented the project within the frameworks of the extraordinary Visegrad Fund programme for Ukraine and Moldova in early 2023. After supporting mainly refugees from Ukraine, the Centre has been becoming a facility for residents in need.

Éva Merenics
Project Manager

OUTREACH
ON FACEBOOK
AND
INSTAGRAM
INCREASED
BY 10.5% AND
INTERACTION
WITH CONTENT
INCREASED
BY 18.7%.

V. PUBLIC RELATIONS AND OUTREACH

A communication strategy and the new visual identity were gradually put into practice during 2023. We continued to spread awareness of the grant schemes on social media channels and strengthen the Fund's reputation by sharing visits from monitored projects. Both face-to-face presentations and on-line information sessions were conducted. Furthermore, webinars were organized during the year to assist the current and potential grantees with their project ideas (among others so-called "online info week").

The achievements of the year:

- Implementing the communication strategy and the new visual identity
- Outreach on Facebook and Instagram increased by 10.5% and interaction with content increased by 18.7%. LinkedIn profile confirmed 1,464 followers.
- Newsletter (12 editions) addressed 4,877 people.

On May 26, 2023, a public discussion of a group of experts on innovation challenges of V4 countries was supported by the Visegrad Fund as part of the Globsec Bratislava Forum 2023 under the title "Breaking the Mould: How the V4 Countries Can Overcome Innovation Challenge".

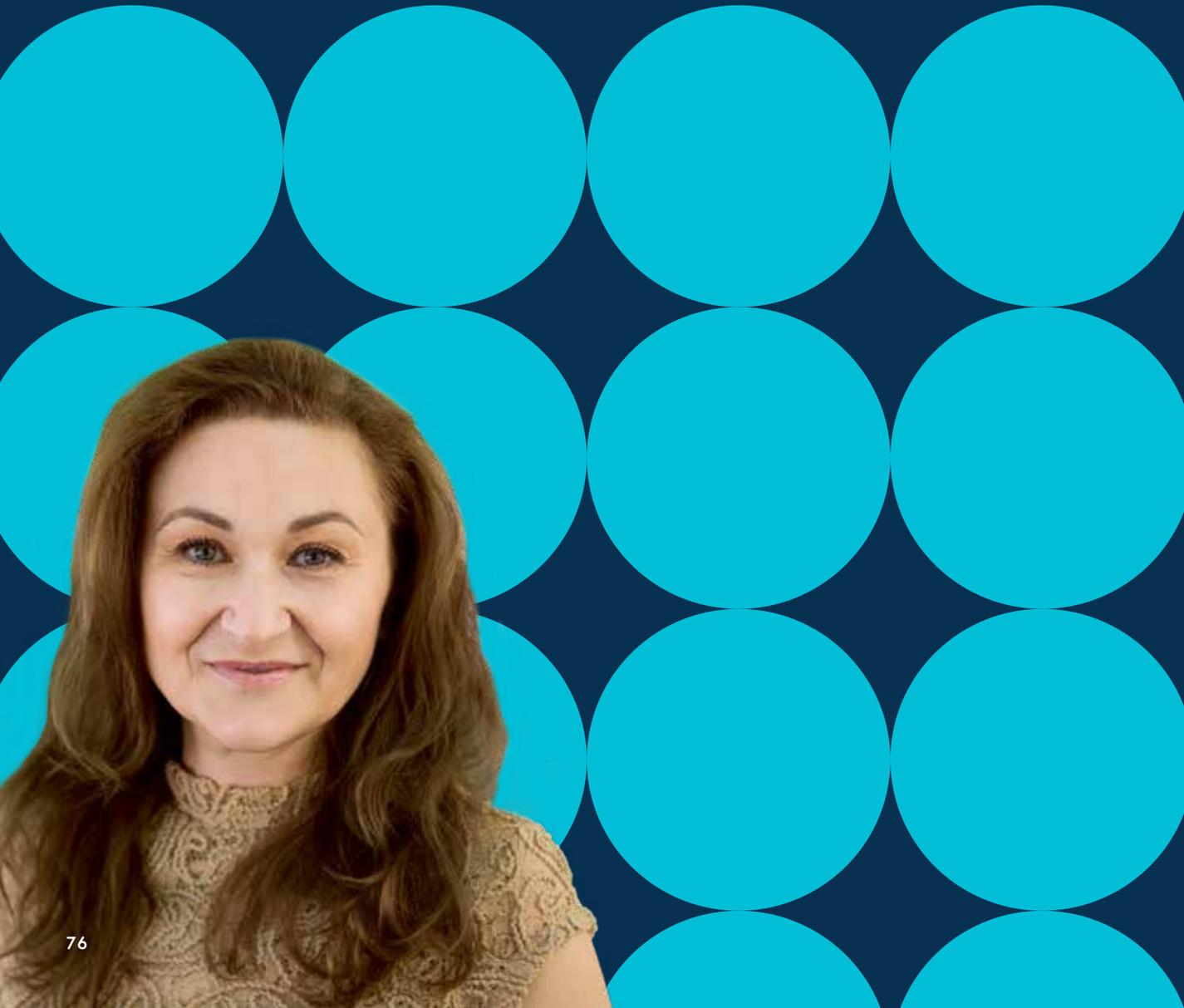
The annual "Project of the Year" contest selected the "Eastern Bloc Catwalk Concert" project implemented by Soharóza Köshasznú Egyesület (HU) in collaboration with Stowarzyszenie Ludzi Sztuki grupa działania (PL), Pro Scena – Slovenská scénografická spoločnosť (SK) and Česká organizace scénografů, divadelních architektů a techniků (CZ).

The Annual anniversary reception was held at the Pálffy Palace in Bratislava on June 21, 2023, where the Project of the Year award was announced and handed over.

In collaboration with a former grantee (Robert B. Lisek, project Apeiron), a special visual arts project supported by AI was projected onto the façade of the Visegrad Fund building during the White Night (Biela noc) festival from Sep 29 until Oct 1, 2023.

As a public outreach activity, a concert of the Visegrad Cello Quartet was produced within the PR budget on the occasion of the summit of V4 heads of state in Prague on November 22, 2023.

"Reach and interaction with content on our communication channels increased by almost 19%."



In the spring I joined the Visegrad Fund team, and I am happy to be part of an organisation that tangibly supports regional cooperation between civil society organisations not only in the V4 countries, but also in the Eastern Partnership and Western Balkans regions.

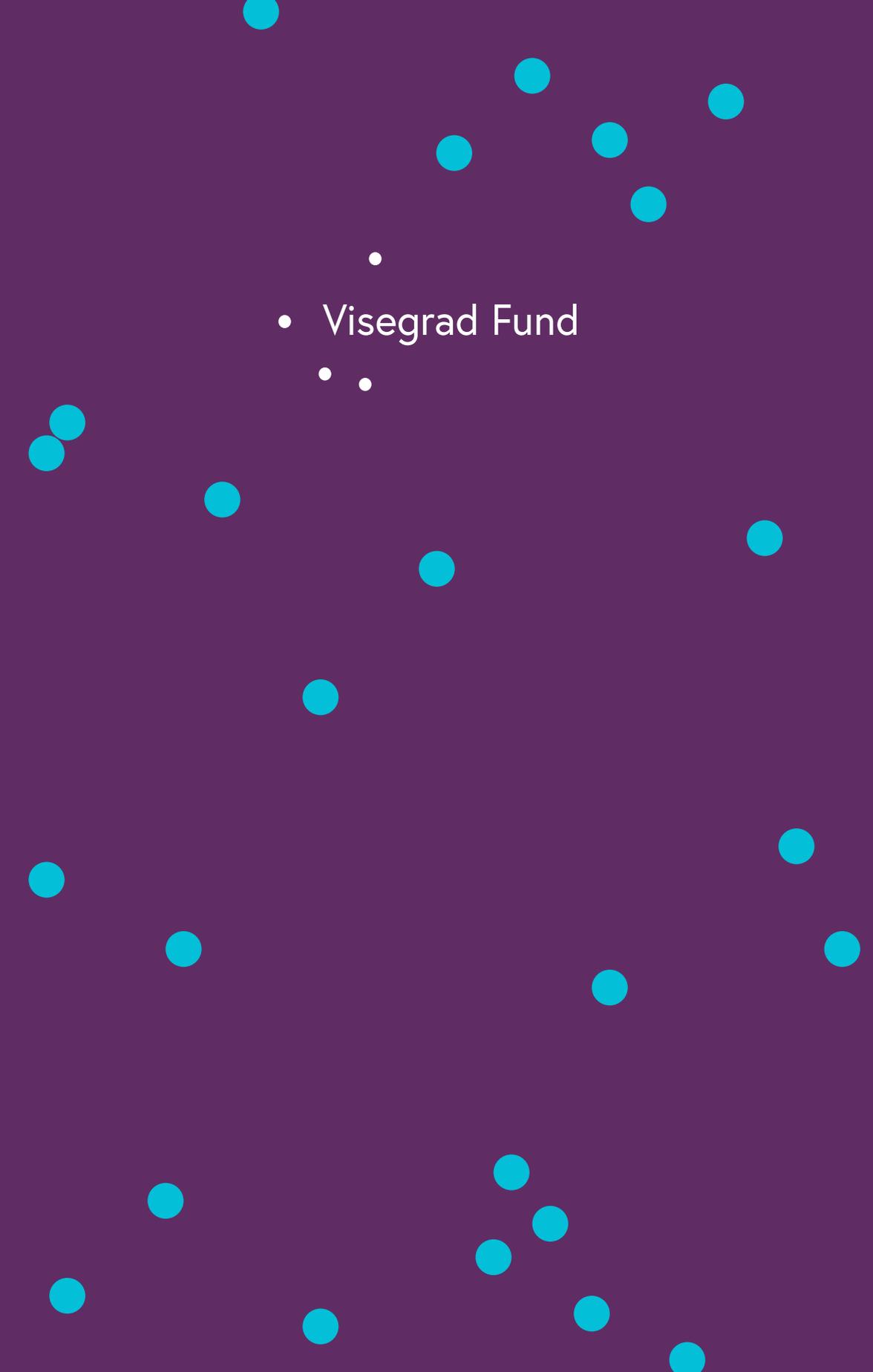
By further enhancing the Fund's positive reputation, we aim to raise the visibility and awareness of the Fund's grant schemes as well as the support that the Fund provides to its grantees with special care. This is the seventh time we have awarded the Project of the Year, and this time it went to the Eastern Bloc project Catwalk Concert, implemented by the Hungarian company Soharóza in collaboration with partners.

We continued to spread awareness of the grant projects through joint visits to monitored projects, personal presentations, and information sessions. Reach and interaction with content on our communication channels increased by almost 19%.

As rich and diverse as the Fund's activities are, so is the new design manual. The variety of colours is reflected in the increasingly topical themes of our projects and activities. We made ourselves visible at the White Night festival in Bratislava, where a special video project supported by AI was created by our former grantee Robert Lisek, and projected in the windows of the Visegrad Fund building.

Sylvia Kovalčíková
PR Manager





• Visegrad Fund