

Prague Civil Society Centre



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Пражский гражданский
центр

Centrul Civic Praga

Пражский гражданский
центр

Пражскі грамадзянскі цэнтр

Прага азаматтық орталығы

Прага жарандык
коом борбору

Маркази ҷомеаи
шахрвандий Прага

პრადის სამოქალაქო
საზოგადოების ცენტრი

Praqa Vətəndaş Cəmiyyəti
Mərkəzi

Praga rayat merkezi

Praga fuqarolik markazi

Прага фуқаролик маркази

Պրահայի քաղաքացիական
հասարակության կենտրոն

PCSC Fellowship guide

Information about the programme

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About the PCSC Fellowship programme

Three fully funded months in Prague to focus on your research, network and think.

What is the PCSC Fellowship Programme?

Fellowships are fully funded three-month research residencies in Prague for individuals from Eastern Europe and Central Asia. This includes activists, experts, researchers, and people working on civic-minded projects and social issues in their country or region.

This is an opportunity to:

- Research challenges, opportunities and trends affecting civil society and human rights in your country or region
- Write a book or training manual, policy or analytical paper for the benefit of the people and/or the civil sector in your country
- Conceptualise and initiate a new project.

The Prague Civil Society Centre will cover all costs associated with the fellowship. This includes travel, modest living expenses, and visa assistance. Fellows are also provided with a shared office space with internet connection and meeting facilities.

Who can apply to be a Fellow?

Fellows must be from one of the countries in yellow and be involved with civil society, journalism, or social issues in their country, through either work, research or activism. We expect applicants to have a proven and solid track-record of work in the civil sector or journalism,



with enough experience to conduct and finalise a three-month project.

Fellows are often:

- in the advanced stage of working on a research paper or book, and need a few months to finish it without the distractions of everyday life or challenges of a repressive political environment
- experienced trainers or someone who provides educational programmes for civil society and are looking to develop a new curriculum or re-think their current approach
- people with extensive knowledge and experience of a certain type of activism and are on the lookout to document or share their experience with others
- people with knowledge of either successful or failed reform processes in their country and want to document this experience to guide future reforms in their country or elsewhere
- looking to write a comparative analysis of reform experiences between their country and another
- those with fresh ideas on how to reinvigorate civil society activism and need time to conceptualise this and work out their approach
- people with extensive experience of social entrepreneurship or other ways of combining profit making and pro-bono work and want to record and share their knowledge
- individuals with extensive experience of using technology and smart communication tools for social change and would like to share their experiences
- people living and working in repressive environments and need a safe place for a productive recess

What are we looking for in your proposal?

Your Fellowship project proposal should aim to reflect and elaborate upon your current work or experience in your home country or region. You should demonstrate how participating in the fellowship programme will aid your work upon returning home, how you will share the knowledge and expertise gained during the fellowship, or how you plan to develop cross-country or regional collaborative projects and networks.

You are free to propose a Fellowship project on any topic, but we do have some topics, which will be given higher priority. More information on this can be found in the section *Priority Themes*.

After the selection process, Fellows are asked to provide a specific project output to be agreed before the beginning of the Fellowship. The Prague Civil Society Centre also reserves the right to ask you to assist our projects or activities.

How to apply and the selection process

Applications must be made through the Prague Civil Society Centre website on the Fellowship application [page](#).

Please be aware that there are two stages to sending your application. Stage one involves completing a survey and stage two involves filling out an application form. You must complete both stages to be considered for the Fellowship.

The Fellowship Programme is very competitive and it is important you fill out and complete all the required steps. Shortlisted candidates will be invited for a Skype interview to discuss the proposed project.

Priority themes

Although we welcome proposals for any research topic, project or idea, special consideration will be given to applicants who propose a project that are relevant to our priority themes, which are listed below. The applicant will have a proven record of accomplishment in these fields and will be interested in mapping, describing, and analysing successful examples of civic work in the countries of the Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

New modes of operation for civil society: How can civil society become less dependent on foreign donors, and correspond more to the needs of the societies in the target countries? How can the civil society sector become more sustainable? How can the civil society sector survive in a repressive environment? How is crowdfunding, business models, philanthropy, and monetisation strategies relevant to the target countries?

Youth programs and initiatives: How can youth be more actively included in society? How do we reduce youth marginalisation in the target countries? How can youth be inspired to work or volunteer in the civic sector and ultimately change their countries and livelihoods?

Media and propaganda: What is the health of the space for independent media in the target countries? What kind of influence does local or foreign propaganda have? What kind of tools are used to control media in the different countries, and how can this be countered? What kind of innovative media solutions are used in the target countries? How can exiled media exist outside repressive countries? What are the overarching propaganda narratives and what tools messages, channels and formats are used to convey them? How can civil society respond and counter this?

Innovative use of “smart” technologies for effective civil society initiatives and activism: How can technology can be used to transform society, spread messages, and push for change or improve the life of communities?

Anticorruption initiatives: What good examples are there of anti-corruption initiatives and investigative media projects in the region, and who is able to produce high quality stories that cover this? How can the results of anti-corruption investigations be used to mobilise readers?

Urban initiatives: How is public space used and what needs does it fulfil to the citizens of the target countries? How do we define or understand public and civic space in the former Soviet Union? How can the public space be “reclaimed” by communities? What are successful urban initiatives, why have they been successful, and what has not worked? How can we make solutions to urban transformation?

Online education: How can we improve or develop models for creating accessible and free education online? What kind of initiatives have worked in the region and why? What sustainable ideas are out there, ready to be developed? How to best engage a target audience in online civic learning initiatives?

State capture: How to overcome kleptocratic and authoritarian regimes? What are the challenges and positive examples from the region? What are the prospects for the economy and democratic development in the oil- or resource-dependent countries? How can oligarchy be reformed, dismantled?

Conflict mongering and authoritarianism: What characterises the frozen and active conflicts in the region? How are these conflicts being transformed in favour of the authoritarian regimes? How is state-propagated nationalism used to mobilise society in the different countries? How are internal or external so-called threats of “extremism” being used to legitimise increasingly repressive policies in some countries?

Shrinking space for civil society: How is civil society being suppressed and marginalised? What are the specifics of new laws, policies, defamation and other tactics used to muzzle and delegitimize civil society and media? How are civil society organisations and activists coping and responding? How can activism be sustained, capacity built and new spaces be created for civic activism? How do regimes and governments co-opt, accommodate, corrupt, suppress and eliminate potential challengers?

Identity, nationalism and state building: What role does post-soviet nostalgia, historical myths and historical memory play? What are national identities built on and what role does patriotism play in this? How deep does propaganda reach into the question of national identity, and what are possible alternative foundations for national identities in the region?

Practical information

Travel to and from Prague. The Centre will arrange and cover the cost of the fellow's travel to and from Prague.

Duration and the location of the fellowship. Maximum length of the fellowship is three months. This cannot be extended. Fellowships take place in Prague.

Accommodation. The Centre provides modest and comfortable accommodation in apartments for the duration of their stay in Prague. Some fellows may be placed in a private room in a shared apartment.

Health insurance. If the fellow does not have travel health insurance, they must obtain an insurance policy for the duration of stay in Prague. The Centre will reimburse the cost of insurance, or purchase the insurance for the fellow.

Visa. Obtaining information about the visa process and ensuring that the visa is received in a timely manner is the responsibility of the fellow. There are different types of Schengen visas. Please bear in mind that, if selected for fellowship, you have a limitation of stay in the Schengen area for a period of 90 days per 180 days. If you already have a partly used 90-day Schengen visa or visa-free stay (citizens of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia), then you will be able to use only the remaining unused number of days during your fellowship and you will not be able to prolong the visa or stay in the Czech Republic after you have used all 90 days. In case you need a visa, the Centre will provide confirmation of accommodation, airplane tickets and a letter of invitation. You can calculate your remaining days with the [visa calculator on the europa.eu website](#).

Per diem. The Centre will pay a per diem of 500 CZK per day for the first three weeks and 400 CZK per day thereafter, throughout the duration of the fellowship period. This provides a decent living for one person. The per diem should be spent on food, mobile phone services, public transport, admission fees to cultural events and other daily needs of the fellow (not including accommodation, this is covered by PCSC separately). The Centre does not assume responsibility for all the expenditures a fellow can have during the stay in Prague beyond covering travel, visa, per diems and accommodation, and cannot be held responsible for any unforeseen expenses, such as broken laptops and damaged luggage.

Travel. Travel plans have to be communicated to the centre in advance. Travel that is not related to the fellowship is not encouraged and the fellow will not receive per diems for these travel days. Please bear in mind that traveling back to the country of origin for the purposes of fellowship project or research is strongly discouraged. All research and preparation related to the fellowship

project, which needs to be done in the country of the origin, should be undertaken before the beginning of the fellowship. Any exception has to be agreed in advance.

Office space. Fellows will be provided with a shared office space next to the Centre. Each fellow will have a desk, access to internet, printer, and coffee/tea free of charge. Please bring your own personal computers; the Centre will not be able to provide you with one.

Project output. During their fellowship, fellows are expected to prepare a concrete project output such as an article, book chapter, presentation for a public or semi-public audience, a training workshop, etc. The project output should be proposed in the project plan and discussed with the Centre in advance. Project outputs are expected to be presented at the end of fellowship.

Examples of previous Fellow's projects

To get an idea of the type of projects our Fellows have worked on in the past see below:

- An activist from Azerbaijan wrote his prison memoirs.
- The founder of an independent media outlet from Kyrgyzstan used the fellowship to learn from other media outlets forced to work in exile.
- A Russian LGBT activist and human rights defender spent time in Prague studying the Czech dissident movement and writings of Jan Patočka to rethink the concept of human rights and write several chapters of his book.
- A Kyrgyz lawyer used the fellowship to investigate successful philanthropy from the non-governmental sector in the Czech Republic, and planned how to apply similar strategies in Kyrgyzstan.
- A researcher from Armenia looked at ways to transfer methods used by Czech civil society for domestic fundraising and influencing policy to Armenia.
- A journalist from Russia conducted a comparative study of high school history books from several East European and Central Asia countries. He also canvassed opinions about historic monuments in order to collect material for an animated series dealing with history, politics and propaganda.
- A Kazakh independent journalist spent the time in Prague researching repressive means utilised against the media sector in Kazakhstan, and how exiled media can be part of the solution.
- A founder of one of the leading civil society organisations in Azerbaijan and former political prisoner worked on a paper that evaluated the negative impact of the growing repression of democratic institutions. This resulted in him formulating recommendations to the international community on how to prevent and reduce political repression in Azerbaijan.
- An Azerbaijani scholar used the fellowship in Prague to explore and compare civil society conditions under repression in Azerbaijan and Central Asia.

- A senior researcher from an independent Ukrainian think tank worked on several articles exploring the transformations of Ukrainian national identity as a result of the conflict.
- A scholar from Belarus spent the fellowship exploring disputes concerning narratives of historical memory in Belarus.
- The director of one of Kazakhstan's leading human rights organisations worked on a paper that analysed the tools used by Kazakh authorities to reduce space for civil society.
- A project manager from Ukraine spent the time in Prague exploring philanthropy in the Czech Republic, with the goal to introduce best practices in this field to Ukraine.
- Two researchers, one from Belarus and one from Azerbaijan, worked together to map successful urban initiatives in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia and Kazakhstan.
- An activist from Moldova researched the harmful impact of foreign aid on Moldovan civil society and researched positive examples from Moldova and other countries on how to empower a self-sustaining civil society.
- The founder and long-time director of a youth organisation from Kazakhstan used the fellowship to research and analyse new strategies and methods for working with young people in five countries: Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia.
- A Kyrgyz lawyer spent time in Prague writing a book about innovative business strategies for the civil society sector as a way of becoming independent from donors.