

## SLOVAK DIPLOMAT BECOMES THE NEW DIRECTOR OF THE VISEGRAD FUND

**Bratislava, 1 August 2024 – The International Visegrad Fund, international organization with the seat in Bratislava, has a new Executive Director. On August 1, Linda Kapustová Helbichová, Slovak diplomat, assumed her duties as the head of the institution, replacing Ambassador Petr Mareš from the Czech Republic, whose mission in Bratislava ended on July 31.**

The change in the post of the Executive Director takes place during a regular 3-year rotation of representatives of each of the four Visegrad Group countries (Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia). Linda Kapustová Helbichová is the third Slovak Executive Director since the Fund's foundation in 2000.

Prior to this post, Ms Kapustová Helbichová served as Deputy Chief of Mission at the Slovak Embassy in Bern, Switzerland, Director General for international relations at the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic and served as the Fund's Deputy Executive Director in the past.

*"I believe in the strong role of the Visegrad Fund, which is based on solid foundations. I look forward to working with the international team and I am confident that together with my colleagues we will continue to support the creativity and cooperation of civil society in the wider region,"* Director Kapustová Helbichová said.

*"I am confident I am leaving the Fund in a good shape,"* said Petr Mareš, and expressed his wish that the institution retains its independence and its uniqueness. *"So far, the Fund has always been able to demonstrate the common will of all four governments to support projects which—despite the political situation—are created and implemented by civil society,"* added Mareš.

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The International Visegrad Fund is an international organisation established by the governments of the Visegrad Group (V4) countries—Czechia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia in 2000. 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 €10 million is equally funded by the governments of the V4 countries. To date, the Fund has supported almost 10,000 grant projects and individual mobility initiatives, with a total funding amount exceeding €130 million.

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