

***This translation is for information purposes only; official text has been published at [www.saia.sk](http://www.saia.sk) in the Slovak language.***

## **Guidelines from 3 April 2020 for scholarship holders within the programmes administered by SAIA, n. o., whose scholarship stays are affected by spreading of COVID-19<sup>1</sup>**

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The below mentioned conditions shall be applicable to scholarship stays within the National Scholarship Programme of the Slovak Republic, the CEEPUS Programme and the Action Austria – Slovakia, which have been affected by the situation connected to the spread of COVID-19 in the world – applicable since 9 March 2020<sup>2</sup>.

The eligibility of costs is solely subject to the assessment performed by the programme administrator (SAIA, n. o.) and there is no legal claim for it. Within the below stated assessment of the financing, the eligibility of expenditures will be taken into account only if the concrete situation is an immediate consequence of the *force majeure* and it was not caused by an arbitrary decision of the scholarship holder. In justified cases reimbursement of financial loss caused by travel cancellation can be taken into account when reimbursing the travel costs; this can be done only if the scholarship holder has taken all the necessary steps in order to minimize the financial loss caused by travel cancellation and only in cases where the situation was not caused by an arbitrary decision of scholarship holder but it was an immediate consequence of the force majeure.<sup>3</sup>

Due to the exceptional situation each month of a scholarship stay that has begun will be considered as a full month spent on a scholarship stay.

On the basis of the assessment of the current objective situation, SAIA, n. o. may accept (differently from the regular programme terms and conditions)<sup>4</sup> also scans of the original documents or other alternatives in order to meet the conditions of the specific scholarship programme.<sup>5</sup>

Other terms and conditions related to scholarship stay remain unchanged unless specified in this guideline.

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### **B. Foreign scholarship holders in Slovakia**

B.1. Scholarship holders who are already in Slovakia should monitor current situation in Slovakia and its development, e.g. via the foreign language media in Slovakia (such as Slovak Spectator <https://spectator.sme.sk/t/8282/coronavirus> for example).

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<sup>1</sup> This guidelines were prepared by SAIA, n. o., and approved by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic.

<sup>2</sup> Date of the publication of the third guideline issued by the Chief Health Officer of the Slovak Republic with recommendation to consider traveling to risk areas; generally from this date also measures of other countries have been increasingly introduced.

<sup>3</sup> For example, the cancellation of a flight by an airline without flight replacement or compensation, or necessity to cancel the original flight ticket due to impossibility to continue a scholarship stay at the host institution that has closed due to COVID-19.

<sup>4</sup> Cases where submission of original documents is required by the terms and conditions of the respective programme.

<sup>5</sup> For example: In justified cases, an e-mail from inviting person confirming the completion of the scholarship stay or other alternative proving no possibility to continue a scholarship stay (e.g. printscreen of the webpage with information about closure of the host institution due to Covid-19) etc. may be accepted.

- B.2. Scholarship holders whose stay has not started yet (at time of publication of these guidelines) and whose beginning of the scholarship stay is planned for earlier than 1 June 2020 are strongly advised NOT to travel to Slovakia. If the beginning of a stay is planned on 1 June 2020 or later, the scholarship holder is obliged to keep track of the information published on the SAIA webpage (<https://www.saia.sk/en/news/covid-19-information-for-scholarship-holders/>) and if SAIA, n. o. will publish a recommendation not to travel, the scholarship holder is strongly advised not to travel to Slovakia. If he/she will decide to come to Slovakia in contradiction to the recommendation of SAIA, an exceptional support in case of problems connected to the Covid-19 situation as mentioned below (points B.3. – B.6.) shall not be applicable.
- B.3. We remind all scholarship holders who are currently in Slovakia that they are responsible for compliance with the conditions that entitle them to reside in Slovakia legally (e.g., to have valid visa or valid residence permit). In cases where the fulfilment of those legal obligations is to be endangered due to the exceptional situation caused by the measures against Covid-19 in Slovakia or abroad, it is necessary to follow guidelines published on SAIA webpage (<https://www.saia.sk/en/news/covid-19-information-for-scholarship-holders/>), or in individual cases we recommend to contact the respective programme administrator in order to identify the most appropriate solution for the specific situation. Since the administrator does not have a direct impact on decisions of the competent authorities, the administrator cannot be taken responsible either for the applied solution of the respective situation or for problems arising from such a solution.
- B.4. Scholarship holders to whom the scholarship intended to cover living costs in Slovakia is paid directly by SAIA, n. o.<sup>6</sup> and who will finish their scholarship stay in Slovakia<sup>7</sup> but at the same time won't be able to return to their home countries due to measures against the spread of COVID-19 (especially measures related to closing of borders and constant changes in the availability of the international transport including situations caused by an inadequate increase of transport prices<sup>8</sup>) are obliged to proceed as follows:
- a. the scholarship holder must ensure that his/her stay in Slovakia is legal (in accordance with law and regulations), otherwise the conditions of the whole paragraph B are not applicable,
  - b. scholarship holders who have been stranded in Slovakia and do not have any possibility to return to their home countries can apply for extension of their scholarship stay. A written request (e-mail) of the scholarship holder shall be addressed to the respective programme administrator and shall contain detailed explanation of the current situation and also documents confirming/supporting the case. Based on such written request from the scholarship holder, the programme administrator may extend the payment of the scholarship for one extra month if necessary (this will constitute increase in total amount of the scholarship in comparison to the originally approved amount). Such an extension may be done up to maximum of two times, exclusively during consecutive months.

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<sup>6</sup> Valid for scholarship holders within the National Scholarship Programme of the Slovak Republic, the CEEPUS Programme and the Action Austria-Slovakia.

<sup>7</sup> Scholarship holders whose scholarship financial support has been fully exhausted (scholarship stay has been formally completed) are covered by this measure.

<sup>8</sup> As an inadequate increase in transport prices, a price at least 4 times higher than the usual price before the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic is considered.

- B.5. The following rule may be applied to scholarship holders, who complete their scholarship stay in Slovakia<sup>9</sup> and to whom – in line with regular terms and conditions of the respective programme – SAIA reimburses travel expenses to the full extent or partially<sup>10</sup>, and at the same time those scholarship holders are not able to return to their home countries due to measures against COVID-19 spread in the world (especially measures related to closing of borders and constant changes in the availability of the international transport including situations caused by an inadequate increase of transport prices): if the caused travel expenses are higher than the originally granted lump sum, based on the real documented expenses the cost can be reimbursed up to the maximum limit set as the amount equal to the travel grant amount in accordance with the conditions of the National Scholarship Programme of the Slovak Republic valid from 2020<sup>11</sup> increased by twice the applicable rate; if the applicable rate is zero, the sum shall be increased twice by immediately following rate (i.e., the maximum limit is 500 €)<sup>12</sup>.
- B.6. If SAIA (in contrast to the point B.5.) normally does not reimburse travel expenses to scholarship holder (neither to the full extent nor partially) but administers the respective scholarship programme<sup>13</sup>, the above mentioned financial compensation (B.5.) may apply only if the travel expenses are not reimbursed by any other sources or in case that the travel expenses are normally reimbursed by SAIA, n. o.

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<sup>9</sup> Scholarship holders whose scholarship financial support has been fully exhausted (scholarship stay has been formally completed) are covered by this measure.

<sup>10</sup> Valid for scholarship holders in categories “student” and “PhD student” within National Scholarship Programme of the Slovak Republic.

<sup>11</sup> “Travel allowance amount depends on the distance (in a direct line) between applicant's place of residence and the place of his/her stay in Slovakia:

- distance up to 350 km – 0 €,
- distance more than 350 km, max. 2,000 km – 250 €,
- distance more than 2,000 km, max. 7,000 km – 500 €,
- distance more than 7,000 km – 1 000 €.

To calculate the distance, please, use the "Distance Calculator", provided by the European Commission for Erasmus+: [http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/tools/distance\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/tools/distance_en.htm).”

<sup>12</sup> This option may also be considered by scholarship holders who have returned home from Slovakia after 9 March 2020 and their stay has been clearly affected by the exceptional situation.

<sup>13</sup> Applicable in programmes CEEPUS and the Action Austria- Slovakia; in case of a scholarship within the National scholarship programme of the Slovak Republic this measure is applicable only for other categories of scholarship holders (i.e., university teachers, researchers/artists).