

[Executive Director of Fulbright Austria]
[address]

From: Signatories
Re: Fulbright Austria funding and petition for increase

Dear [Executive Director of Fulbright Austria],

This message concerns the present level of funding available for all Fulbright Austria grantees. Specifically, we are concerned that the level of grant support places some awardees below the Austrian poverty level.

Every year, as part of the EU-wide “EU-SILC” study, the Austrian federal statistical office computes the “at-risk-of-poverty threshold” (Armutgefährdungsschwelle), and uses it in national studies of poverty. It is defined as 60% of the median annual equivalised post-tax income (see Appendix 1 for definitions). Data for the last twelve years are below:

2021: 1,371€/month
2020: 1,328€/month
2019: 1,286€/month
2018: 1,259€/month
2017: 1,238€/month
2016: 1,185€/month
2015: 1,163€/month
2014: 1,161€/month
2013: 1,104€/month
2012: 1,090€/month
2011: 1,066€/month
2010: 1,031€/month

The at-risk-of-poverty threshold should be the floor for Fulbright grants. The 2021-2022 stipend for most full-time Student research grants is 1,050€/month, which is approximately 77% of the 2021 at-risk-of-poverty threshold, or just above the 2010 at-risk-of-poverty threshold. The at-risk-of-poverty threshold is likely to rise even before the planned raise of these Fulbright stipends to 1,150€/month starting in 2023-2024 – which is a laudable increase, but in this light, is simply not enough.

Fulbright Austria should immediately commit to paying all grantees, netto, at least the most recent at-risk-of-poverty threshold, now and every year going forward. This includes June pay for combined grantees; the 2022-2023 grantees even though they have already signed grant authorizations; and backpay for the 2021-2022 grantees, who, in light of rapid Austrian inflation, are in a financial emergency.

All future stipends should be pro-rated from the day of orientation (late September, before the grant officially starts October 1st), since even at the at-risk-of-poverty threshold, the Students are too financially precarious to live in-country for two weeks without pay. This can be accomplished through either a partial September stipend, or an increase to the travel grant.

Your partners,
[38 signatories]

Appendix 1:

The monthly at-risk-of-poverty threshold is one-twelfth of the median annual “equivalised income” (Äquivalenzeinkommen).

The “equivalized income” of a household is the total annual netto (post-tax) household income, divided by a certain number related to how many adults and children are in the household. This number is the sum of: 1 for the first adult (over 14 years old), 0.5 for each additional adult, and 0.3 for each child.

In particular, the monthly equivalised income of a single-adult household (this includes most Student grantees) is equal to one-twelfth of the annual netto income, i.e., is the right number to compare with the Fulbright stipends.

For more details, see [pp. 24-25 here](#) (in German).