

# ReThink.CEE Fellowship

## Building Next-Generation Policy Expertise

The ReThink.CEE Fellowship of the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF) is built on the conviction that a more resilient, democratic, and internationally engaged Central and Eastern Europe is not only possible but essential for the development of a prosperous and integrated Europe. By empowering new voices and channeling regional expertise into European and transatlantic policy debates and networks, the fellowship seeks to strengthen the intellectual foundations of a more cohesive and forward-thinking Europe.

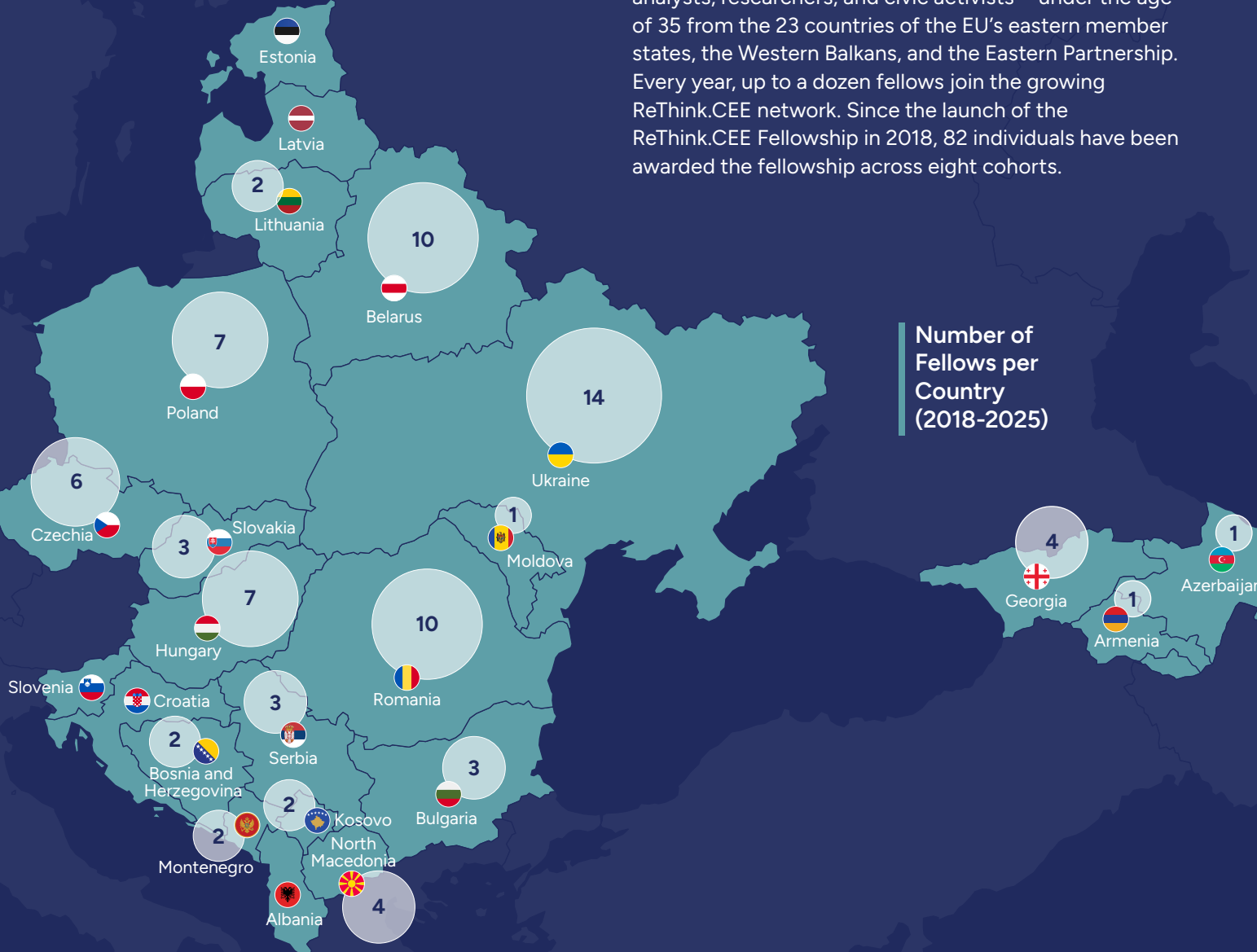
As Central and Eastern Europe faces mounting challenges to democracy, security, and prosperity, the countries of the region and their partners urgently need fresh thinking, ideas, strategies, and policies. The ReThink.CEE Fellowship is designed to generate such policy impulses by tapping the sizeable reservoir of next-generation policy experts, innovators, and thought leaders from the eastern members of the EU to the countries of the Eastern Partnership and the Western Balkans.

During a year-long non-residential fellowship, ReThink.CEE fellows identify, research, and analyze policy challenges in the region, and they develop ideas for responses by

regional and international stakeholders. Their results are published by GMF as policy papers. In this way, the ReThink.CEE Fellowship supports the development of regional expertise and amplifies its policy impact internationally.

Besides a stipend and travel and research funds, ReThink.CEE fellows are provided with professional opportunities, intellectual resources, and capacity-building to develop their analytical and policy skills, expertise, and public profile. Support includes workshops on policy research and writing, guidance from GMF peers, cooperation with GMF offices and networks, and assistance with media exposure.

The ReThink.CEE Fellowship is addressed to next-generation thought leaders—policy experts, analysts, researchers, and civic activists—under the age of 35 from the 23 countries of the EU’s eastern member states, the Western Balkans, and the Eastern Partnership. Every year, up to a dozen fellows join the growing ReThink.CEE network. Since the launch of the ReThink.CEE Fellowship in 2018, 82 individuals have been awarded the fellowship across eight cohorts.



Number of Fellows per Country (2018-2025)

### Thematic Areas:

 Democracy	 Good governance	 Civil society	 Minority rights
 Geopolitics	 Security and defense	 Trade	 EU Enlargement

# Fellowship Components

GMF's long-standing experience of working with think tanks and civil society organizations in Central and Eastern Europe proves that there is a sizeable reservoir of promising professionals in the region. Their rise and impact, however, is often hampered by limited opportunities and resources, and the lack of supportive local networks that would assist in developing their

skills. The ReThink.CEE Fellowship seeks to fill this gap and to support talented individuals in conducting creative and timely policy research. In doing so, it also strengthens the capacities of the think tank and civil society sectors of the region, and promotes high-quality, evidence-based policy thinking in addressing regional challenges.



Community building, 2022 cohort

## The ReThink.CEE Fellowship offers:

### Affiliation with a premier transatlantic think tank

For a one-year period, fellows are affiliated with GMF and gain access to its network of policy professionals, programs, and offices. Affiliation with GMF supports fellows in developing their international network and provides them with exposure to European and transatlantic policy debates.

### Individual mentoring

Individual mentoring plays a crucial role in the fellowship. Fellows are connected with mentors who provide personalized support and feedback on their individual policy research project and help with its conceptualization and design. This tailored approach creates a collaborative, empowering environment in which fellows can reflect on their work, tackle challenges, and benefit from the expertise of senior professionals in their respective fields.

### Community building

A core strength of the fellowship is the exchange among fellows from diverse national backgrounds. This interaction begins at an introductory workshop and is reinforced throughout the fellowship through regular engagement involving the ongoing cohort, ReThink.CEE alumni, and GMF staff. These opportunities for collaboration broaden fellows' perspectives and foster a sense of community.

### Alumni engagement

GMF maintains strong ties with ReThink.CEE fellows beyond their fellowship period through a growing alumni network, offering continued opportunities for professional engagement and collaboration, including mentoring new fellows as well as speaking and publication opportunities with GMF. This sustained engagement strengthens long-term connections across the think tank and civil society sectors of Central and Eastern Europe, fostering a more vibrant and cohesive policy exchange among the next generation of the region's experts.



Skill building workshop, 2023 cohort

### Skill-building via trainings

The fellowship provides fellows with opportunities to enhance their abilities in analysis, policy writing, communication, outreach, and advocacy. The skills gained through trainings help fellows strengthen their professional profile and provide them with valuable tools for continued development beyond the fellowship.

### Financial support

A stipend and a travel and research budget provide fellows the means to conduct fieldwork, to network with stakeholders, and to dedicate the necessary time to deliver a quality policy paper by the end of their fellowship.



ReThink.CEE fellows, 2024 cohort

# ReThink.CEE Policy Papers and Analyses

By the end of their fellowship, ReThink.CEE fellows produce an English-language policy paper addressing a key challenge facing Central and Eastern Europe. Throughout the fellowship, they receive ongoing writing and editorial support from a senior English-speaking editor, ensuring their work meets professional publication standards. The opportunity to develop a policy paper allows fellows to apply their newly acquired skills and strengthen their analytical portfolio.

To facilitate dissemination, ReThink.CEE fellows have the opportunity to present their findings in online debates with key figures in the policy community, which amplifies their voices and integrates their insights into international policy debates. GMF further supports the spread of ideas through its extensive outreach channels, including its mailing lists and social media platforms. These enhance fellows' visibility at the international, regional, and national levels, embedding them within relevant policy communities. In parallel, ReThink.CEE discussions and briefings reinforce the fellowship broader goal to elevate new regional perspectives and to position fellows as active and influential contributors to policy debates.



## Testimonials

The ReThink.CEE Fellowship has contributed to the career development of dozens of young think tankers and civil society experts from Central and Eastern Europe, who remain in GMF's extended network.



**Pavel Havlíček**  
(Czechia, 2019)  
Research Fellow,  
Association for International  
Affairs, Czechia

My experience with the GMF Rethink.CEE Fellowship in 2018–2019 was very positive and I would recommend it to starting researchers and professionals from across Central and Eastern Europe. What I really appreciated was the opportunity to pursue my own research interest under the roof of a reputable and widely known international institution as well as the time flexibility with which the research project was planned and designed for the year-long-collaboration. For me this was an important career step that opened new doors and access to the research and policy-oriented community working on democratization in Brussels and beyond, which helped me to build a network of contacts for future projects and cooperation. Finally, I really enjoyed working with GMF with which I am still not only in touch thanks to the alumni community, but also actively working on new initiatives related to Central and Eastern Europe as well as the wider Eurasia region.”

Further testimonials can be found on the website of the ReThink.CEE Fellowship at <https://www.gmfus.org/rethinkcee-fellowship>



**Edit Zgut-Przybylska** (Hungary, 2020)  
Assistant Professor, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the Polish  
Academy of Sciences, Poland

The Rethink.CEE Fellowship has been a transformative experience for me. It was essential for my policy analysis and my PhD research. The idea was to conduct interviews for my project on informal power in Hungary and Poland, and although I could hardly travel due to COVID-19 lockdown, the fellowship helped a great deal to maximize outreach. I wrote a comparative policy paper that eventually underpinned the empirical backbone of my PhD thesis. GMF brings together an exceptional

community of policy experts across disciplines and regions. Discussing my project with these fellows while being guided by the GMF team helped a great deal to strengthen my voice in the transatlantic policy community. We could not meet physically but our online meetings were always truly engaging. I got inspired by my colleagues, with whom I am collaborating to this day. My gratitude goes to GMF for making this happen.”



**Andrei Yeliseyev**  
(Belarus, 2018)  
Research Director,  
EAST Center

I had the honor to take part in the first edition of the ReThink.CEE Fellowship in 2018. I enjoyed the flexibility and analytical assistance from GMF-affiliated scholars that the program offered to its fellows. My topic was related to the Eurasian Economic Union, and thanks to the fellowship, I could carry out expert interviews with policymakers, academics, and analysts in each of the five EAEU countries. The ReThink.CEE Fellowship is a particularly useful investment of time for researchers who are planning to continue their career in the think tank sector.”



**Arta Haxhixhemajli**  
(Kosovo, 2023)  
Research Officer,  
Balkan Forum

I am grateful to have been the first person from Kosovo selected to participate in the ReThink.CEE Fellowship. I had the opportunity to expand my network and complete my policy paper on China's Digital Silk Road in the Western Balkans. The fellowship gave me the guidance and knowledge to understand and be part of something bigger. It is worth it to go for it and enhance your research skills. I am expressing my gratitude for making my journey possible and for giving me the privilege to be part of such an impactful and inspiring fellowship.”

## ReThink.CEE Fellowship Donor Contributions

Open Society Foundations

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