

# Elisabeth-Selbert-Initiative

## Call for Applications

### Human Rights Defenders Scholarship 2026

**Applications: From 5<sup>th</sup> of February to 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2026**

#### **The Program:**

The scholarship program aims to support human rights defenders (HRDs) residing in Germany in continuing their human rights engagement and is funded by the Federal Foreign Office.

It includes participation in networking opportunities and workshops, a monthly allowance to cover expenses related to human rights work, and, optionally, an internship with a human rights organization in Germany.

The workshops aim to deepen practical skills and knowledge relevant to human rights work and are conducted in English.

#### **Who can apply?**

Human rights defenders who were at risk in their countries of origin due to their peaceful engagement in the promotion and protection of human rights and who intend to continue contributing to human rights efforts in Germany.

#### **Further requirements for applicants**

- Residence in Germany since 2023, 2024, 2025, or 2026
- Admission to Germany under §22 or §23, or possession of recognized refugee status under §25 (paragraphs 1 or 2) of the Federal Residence Act (Aufenthaltsgesetz)
- Applicants who entered Germany with a residence permit for purposes other than protection (e.g. study or employment) may be considered on an exceptional basis and should submit substantiated references letter(s) from a person/organization working in the human rights field as part of their application.
- Good command of English (at least level B2), sufficient to actively participate in the program

#### **Benefits for participants**

- Networking opportunities
- Workshops and training on topics relevant to human rights work (e.g. communication, advocacy, networking, holistic security)
- Technical equipment is provided
- Monthly allowance for efforts related to human rights work (250 EUR)
- Exchange of experience and information with other HRDs
- Support in conceptualising and developing project ideas to address human rights challenges
- Coverage of travel and accommodation costs for in-person meetings in Berlin
- Optional: a short-term internship with a partner organization (subject to availability)

#### **Duration of the program:**

- **May 15 – November 15, 2026**

#### **Time Commitment**

- Participation does not require full-time commitment.

- Participants should be engaged in human rights work; the amount of time dedicated is, however, determined by the participant.
- Approximately 10 events are planned (eight online, two in person), ranging from 2.5 hours (online) to two and a half days (in person in Berlin). Participants are expected to attend meetings they are invited to.
- Internships (optional): up to two months and subject to availability; may take place from June to October.

### Registered with the Job Centre?

Participants who receive benefits from job centres remain registered and continue to receive those benefits without interruption. Participation in the program does not change the place of residence and does not prevent attendance of integration courses.

Job centres must be informed of participation in the scholarship program. The scholarship benefits do **not** replace job centre benefits, as they serve a different purpose. Should job centres have any questions regarding the program benefits, they can be directed to the Elisabeth-Selbert-Initiative.

### How to Apply

1. **Review the eligibility requirements** outlined above to ensure you meet them.
2. **Contact the ESI coordinators via email** and request access to the application platform at [esi-sondermodul@protonmail.com](mailto:esi-sondermodul@protonmail.com)
  - Access credentials will only be provided to applicants using a Protonmail account, to ensure end-to-end encryption. You can sign up for free at *Proton Mail: Sign-up*.
  - Please do not submit any personal application materials by email.
3. **Deadline to request access** to the application platform: **February 27, 2026, at 5:00 pm CET**
4. **Application deadline: 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2026**

Application forms on the platform must be submitted **no later than March 1, 2026**. Only complete applications can be considered.

### Selection Timeline

- March 1, 2026: Application deadline
- March 2026: Short interviews
- Mid-April 2026: Applicants are informed of the selection decision
- May 15, 2026: Program start
- November 15, 2026: Program end

**Contact:** [esi-sondermodul@protonmail.com](mailto:esi-sondermodul@protonmail.com)

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