

CENTRAL Leadership Program for graduate students and doctoral candidates

Core Phase – Summer School: 31 August – 20 September 2026

An intensive leadership program spanning, centered on a summer school with active participant contribution and alumni engagement throughout the academic year



Summer in the park © Jacqueline-Brandwayn on unsplash

CENTRAL Network

The CENTRAL Network is excited to announce grants for its new Leadership Program in summer 2026. Join us as we bring together top universities from Austria (University of Vienna), Poland (University of Warsaw), the Czech Republic (Charles University), Hungary (Budapest ELTE), and Germany (Humboldt-University Berlin). Additionally, for the CENTRAL Leadership Program, the CENTRAL universities also invite graduate students from the Andrassy University (Budapest), the Ivan-Franko University (Lviv) and the Ukrainian Catholic University (Lviv) to participate in the leadership program.

Leadership program highlights

The CENTRAL Leadership Program is an intensive, selective leadership program for outstanding graduate students and doctoral candidates from Central Europe. The program is centered around a three-week Summer School and combines academic content, regional expertise, and leadership development with a strong emphasis on active participation and contribution.

In this unique initiative, up to 30 master students and doctoral candidates (from all faculties and fields of study) take on an immersive journey through the region to explore Budapest, Vienna, Prague, Berlin and Warsaw. Participants gain invaluable insights into the diverse realms of economy, politics, diplomacy, society, and public service, fostering the skills and vision needed to drive the advancement of the Central European region.

The Summer School forms the core phase of the program and is complemented by preparatory and follow-up elements hosted both by the program staff and via participants' contributions. Participants engage with Central European politics, society, diplomacy, and public service while developing leadership skills relevant for complex, international environments.

Program funding and travel details

Participants in the program enjoy comprehensive support covering all program expenses across the five locations. This includes an Interrail Pass for train travel, accommodation, most lunches, special dinners, that are part of the program, and cultural activities. Individuals are responsible for their travel arrangements to and from the first (Budapest) and last (Warsaw) locations. While meals, other than program lunches and special dinners, are also self-funded, the program ensures coordination for an enriching experience. Please note that the accommodation will be shared (same sex) in some location and any upgrade or alternative hotel booking is handled by the participants themselves.

Who Can Apply

The CENTRAL leadership program seeks advanced graduate students or doctoral candidates with a minimum B2 level of English proficiency and a basic interest in Central European politics, history, and culture. This program is designed to equip participants for leadership roles in various fields such as society, economics, politics, or public service across Europe. Participation offers individuals a pathway to more effectively plan their career trajectories.

Participant Selection Procedure

The selection of participants is conducted independently by each partner university, employing equitable selection methods. Prospective participants are required to submit their CV and a motivation letter as part of the application process. Subsequently, their home university might arrange an interview. Key selection criteria encompass motivation for the program, affiliation with Central Europe, previous civic engagement and career objectives relating to the progress and leadership of the Central European region.

Applications are submitted centrally via Charles University (CU): <https://central-network.eu/CN-41.html>

Partner universities may advertise the call individually and at different times, starting from **15 February 2026**

Applicants are required to submit:

- A CV

- A motivation letter

Selection is conducted by the partner universities using transparent and equitable procedures. Shortlisted candidates may be invited to an interview by their home institution.

Application deadline: 31 March 2026

Preliminary Program Schedule:

Online kick off- June 25

| Summer school schedule CENTRAL Leadership Program 2026 | | | | | |
|---|-------|-----------|----------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|
| Day | | | | | |
| 1 | 30.8. | Sunday | Arrival Day - Travel to Budapest | 4 nights | program at university 3 days |
| 2 | 31.8. | Monday | Budapest | | |
| 3 | 1.9. | Tuesday | Budapest | | |
| 4 | 2.9. | Wednesday | Budapest | | |
| 5 | 3.9. | Thursday | Departure Day - Travel do Vienna | | |
| 6 | 4.9. | Friday | Vienna | 5 nights | program at university 4 days |
| 7 | 5.9. | Saturday | Vienna | | |
| 8 | 6.9. | Sunday | Vienna | | |

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|--------------|-----------|-----------|---|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| 9 | 7.9. | Monday | Vienna | | |
| 10 | 8.9. | Tuesday | Vienna, Departure Day - Travel to Prague | | |
| 11 | 9.9. | Wednesday | Prague | 5 nights | program at university 4 days |
| 12 | 10.9. | Thursday | Prague | | |
| 13 | 11.9. | Friday | Prague | | |
| 14 | 12.9. | Saturday | Prague | | |
| 15 | 13.9. | Sunday | Berlin, Departure Day - Travel to Berlin | | |
| 16 | 14.9. | Monday | Berlin | 4 nights | program at university 3 days |
| 17 | 15.9. | Tuesday | Berlin | | |
| 18 | 16.9. | Wednesday | Berlin | | |
| 19 | 17.9. | Thursday | Berlin, Departure Day - Travel do Warsaw | | |
| 20 | 18.9. | Friday | Warsaw | 3 nights | program at university 3 days |
| 21 | 19.9. | Saturday | Warsaw | | |
| 22 | 20.9. | Sunday | Warsaw, Departure Day back home | | |
| TOTAL | 22 | | | 21 nights | 16 days of program |

Best wishes

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