2026/27 MERCATOR-IPC FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM GUIDELINES

IPC | ISTANBUL POLICY CENTER
SABANCI UNIVERSITY
STIFTUNG MERCATOR INITIATIVE

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1. GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1 GOALS AND THEMATIC AREAS

The Mercator-IPC Fellowship Program, a key component of the Istanbul Policy Center-Sabancı University-Stiftung Mercator Initiative, is designed to create a dynamic and engaging environment for international scholars, journalists, professionals, and civil society activists. At its core, the program aims to strengthen academic, political, and social ties between Turkey and Germany, as well as Turkey and Europe, by supporting exceptional scientific research and practical policy work.

The program emphasizes the following thematic areas:

EU/German-Turkish relations
Climate change

Hosted by the Istanbul Policy Center (IPC), an independent policy research institute with global outreach located in downtown Istanbul, the program offers access to a rich network of academics, civil society activists, and decision makers. IPC, known for its mission to foster academic research with direct policy impact, provides a unique platform for sound academic research to shape hands-on policy work. Benefiting from its organic association with Sabancı University, IPC fellows enjoy an integral affiliation with the university throughout their fellowship. This affiliation grants them full access to Sabancı University's extensive intellectual resources and scientific knowledge, enriching their fellowship experience with a wealth of academic and research opportunities.

The Mercator-IPC Fellowship Program is based on the belief that knowledge acquisition and the exchange of ideas are vital for addressing the challenges of a globalized world. By supporting individuals who make significant contributions in these thematic areas, the program enhances research capabilities and contributes to innovative and objective analyses of key domestic and foreign policy issues.

1.2 TYPES OF FELLOWSHIPS AND REQUIREMENTS

Mercator-IPC Fellowships are predominantly, but not exclusively, granted to applicants from outside Turkey, especially from Germany.

Mercator-IPC Fellowships are granted to outstanding academics, journalists, practitioners, and professionals who have significant prior work experience. The fellows will be expected to work on academic or practical projects at IPC. A Master's degree (or equivalent) is required for this position, but a PhD is strongly preferred. Applicants without a PhD degree will only be considered if their work experience and expertise meet the program requirements according to the jury. Projects that focus on the German-Turkish nexus are likewise preferred. Applicants cannot apply for fellowships to fund their PhD dissertations.

Additionally, institutions from Germany/Europe whose areas of work overlap with the priorities of the Program are invited to nominate candidates for the Fellowship program.

Short-term visiting fellowships are also available to practitioners from Germany/Europe (i.e., policy experts, civil servants, civil society workers, advisors to MPs, and policy officers working in EU institutions). The minimum duration of this fellowship is one month.

Applications should include a proposal for an outreach strategy focusing on how the project results will be presented and discussed with policy makers, stakeholders, media, and/or the general public. Please note that a Coordination Team will be assisting you with the process of realizing your outreach strategy in terms of logistics and capacity. Unless fellows are required to travel to complete their individual research projects, they are encouraged to be physically present in Istanbul.

Mercator-IPC Senior Fellowships are granted to internationally renowned scholars and highly respected representatives of civil society or politics who have already made a significant contribution to German-Turkish or European-Turkish relations. Senior Fellowships have no specific format or duration. Senior Fellows are jointly chosen by the partners of the Istanbul Policy Center-Sabancı University-Stiftung Mercator Initiative. Candidates should have more than 10 years of academic or practical work experience as well as a distinct academic and

public profile. They are required to include a proposal in their application for a public outreach strategy focusing on how the project results will be presented and discussed with policy makers, stakeholders, media, and/or the general public.

1.3 APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Candidates who are applying for the fellowship are invited to submit their applications at one of two stages. The first stage is designed to provide applicants with feedback on their eligibility for the application but it is not obligatory. The applicants who do not have any questions on their eligibility can directly move to the final stage. In the first stage, applicants are required to submit the following documents before **March 9, 2026.**

a) A cover letter;

b) A completed application form;

c) A CV including a list of all publications.

Candidates applying at the first stage will receive notification of their eligibility from the Mercator-IPC Fellowship Program Team within two weeks of their submission. Eligible candidates will be invited to move on to the final stage, at which time they must submit the below-listed documents before **April 20, 2026.** Applicants who are sure of their eligibility and are applying in the final stage must also submit **all documents (a–h)** by this deadline.

d) Copies of relevant academic transcripts and/or diplomas (no translation needed);

e) A written proposal of the applicant's project. This proposal must include:

• Discussion of the research/project topic, relevant research questions/project objectives, and an explanation of the academic and political relevance of the project,

• An overview of the state of research or similar projects in the field,

• An overview of the theoretical and methodological approaches to be applied in the project (if relevant), and

• Key resources or background information related to the topic.

• The proposal should not exceed five pages (2 cm margin, 1.5 cell spacing, 12pt Times New Roman font).

f) A second written proposal for an outreach strategy focusing on how the project results will be presented and discussed with policy makers, stakeholders, media, and/or the general public. This proposal must include:

• An outline describing the outreach strategy's format and time frame,

• A description of the target group, political relevance, and predicted impact of the outreach strategy, and

• A budget plan and a list of possible partner institutions for outreach.

• The proposal should not exceed two pages (2 cm margin, 1.5 cell spacing and 12pt Times New Roman font). If the fellowship project described under section e) is of a practical nature and already contains a public outreach strategy, it is not necessary to attach a second proposal.

g) A timeline of the proposed project;

h) Two letters of recommendation from professors or employers.

The call for applications is sent out once a year. All applications must be submitted in the form of a single PDF document, and documents must be in English (incomplete applications will not be considered).

Candidates applying for the **short-term visiting fellowship** should submit the following documents:

a) A cover letter;

b) A CV;

c) A written proposal with a short description of a project designed for a public outreach strategy, including:

• An outline of the outreach's format and time frame,

• A description of the target group, political relevance, and predicted impact of the outreach strategy,

• A budget plan and a list of possible partner institutions for outreach.

*The proposal should not exceed two pages.

1.4 SELECTION PROCESS

Mercator-IPC Fellowships are predominantly, but not exclusively, granted to applicants from outside Turkey, especially from Germany.

All applications for Mercator-IPC Fellowship positions are evaluated according to formal criteria. Given the large volume of applications, initial selection is conducted by the IPC Director in close cooperation with the Fellowship Program Coordinator and is based on the applicant's academic and professional qualifications, as well as the relevance and innovative quality of the applicant's project proposal.

The fellows are selected based on the in-person interviews conducted by an international jury consisting of eminent experts from the two thematic areas.

The jury team is composed of jurors from both thematic areas. Subsequently, the jurors, IPC Director, and a representative of Stiftung Mercator convene for a final meeting to select the fellows. The following questions are essential to the jury's decision:

• Does the applicant possess the necessary academic and professional qualifications?

• Is the academic/practical project of scientific or political relevance to one of the two thematic areas?

• Will the project have an impact on EU/German-Turkish relations?

• Does the applicant have a connection or familiarity to German society?

• Does the project take into account already existing research and ongoing civil society activities in the field?

• Is the applicant's time frame realistic?

• Do the applicant's previous publications and work experiences demonstrate their expertise in the thematic area?

• Has the applicant made a proposal for a project designed for public outreach?

• Does the applicant have the necessary experience to guarantee the successful implementation of the project?

• Is the applicant's command of English and other languages sufficient to guarantee the successful implementation of the project?

Institutions should nominate candidates until March 9, 2026. Nominated candidates will proceed to the final stage of the application process where they will submit the required documents (items a to h mentioned above) and will be called for an interview.

There is no deadline for the **short-term visiting fellowship.** Applications can be submitted at any time throughout the year. The evaluation of the applicants will be first assessed by the partners of the Program, then selected applicants will be called for an interview. Each application will be assessed individually within six weeks of submission. For more information about short-term visiting fellowship, please refer to the Program Coordinator Dr. Pelin Oğuz (pelin.oguz@sabanciuniv.edu).

1.5 ACCEPTANCE AND REJECTION

Letters of acceptance and rejection are sent out immediately after a decision has been made. In principle, IPC does not elaborate on the reasons for rejecting an application. IPC has the right to keep all original application materials. All applicants must agree to the stated conditions. Applicants may re-apply with either the same or a different project proposal.

1.6 LOCATION

Fellows are based at IPC, which is located in Istanbul-Karaköy. IPC provides work space for the fellows as well as the fellowship's administrative staff. Additional work space and event venues are provided by Sabancı University at its campus in Istanbul-Tuzla. In contrast to regular Mercator-IPC Fellows, Senior Fellows are not required to be physically present during the entire duration of their fellowship.

1.7 DURATION

The general duration of the fellowship is six to twelve months. Applicants must state the intended duration of their fellowship on the application form. The final duration of individual fellowships is to be determined by the jury, who has the authority to reduce or extend the duration of fellowships.

The minimum duration of the short-term visiting fellowship is one month..

1.8 CODE OF CONDUCT

Fellowships are granted based on the information given in the application documents. Significant changes to the research/practical projects must be approved by the IPC Director in close cooperation with the Fellowship Program Coordinator.

Fellows pledge to work independently. They are responsible for meeting the time frame indicated on their application forms. In cases of significant delays that might affect the outcome of the project, the Fellowship Program Coordinator must be informed immediately.

Fellows are expected to carry out the following academic and public activities:

- Participate in and present their projects at academic seminars, workshops, and conferences;
- Regularly participate in and contribute to meetings organized by IPC;
- Publish academic and policy papers as well as journalistic pieces during their stay in Turkey;
- Reach out to Turkish, German, and international media and decision makers to promote their projects with the support of IPC's staff;
- Build strong and enduring networks with academics, civil society representatives, and policy makers.

1.9 EXTENSION

1.9.1 Extension of Mercator-IPC Fellowships

After filing a written application for extension, a project may be granted extension based on relevancy and need. Extensions must receive the consent of the partners of the Istanbul Policy Center-Sabancı University-Stiftung Mercator Initiative. An application for extension must contain the following documents:

- A written statement of purpose explaining the necessity of the extension;
- A written progress report not exceeding five pages;
- An updated timeline;
- A list of all activities, practical projects, and events the fellow has participated in or contributed to.

An additional travel allowance may be granted upon the decision of IPC's Director.

1.10 STATUTORY FRAMEWORK

Different procedures apply to each Mercator-IPC Fellow according to the country of registration for tax purposes. For further information please contact the Mercator-IPC Fellowship team.

1.11 GRANT

1.11.1 Base Amount

Mercator-IPC Fellows are granted a monthly net sum of up to EUR 2,700.

1.11.2 Travel Allowance

Fellowships include a research and travel allowance of up to EUR 1,500

1.11.3 Further Allowances

Fellows are not entitled to further personal allowances. However, at the discretion of the IPC Director, additional funding may be provided for the organization of events or publications

1.12 ANCILLARY INCOME

Mercator-IPC Fellows are expected to focus primarily on their research or practical project. As such, fellows commit to receiving external compensation for no more than five hours of work on average per week. Likewise, the amount of time spent on charitable causes should be limited. Applicants must inform the Fellowship Project Coordinator of any changes to their employment status.

1.13 RESIDENCE PERMIT

All non-Turkish fellows, irrespective of the duration of their fellowship, must obtain an offical work exemption document. Offical residence permit application is no longer required by Turkish authorities. If necessary, a representative from Sabancı University can assist the applicant during the process of applying for an official work exemption document.

1.14 ACCOMMODATION

Fellows are responsible for finding and paying for their own accommodation. If necessary, the Fellowship Program Coordinator can assist them in relocating.

1.15 REPORTS

All fellows must submit a written internal project report no more than one month after their stipend has expired. The report should include:

- A short outline of the research/practical project;
- An overview of the implementation process of the project;
- A discussion of the outcome of the project;
- A personal evaluation of its success;
- A description of the activities, events, and projects in which the fellow was engaged;
- Remarks on the obstacles and achievements of the project;
- An evaluation of the overall organization of the project and the performance of IPC staff.

The report should not exceed ten pages (2 cm margin, 1.5 spacing, 12pt Times New Roman font).

In addition to the internal project report, all fellows are expected to provide a written project summary discussing the results of their research or their practical project in the form of an output of their choosing, e.g., a project report, a website, a video, etc. IPC has the right to publish or use the project summary for means of public relations.

1.16 CERTIFICATES

Mercator-IPC Fellows may receive an official certificate of participation signed by the President of Sabancı University, the IPC Director, and an Executive Director of Stiftung Mercator upon the request of the fellow.

1.17 USAGE AND PUBLICATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

The Istanbul Policy Center-Sabancı University-Stiftung Mercator Initiative cares about the publication of the results of research and practical projects supported through its funds. Accordingly, the IPC Director may provide fellows with additional grants to organize events or create publications. If the results of research/practical projects are published by a third party, such as academic journals, books, newspapers, etc., it is requested that fellows mention their affiliation with the Istanbul Policy Center-Sabancı University-Stiftung Mercator Initiative and its fellowship program.

The logos of the Istanbul Policy Center-Sabancı University-Stiftung Mercator Initiative and its individual partners, Istanbul Policy Center, Sabancı University, and Stiftung Mercator, are protected by copyright law. None of the logos of the institutions stated in the above sentence can be used without the approval of the concerned party.

2. GENERAL REGULATIONS

Acceptance of the general guidelines of the Mercator-IPC Fellowship Program by each fellow is a precondition for entitlement to the scholarship. In the unlikely event of a violation of the general guidelines, the IPC Director has the right to totally or partially annul the fellowship. The application may be annulled if false information is given during the application process, if a significant violation of the fellowship guidelines occurs, or if the fellow has not delivered upon the promised outputs as outlined in their project proposal. Furthermore, the fellowship may be annulled if the fellow is deemed to have violated international academic standards, for example, by plagiarizing, or if the fellow has violated Turkish or international law. If a fellow is deemed to have acted against the fundamental principles of democracy, liberty, pluralism, or human rights, the IPC Director has the authority to immediately terminate the fellowship.

The monthly stipend is suspended immediately after the annulment of a fellowship. If the fellow has lied or falsified information in order to gain acceptance to the program, the organizers of the program have the right to reclaim the monthly payments made.

Sabancı University has the sole right to modify the general guidelines of the Mercator-IPC Fellowship Program with the approval of Stiftung Mercator and the IPC Director. Fellows will be informed of any changes to the general guidelines as soon as possible.

The general guidelines of the Mercator-IPC Fellowship Program are in accordance with Turkish law. The exclusive place of jurisdiction is Istanbul.

3. FURTHER INFORMATION

Istanbul Policy Center - http://ipc.sabanciuniv.edu

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