

What zis offers

Young people of all nationalities between 16 and 20 can apply for a zis grant. The money is intended for a self-organized study trip.

The zis foundation in Salem, Germany, makes a unique offer to young people between 16 and 20 years of age: They can obtain a grant of 500 Euro for a study trip to a foreign country (as of 2007, please check the zis website for the current sum in later years). Away from the paths of mass tourism, the zis participants research a self-chosen topic. They get a realistic impression of the daily life abroad and deep insights into a different society. They return with a deeper understanding of a formerly strange culture. At the same time, all zis participants learn about themselves and their own roots.

The zis grant is more than money. An intensive time of preparation and documentation before and after travelling ensures success and safety and commitment. Every participant has a personal adviser who helps organize the trip via e-mail. Most of these volunteers are former participants and have expertise in the topics or destinations they take care of. A jury evaluates the project reports, qualified feedback is guaranteed.

The choice of destination and topic is generally free. Young people who are not German citizens and who are not residents of Germany are welcome to travel to Germany. Transport by plane is not allowed according to the zis rules, and zis will not sponsor trips to regions of warfare or violent ethnic conflicts. The only thematic restriction is the zis principle not to support projects which are prone to lead the participants into criminal milieus.

Participants must be between 16 and 20 years old when they set off. Educational background plays no role – with one exception: participants must not yet attend university. Applicants should be aware that they need enough time for preparation and documentation as well as at least four weeks for the journey itself. As all costs related to the project (including all transfers from and to home) have to be covered with the grant, everyone can apply.



At least 40 zis grants are available every year. Applicants with a good plan, healthy self-awareness, and real commitment have a fair chance of getting the opportunity of a once-in-a-lifetime adventure.

What matters at zis

The conditions of a zis grant are chance and challenge at the same time. They require curiosity, imagination, and commitment.



For more than 50 years, zis journeys have been undertaken with the same rules. They may seem hard, but the limitations of the grant are chance and challenge at the same time. The conditions ensure an immediate encounter with a topic, a foreign country and the own personality. After their journeys, participants say it were just the zis conditions that made it all possible.

zis journeys are undertaken alone.

When travelling alone, young people experience their environment intensively. They learn to assess and to use their talents and abilities. zis participants are flexible in their plans and open to new encounters. At the same time, they get to know their identities, their goals and values. On a zis trip, young people learn of the difference between loneliness and being alone.

zis journeys are paid with the grant alone.

It takes quite some imagination to cover all travel expenses including transfer from and to home with the grant alone. The sum is deliberately low as this forces the participants to improvise and to compromise. Not all wishes will become true on a zis journey. But the participants learn that the best experience cannot be bought with money.

zis journeys last four weeks at least.

Looking below the surface requires time. Research within the zis framework will only be successful if participants meet a great number of people, if they can spend enough time with their contacts and if they can thoroughly study sites and places. So far, literally every zis topic has provided enough ideas and work for four weeks of research.

zis participants hand in a study report, a diary and a statement.

It's nice when young people see a lot. But it is better when they reflect on what they saw. The zis rules force to structure thoughts and feelings after returning. In their study reports (8000 words at least), participants make the connection between their personal experience and the cultural or scientific framework. The zis diaries serve to narrate the events and to examine the effects the journey has on the own knowledge or values. All written work has to be handed in within three months after return in German or English.

What others did with zis

The zis grant is a framework for projects as individual as the young people who venture abroad and start their research.



The most different projects have already been carried out with a zis grant. The following examples are not intended as a list to choose from but to give an idea of the bandwidth concerning topics and destinations:

- Consequences of the Prestige disaster in Galicia, Spain
- Lavender in Provence, France
- Rowing in Great Britain
- Traditional crispbread production in Sweden
- Culture and lifestyle of the Rastafarians in Paris
- Reviewing of the Civil War in Spain
- Information technology in Latvia
- Religion in the former German Democratic Republic
- Tracking the Tour de France
- Gaelic in Scotland: A language with a future?
- Contemporary art on Malta
- The life of working women in Morocco
- Animal protection in Germany
- The Solidarnosc movement in Gdansk today
- Sustainable Tourism on the coast of Croatia
- Franz Kafka's work in modern Prague
- The pilgrimage to Rome today



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An application for a zis grant is promising if it convincingly conveys a realistic plan and personal interest in the topic proposed.

For an application, candidates have to complete the zis form. It can be downloaded from the zis website. E-mail-account and regular access to the internet are indispensable for preparing the journey and for communication with zis. All papers can be handed in in English or German and must be sent by conventional mail. In addition to the application form, zis requires:

- an extensive description of the suggested research topic that shows the applicant's personal interest and his or her existing knowledge
- realistic information on language abilities
- concrete ideas on how to do research before and during the journey
- outline concerning dates of departure and arrival, itinerary, and means of transport (no travel by plane)
- budget plan – all costs have to be covered with the grant
- if more money is needed than the grant sum: ideas on how to earn money in the study area (during the journey, not before or after)
- summary on existing contacts within the study area
- suggestions on how to find accommodation
- photograph of the applicant
- reference from a teacher, instructor or project manager

Deadline (documents at the zis office) for every year is February 15.

Applicants will be informed by the middle of March if they are in the next round. After that, the applicant will, supported by his or her adviser, further develop the project. The definite assent to the grant will be given by the adviser once the journey is fully planned, manageable and safe. zis reserves the right to refuse grants if applicants or their projects do not meet the requirements at any state of the preparation phase.



The zis programme has been unchanged for 50 years: It empowers young people and bridges the gaps between nations and cultures.



Talented young people need a challenge: This was the basic idea of French architect and industrial leader, Jean Walter (1883-1957). After a successful professional life, he regarded a journey to Istanbul he had undertaken with only 16 years of age as essential for his personal progress. Walter believed that cultural exchange, a clear purpose and the experience of being in need of help were crucial for fostering personalities who are ready for actively taking over responsibility. Jean Walter dedicated his fortune to the aim that other young people might make the same experience he once had made himself. His foundation, named Zellidja after a patch of Land in Algeria where Walter found rich resources, still awards travel grants in France.

In 1956, the pedagogues Prince George Wilhelm of Hanover, Marina Ewald, and Jacques Doucet adopted the programme to Germany and based it in the prestigious Schule Schloss Salem. From the very beginning, the bursaries were open to young people from all social and educational backgrounds and from all nationalities. Today, the German programme is being organized and financed by the zis Stiftung für Studienreisen (zis Foundation for Travel Grants). It is a registered charity according to German Law.

In the past 50 years, almost 1500 young people undertook a zis trip according to the rules of the foundation and its predecessors. Since Jean Walter's days, young people commit themselves to a framework that creates opportunities for unique experience, personal gain, and successful research. As every zis journey is a small but sustainable contribution to a peaceful encounter between nations and cultures, the programme runs under the auspices of the German commission for UNESCO.

zis is funded mainly by donations from private friends. Former participants make crucial contributions in form of money and of voluntary work as advisers to the participants and as members of the jury. They all share the conviction that an increasingly globalized world needs a young generation with well-reflected courage, personal integrity, and intercultural experience.



See yourself.

The zis Foundation offers travel grants for young people