

## 12 SPECIAL FUND OPERATING RULES

The Special Fund is an item in the operations budget of the World Road Association (PIARC). It exists to facilitate participation of members from developing countries and countries in transition in the activities of the Association, especially Technical Committee activities. It aims to cover part of travel or accommodation expenses for participation in meetings, seminars or Congresses organised by the Association, **as long as the benefiting Government's annual subscription fees are up to date.**

The Special Fund must help to reflect the whole range of member countries in the activities of the Association; the objective being to have a balanced representation across continents and regions. Technical Committees are encouraged to use the Special Fund to strengthen the participation of members from developing countries.

The eligibility criterion for benefiting from the Special Fund is to belong to a country classified as "*Low-income economies*" and "*Lower-middle-income economies*" by the World Bank. The list of eligible countries is annually updated by the General Secretariat from the document entitled "World Development Indicators", published by the World Bank (see Appendix E.1).

Article 72 of the Association's Internal Rules states that the operating rules for the Special Fund are approved by the Executive Committee.

### 12.1 Operating rules for 2012-2015

The General Secretariat manages the Special Fund according to the operating rules set in the Blue Guide and reports annually to the Finance Commission.

Subject to the eligibility criterion, a member country can ask to benefit from the Special Fund for participation of:

- one delegate to the meetings of the Council,
- elected members to the meetings of the Executive Committee and Commissions;
- up to 3 members of Technical Committees to the meetings of these Committees,
- one representative to seminars and other events organized by the Association, in the absence of a member of the country to Technical Committees involved in these events and provided the topic is of interest to the country.

In the case of the World Road Congress, the Council of the Association votes special arrangements for the use of the Special Fund on this occasion.

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The beneficiary of the Special Fund may request the funding of either 100% of travel expenses or 100% of accommodation expenses directly linked to the participation in the PIARC meeting for which the request is made. The following terms apply:

- air tickets: beneficiaries are expected to travel in economy class only and seek the lowest fare whenever possible (no refund will be made for other classes);
- luxury hotels should be excluded; refunds will be made based on the meeting duration.

These conditions are detailed in section 12.2.

The General Secretariat is entitled to limit the reimbursements according to these principles.

### **12.2 Practical arrangements**

#### **12.2.1 Member of a Technical Committee**

At the beginning of the 2012-2015 cycle, the First Delegate, the beneficiary and the PIARC Secretary General sign an agreement (see model in Appendix E.2). Once the agreement is signed, the Technical Committee member is not expected to contact the First Delegate every time he/she applies for funding from the Special Fund in order to participate in a meeting of his/her Technical Committee.

After each meeting in which the beneficiary participates with Fund's help, the beneficiary must present a report to the First Delegate and to the National Committee of his/her country if there is one; a copy should be sent to the General Secretariat of the Association. The agreement is a moral commitment.

The beneficiaries must be able to participate actively and on a regular basis in the Technical Committee's activities for the entire four-year period. Otherwise, the benefit from the Special fund can be denied by the General Secretariat of the Association.

#### **12.2.2 Other cases**

In cases other than the case described in 12.2.1, the request should in all cases be presented to the PIARC General Secretariat with a written agreement of the First Delegate.

#### **12.2.3 Allocation of a prepaid ticket or reimbursement of expenses**

##### Time notice to submit a request for a prepaid air ticket

If the request concerns the cost of travel and this request is made to PIARC *at least six weeks before the date of the meeting*, PIARC will ensure that the beneficiary is provided with a prepaid ticket once the questions of visa are cleared.

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For each request:

- The applicant should send a form (see Appendix E.3) providing information proposing flexible dates of travel and an itinerary including the name of the airline companies and the proposed costs. In order to fill this form, the applicant should make a preliminary enquiry about the possibility of a journey with cheap air fares;
- Tickets must always be *in economy class and for fixed dates* (no modifications, no refunds);
- The travel should, in general, comprise one Saturday to Sunday night (or Sunday to Monday depending on the country) abroad in order to benefit from low airfares;
- PIARC will buy tickets on commercial airlines and not charter companies.

It is reminded that the Association will *not modify the date/time of a prepaid air ticket, even in the case of delay in the issuance of visas*. The purpose is to avoid the Association having to pay penalties, extra fares and also to avoid cancellation of a ticket paid by the Association. This rule will be *strictly applied* so as to guarantee the optimal use of the Special Fund for the benefit of the largest number of beneficiaries. It is therefore strongly recommended to the applicant-beneficiary to start the visa application process at least at the same time as his/her application for Special Fund funding. This will allow taking into account the time needed for issuing the visa in the organization of the trip applied for.

An "express refund" process will be proposed to the beneficiary/applicant when the visa application process turns out to be complex or when the time needed for issuing the visa is uncertain (this can be the case when the destination country has no diplomatic representation in the country of residence of the beneficiary/applicant).

### Refund process of air tickets or accommodation

If the request is made to PIARC less than six weeks before the meeting or if the request is in relation to reimbursement of accommodation costs, the reimbursement will occur after the meeting by transferring funds to the bank account of the beneficiary or to their administration, determined by the information provided by the First Delegate. Before confirming and paying for the ticket or accommodation, the applicant/beneficiary must beforehand provide information to the General Secretariat on the estimated cost of the flight ticket or accommodation. The General Secretariat shall then validate the amount to be reimbursed.

In the case of a request for travel costs, the applicant should send the form (annex E.2) to PIARC. The applicant will be responsible for ordering and paying for their own tickets. The subsequent reimbursement will be limited to the value of the cheapest air tickets that could have been purchased if the request had been presented more than 6 weeks before the start of the journey.

### Express refund process

In case of complex visa issuing process, and in order to provide flexibility to the beneficiary/applicant to set optimal travel dates, the General Secretariat may propose him/her an "express refund" process. As soon as the visa is issued and the ticket purchased by the applicant, he/she is expected to forward the ticket receipt and visa receipt to the General Secretariat, who will then proceed to the bank transfer of the related amount, before the beneficiary/applicant returns from his/her meeting. The subsequent reimbursement will be limited to the value of the cheapest air tickets that could have been purchased if the request had been presented more than 6 weeks before the start of the journey.