

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Support for the development of Fact-Checking units

GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

Closing date and time for reception of applications:

10/08/2023 at 5:30 pm (GMT+01:00 Paris, Brussels, Copenhagen, Madrid).

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1. DEFINITIONS

Activities	Refers to the tasks (work program) that must be completed to achieve the expected results.
Applicant	Refers to the entity with legal personality that applies to CFI for a Grant under this Call for Proposals. If the Grant is awarded, the Applicant becomes the Recipient.
Application File	Refers to the set of documents that must be returned to CFI as part of the application: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annex 1: The Project Presentation Note; • Annex 2: Project Budget Estimate; • Annex 3: Application Form,
Application Form	Refers to the Applicant Information Form to be completed and signed by the Applicant and presenting the information of all parties forming the Recipients. This document is attached as Annex 3 to these Guidelines.
Call for Proposals	Refers to the present process of competitive evaluation by CFI of the Applicants, based on the Guidelines that set out objectives to be achieved, leaving the content and implementation to them, in order to award one or more Grants.
CFI	Refers to the entity initiating this Call for Proposals which will award the Grants. Its corporate name is: TRANSTELE CANAL FRANCE INTERNATIONAL.
Eligible Costs	Refers to the costs actually incurred by the Recipients, included in the budget submitted and approved, as well as lump sum costs approved by CFI in the budget allocated to the Recipients.
Estimated Budget	Means the estimated budget for the total costs of the Project Activities proposed by the Recipients. It shall be prepared in accordance with Annex 2.
Grant(s)	Refers to the financial assistance granted to the Recipients by CFI. This financial assistance is materialized in the form of donation and is framed by a Grant Agreement concluded between CFI and the Recipient.
Main Project	Refers to the Project led by CFI in which this Call for Proposals is included.
Project	Refers to the Recipients' project which includes all the Activities, with human, technical and financial resources, that the Recipients wish to

	implement in order to achieve one or several objectives.
Project Presentation note	Refers to the document in which the Applicants' proposed Project is fully described. This document is attached as Appendix 1 to these Guidelines.
Recipients	Refers to all Applicants who will be selected under this Call for Proposals and who, as such, will be awarded a Grant and technical support.

2.CONTEXT

2.1.Presentation of CFI



**Agence française de développement des médias - CFI
(Transtélé Canal France International)
62 rue Camille Desmoulins
92132 Issy-les-Moulineaux**

CFI, the French media development agency, is the operator in charge of implementing the French official development assistance policy in the media sector. CFI's mission is to support public and private media actors (television, radio, print, and online media) in North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and Asia, so that they can play their role in supporting good governance and development policies in their respective countries. CFI also works alongside civil society actors committed to pluralist and democratic information and to the promotion of sustainable development.

CFI is an operator of the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs and a subsidiary of the France Médias Monde group.

The present Call for Proposals covers the need to support the teams of the Mediterranean-Asia Department within the framework of the implementation of the Main Project "Combating disinformation in the Western Balkans" financed by the European Union (FPI).

2.2.Context for this Call for Proposals

Due to recent developments, the phenomenon of disinformation, already considered endemic throughout the Western Balkans, is increasing. The study of the region's media landscape from 2018 to 2022 revealed four key disinformation challenges: (1) antipathy toward the EU and frustration around the accession process; (2) revived nationalist narratives; (3) disinformation about international conflicts; and (4) the increasing use (and influence) of disinformation around elections and referenda.

In this context, **CFI is implementing an 18-month EU-funded Project**, to be deployed in Serbia, Kosovo*, Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina aiming to promote media capacity building in fact-checking and increase the accountability and reliability of print, broadcast, online media and CSOs.

3. PURPOSE OF THIS CALL FOR PROPOSALS

3.1. Objectives and priorities

The overall objective of this Call for Proposals is to improve media capacity to fight against disinformation and the spread of false information in the Western Balkans.

The specific objectives of this Call for Proposals are:

- Supporting the development and strengthening of the production of fact-checking units/activities by media in the region
- Strengthening the supply and accessibility of fact-checking content for the region's audiences, particularly, but not exclusively, youth.
- Supporting the sustainability of fact-checking units/activities by the region's media

The priority(s) of this Call for Proposals are:

- The reinforcement through equipment and services of the media engaged in the structuring and development of fact-checking units, contributing to the reinforcement of the editorial work of the newsrooms
- Technical capacity building of journalists in the structuring and editorial development of fact-checking units
- Support for the sustainability of the units/fact-checking activity by the media in the region

3.2. Amount of the financial envelope made available by CFI

The overall indicative amount made available under this Call for Proposals is EUR 210,000. CFI reserves the right not to allocate the total amount available.

Any Grant requested under this Call for Proposals must be between the following minimum and maximum amounts:

- Minimum amount: EUR 20,000
- Maximum amount: EUR 40,000

In the framework of this Call for Proposals, the direct grant may cover the entire Eligible Costs of the action, within the limits of the grant ranges mentioned above.

A maximum of 6 applications will be selected.

3.3. Technical support provided by CFI

All Recipients will receive technical support from CFI. This will take the following form:

- Training with local and international speakers on the challenges and know-how of developing Fact-checking units

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

- Personalized support/mentoring by local and international experts specific to the challenges of the Beneficiary's Project (editorial development, audience development, journalistic work, etc.) This support will be defined with the Beneficiary following their selection.

4. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

4.1. Eligibility criteria for the Applicants

In order to candidate to this Call for Proposals, the Applicants must answer to the following criteria:

- Be a legal entity with a bank account registered in the name of the company;
- This call is opened for media, independent journalists and fact-checkers
- Be directly in charge of the preparation and execution of the Project proposed in the framework this Call for Proposals;
- Have been legally and physically established in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro or Serbia for at least three (3) years;
- To not be bankrupt and have no criminal conviction
- To not be a member of the Main Project consortium

For media:

- Have five (5) contractual employees (may be part-time) and an annual turnover of at least 20 000 EUR

4.2. Eligibility criteria for the Activities

4.2.1. Length

The selected Projects must take place between 15/09/2023 and 14/04/2024.

The initial planned duration of the selected Projects cannot be less than five (5) months nor exceed seven (7) months.

4.2.2. Geographic coverage

The proposed Projects must be implemented in one or more of the following countries:

- Bosnia-Herzegovina
- Kosovo*
- Montenegro
- Serbia

4.2.3. Sectors and themes

The Project must aim at improving the veracity of information at the local and regional level, by strengthening fact-checking units through:

- Communication, consultation and sustainable partnership with regional and international media, professional networks
- Modernization of journalistic production/editing/fact-checking tools
- Support for the quality, certification and standardization process
- Training in fact-checking, open-data, and journalistic fields relevant to the call
- Strengthening of publication tools / visibility to audiences (e.g. online presence)

4.2.4. Types of Activities

The actions that can be financed under this Call for Proposals are of three types:

- Intangible investments
- Tangible investments
- Collective and collaborative actions

These actions must be strictly linked to the activity of the fact-checking units and to the fact-checking work of the editorial staff/media. They are broken down into the following types of Activities or types of eligible expenses:

Intangible investments	Tangible investments	Collective and collaborative actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ICT (software, online software solutions, database access...) - Standardization and certification actions and quality control - Qualification/training of human resources - Marketing/advertising and communication/visibility actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Purchase of the necessary equipment for the investigation/production - IT equipment - Fitting out of the fact-checking units 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of thematic guides and trainings for internal and/or external purposes - Research with the academic sector/CSOs - Collective advocacy actions on access to information / transparency - Study tours - Other logistical costs related to the collaboration with third party media, CSOs, universities or schools

The Human resources directly necessary and allocated to the investigation are eligible (salary during the investigation and production).

The human resources directly linked to the management of the Grant are eligible under the conditions in 4.3.2.b.

4.3. Eligibility criteria for the costs

Only the Eligible Costs may be covered by the Grant. The budget is both an estimation of the costs and the limit of the Eligible Costs.

4.3.1. Eligible direct costs

The Eligible direct costs must answer to the following criteria:

- a) They are incurred during the implementing period of the Project except for the final audit costs. Furthermore:
 - (i) The furniture costs must only regard the delivery and set-up of materials during the implementation period;
 - (ii) The costs presented in the final financial report must have been paid for before the submission of said report. In case of insufficient treasuries, well justified, they may be paid for later, as long as they are mentioned in the final report, with the payment date.
- b) They are mentioned in the budget submitting in the Application File;
- c) They are necessary to the proper execution of the Activities;

- d) They are identifiable and verifiable, are written in the accounting of the Recipient and determined following the accounting norms applicable in the Recipient's establishment country and the usual practices of the Recipient regarding analytical accounting;
- e) They follow the fiscal and social regulations applicable;
- f) They are reasonable, justified and respect the principle of good financial management, specifically regarding the economy, the efficiency and the procurement rules for which the process implemented by the Recipients may be applied.

4.3.2. Budget rules for the direct Eligible Costs

The procurement procedure is described in the Annex 1: Financial Guidelines

- a) For all purchases of services and purchases in excess of €5,000 excluding VAT (five thousand euros excluding VAT), competitive tendering of service providers/suppliers and the production of three (3) quotations will be required.
- b) The human resources allocated to the Project may not exceed 40% of the total Eligible Costs of the Project.
- c) If the grant requested is equal or exceeds €40,000, an external financial audit must be included in the budget.

4.3.3. Eligible indirect costs

Indirect costs incurred during the implementation of the Project may be eligible for flat-rate funding, up to a maximum of 7% of the estimated total of eligible direct costs. Indirect costs are eligible as long as they do not include costs included under another heading of the budget. No supporting documents are required to justify the use of indirect costs granted.

4.3.4. Ineligible costs

The following costs are not eligible:

- Debt and debt expenses (interest);
- Provisions for possible future losses or debts;
- Costs declared by the Recipient and financed by another action or program;
- Purchases of land or buildings;
- Exchange losses;
- Credits to third parties;
- Performance-related bonuses included in staff costs
- Taxes, including VAT, unless the Recipient is able to produce a certificate justifying that it does not benefit from an exemption or other exception allowing it to recover VAT from the administration concerned and only in cases where the VAT to be paid was not included in the amounts described in the budget submitted to CFI.

5. APPLICATION FORM

5.1. Content of the Application Form

Applications must be submitted in accordance with the instructions in these Guidelines. An Application Package must contain:

- Annex 1: Project Presentation Note ;
- Annex 2: Estimated Budget of the Project;
- Annex 3: Application Form.

In order to be considered complete, the Application Form must contain the 3 documents mentioned above.

Handwritten applications will not be accepted.

Applications must be submitted in English.

CFI reserves the right to request clarification if the information provided does not allow for a complete evaluation.

5.1.1. Presentation of the Project Presentation Note

The Project must be presented according to the "Project Presentation Note" template attached to these Guidelines (Annex 1).

5.1.2. Presentation of the provisional budget

The Estimated Budget of the Project must be presented according to the "Estimated Budget" model attached to these Guidelines (Annex 2). The Estimated Budget must be established in accordance with the provisions of Article 4.3..

5.1.3. Presentation of the Application Form

The Application Form must be submitted in accordance with the "Application Form" template attached to these Guidelines (Appendix 3). The Application Form must be signed.

It must contain the legal registration document and the Applicant's bank details.

5.2. Additional information

To obtain any additional information on the process or on the Guidelines documents, Applicants should send a timely request via CFI's platform.

Applicants may submit questions no later than ten (10) calendar days prior to the application deadline of 31/07/2023.

CFI will respond to these questions and send responses no later than five (5) calendar days prior to the application deadline of 05/08/2023.

5.3. How to submit an Application

The complete Application Forms will be transmitted and must reach their destination before the deadline indicated on the cover page of these Guidelines. The reference time zone will be (GMT+01:00) Paris, Brussels, Copenhagen, Madrid.

Applications must be submitted on CFI's Platform.

6. SELECTION OF APPLICATIONS

Applications will be reviewed and evaluated by CFI with the possible assistance of external assessors. All Applications will be evaluated according to the steps and criteria described below.

If the review of the Application reveals that the proposed Project does not meet the eligibility criteria set forth in these Guidelines, the Application will be rejected on that basis only.

6.1. STEP 1: Opening and administrative verification

At the opening and administrative verification stage, the following elements will be evaluated:

- Compliance with the deadline and format of the Application Packet. Failure to do so will result in automatic rejection of the Application Package;
- Compliance with all criteria in the checklist on the Application Form. If any of the requested information is missing or incorrect, the Application may be rejected on that basis alone and will not be evaluated.

Project Submission Notes that pass this check will be evaluated on the relevance and design of the proposed Project.

6.2. STEP 2: Evaluation of the Project Presentation Note and Budget

The Project Presentation Notes will be given an overall score out of 100 points, broken down according to the evaluation grid below. The evaluation will also verify compliance with the instructions on how to complete the Project Presentation Note. The evaluation criteria will be used to assess the quality of the Application Packages in relation to the objectives and priorities set out in the Guidelines and to award Grants to Projects.

1. Relevance of the Project	Subnote	[20]
<p>1.1 How relevant is the proposed topic to the objectives and priorities of the Call for Proposals, to the specific themes/sectors/areas, or to any other specific requirements mentioned in the Guidelines for Applicants? Do the expected results of the Project meet the priorities established in the Guidelines for Applicants?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The reinforcement through equipment and services of the media engaged in the structuring and development of fact-checking units, contributing to the reinforcement of the editorial work of the newsrooms - Technical capacity building of journalists in the structuring and editorial development of fact-checking units - Support for the sustainability of the units/fact-checking activity by the media in the region 	[10]	
<p>1.2 To what extent is the subject relevant to the identified needs of the media and its audience and to the constraints of its environment? In what way does it propose a new editorial axis?</p>	[5]	

1.3 Does the Project contain elements that have a particular added value (for example, in terms of journalistic innovation or good practices)?	[5]	
2. Project design	Subnote	[25]
2.1 How coherent is the overall design of the Project? Does the Project indicate the results it is expected to achieve? Does the intervention logic explain the rationale for the expected outcomes?	[5]	
2.2 Does the design reflect a sound analysis of the existing problems, as well as the capabilities of the stakeholders involved?	[7]	
2.3 Does the design take into account external factors (risks and assumptions)?	[5]	
2.4 Are the Activities feasible and consistent with the expected results (including timeframe)? Are the results (outputs, outcomes, and impact) realistic?	[5]	
2.4 To what extent does the Project take into account relevant cross-cutting issues, such as environmental/climate change issues, promotion of gender equality and equal opportunities, needs of persons with disabilities, minority and indigenous rights, youth?	[3]	
3. Implementation approach		[15]
3.1 Is the action plan for the implementation of the Project clear and feasible?	[10]	
3.2 Does the Project include an effective and efficient monitoring system? Is an evaluation planned (before, during and/or at the end of implementation)?	[5]	
4. Sustainability of the Project		[15]
4.1 Is the Project likely to have a tangible impact on fact-checking journalists? on audiences?	[5]	
4.2 Is the Project likely to have multiplier effects, including the possibility of replication, extension, learning and sharing of knowledge: with other media? with CSOs? with the general public?	[5]	
4.3 Are the expected results of the Project sustainable? - financially: Is the Project's budget independent from the media/fact-checking unit's operating budget? Does the Project contribute to the creation of new sources of income?	[5]	

- on the institutional level: Is the fact-checking unit/activity better anchored in the editorial and economic activity of the Recipient media?		
5. Project Budget		[10]
5.1 Are the Activities adequately reflected in the Project Budget forecast?	[10]	
6. Financial and operational capacity		[15]
6.1 Does the Applicant have sufficient Project management experience?	[5]	
6.2 Does the Applicant have sufficient technical expertise?	[5]	
6.4 Does the Applicant have stable and sufficient funding sources?	[5]	
NOTE TOTALE MAXIMUM	100	

6.3. STEP 3: Awarding

After the evaluation, a table is established by the CFI jury, listing all the applications ranked according to their score.

Applications with a score above 70 will be preselected. The Applications with the highest score are provisionally selected until the budget available for this Call for Proposals is exhausted.

In addition, a reserve list is established according to the same criteria. This list will be used if other funds become available during its validity period or if one of the successful Applicants is unavailable.

Applicants will be informed in writing of CFI's decision regarding their application and, in the case of rejection, the reasons for the decision.

Once a decision has been made to award a Grant, the Recipient will be offered a Grant agreement.

7. PROCEDURE

7.1. Provisional schedule of the procedure

STEP	DATE
Deadline for any additional information requests to be sent to CFI	31/07/2023

Deadline for CFI to respond to requests for additional information	05/08/2023
Deadline for submission of Applications	10/08/2023 at 5:30pm
Opening, administrative verification of the application files (step 1)	14/08/2023
Evaluation of Project Presentation Notes (Step 2)	18/08/2023
Notice of Decision to Applicants	01/09/2023
Signing of Grant Agreements	08/09/2023

This schedule refers to provisional dates and may be updated by CFI during the process.

7.2. Abandonment of the procedure

CFI reserves the right to suspend or cancel the procedure if it is found that the award procedure was tainted by a breach of duty, irregularities or fraud. Where a breach of duty, irregularities or fraud is discovered after the award of the Grant, CFI may refrain from entering into the Agreement.

8.ANNEXS

Application Package:

- Annex 1: Project presentation note ;
- Appendix 2: Project budget forecast;
- Appendix 3: Application form.