

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Support for the production of joint cross-border investigations on misinformation and disinformation

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.
Applicants	Refers to both Lead and Co-Applicants who apply for the Grant in order to become the Recipients.
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 Lead 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.
Co-Applicants	Refers to all the entities designated in the application form, which jointly carry out the action alongside the Lead Partner, in the framework of the production support subject of this Call for Proposals.
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 Lead Applicant.
Lead Applicant	Refers to the entity with legal personality that applies to CFI for a Grant under this Call for Proposals, on behalf of all Co-Applicants.

	<p>If the Grant is awarded, the Lead Applicant becomes the Recipient identified in the Special Conditions of the agreement established with CFI. As such, it assumes full financial responsibility for the implementation of the action in accordance with the terms of the Grant Contract, including reversions to the Co-Applicants.</p> <p>The Lead Applicant is CFI's focal point. It represents any other Co-Applicants and acts on their behalf. It has a signed authorization from the Co-Applicants to do so on their behalf.</p>
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 (Lead and Co-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 “FIMI” 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 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 support co-produced media initiatives on false information as a source of conflict from a regional perspective. It is expected that media outlets from separate countries will apply together for a joint investigation.

Technical assistance and mentoring will be provided on cross-border journalism on sensitive ethnic and political topics. This assistance will be tailored to selected media outlets interested in exploring how misinformation and specific disinformation tactics inflame ethnic and national tensions between Western Balkan countries, particularly in the context of recent developments.

3.PURPOSE OF THIS CALL FOR PROPOSALS

3.1. Objectives and priorities

The overall objective of this Call for Proposals is to fight the spread of false information in the Western Balkans through the support to regional media for cross-border investigations.

The specific objectives of this Call for Proposals are:

- The support to the co-production of joint investigation between at least two media from different linguistic, national and/or cultural areas (i.e. Lead Applicant and associate(s)), questioning the impact of false information and/or disinformation on political and societal tensions.
- Capacity building of Recipients in cross-border and conflict sensitive journalism

The priorities of this Call for Proposals are:

- Cross-border co-productions in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro and Serbia on misinformation and false information related to international issues, including, **but not limited to** Russian aggression against Ukraine, Covid 19 health crisis, Climate and environmental crisis...
- Cross-border co-productions in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro and Serbia on misinformation and false information related to regional issues, including **but not limited to**: EU accession process, national electoral cycles, socio-economic development...

* 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.

3.2. Amount of the financial envelope made available by CFI

The overall indicative amount made available under this Call for Proposals is EUR 90,000. CFI reserves the right to not allocate the total amount available.

Amount of the Grants:

Any Grant (understood as the total requested by all Lead Applicants and solidarity partners) under this Call for Proposals must be between the following minimum and maximum amounts:

- Minimum amount: EUR 10,000
- Maximum amount: 30 000 EUR

Within 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.

3.3. Technical support provided by CFI

All Recipients will receive technical support from CFI. It will take the following forms:

- Training with local and international experts on the issues and skills of cross-border and conflict-sensitive journalism;
- Personalized mentoring by local and international experts specific to the issues of their investigative/reporting Projects, both face-to-face and remote

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:

- To be in a consortium of two (2) to four (4) media and have one media identified as the Lead Applicant;
 - o Each media must publish in a distinct language and/or be established in a distinct area from the following list:
 - Bosnia-Herzegovina
 - Montenegro
 - Kosovo*
 - Serbia
- Be a legal entity with a bank account registered in the name of the company;
- Be directly in charge of the co-production of the investigation proposed in 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
- Have an accurate evaluation of its audience
- To not be a member of the Main Project consortium

The Lead Applicant must:

- Have five (5) contractual employees (may be part-time) and an annual turnover of at least EUR 15 000
 - o The Lead Applicant must receive the power to sign and handle (including financially) the Grant on behalf of the Co-Applicants.

- To not be one of the Beneficiaries of CFI's "Support for the development of Fact-Checking units" grant. Beneficiaries of the "Support for the development of Fact-Checking units" grant may only apply to this "Support for the production of joint cross-border investigations on misinformation and disinformation" Grant as Co-Applicants.

4.2. Eligibility criteria for the Activities

4.2.1. Length

The selected Projects have to take place between the 08/09/2023 and 14/04/2024.

The initial planned duration of the selected Projects cannot be less than four (4) months nor exceed seven (7) months.

4.2.2. Geographic coverage

The proposed investigations have to be executed in the following areas:

- Bosnia-Herzégovina
- Montenegro
- Kosovo*
- Serbia

4.2.3. Sectors and themes

The thematic priorities of this Call for Proposals are:

- Disinformation and Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI) regarding international matters. Subjects include but are not limited to: the Russian aggression against Ukraine, the Covid-19 crisis, the environmental crisis...
- Disinformation and FIMI regarding regional matters. Subjects include but are not limited to: the EU adhesion process, national electoral cycles, socio-economic development...

The investigation format, including the mediatic support, is free (written press, radio, TV, online) and can be mixt.

The editorial comment is free, and the subjects may include, but are not limited to social, economic, political, public governance, environmental, technological elements.

The Applicants are invited to integrate as much as possible innovative journalistic techniques, Open-Data Journalism, cross-border Journalism and conflict and ethnic sensitive journalism in particular.

4.2.4. Types of Activities

The Activities that may allocated the Grant in the frame of this Call for Proposals are of three (3) types:

- Intangible investments
- Tangible investments
- Logistic costs

These actions must be strictly linked to the main investigation and production Activities. Here is the detail of the Eligible Costs:

Intangible investments	Tangible investments	Logistic costs
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ICT (software, online software solutions, database access...) needed for the investigation and production - The rights/royalties of the content used in the production 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Purchase of the necessary equipment for the investigation/production - Small IT equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Investigation costs (travel; participation in seminars/events; organization of meetings...) - Other research costs with the academic sector/CSOs Other production/post-production costs/services
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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.

The Applicants' Eligible Costs may be presented as one in a common Budget submitted by the Lead Applicant whom endorses the responsibility of the correct repartition of costs and of the payment to the Co-Applicants of their 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

- 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 60% of the total Eligible Costs of the Project.

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: Lead Applicant Application Form.
- Annex 4 : Co-Applicant Application Form (one per Co-Applicant must be submitted)

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"> - Support for joint investigative co-production between (at least two) media from distinct linguistic, national and/or cultural areas (i.e. Lead Applicant and associate(s)), questioning the impact of misinformation and or disinformation on political and societal tensions: - Cross-border co-productions in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro and Serbia of the impact of disinformation and false information related to international issues, including, but not limited to: Russian aggression against Ukraine, Covid 19 health crisis, Climate and environmental crisis - Cross-border or cross-cultural co-productions in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro and Serbia of the impact of misinformation and false information related to regional issues, including but not limited to: EU accession process, national electoral cycles, socio-economic development 	[10]	
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?	[5]	
1.3 Does the Project contain elements that add particular value (for example, in terms of journalistic innovation or good practice)?	[5]	
2. Project design	Subnote	[25]
<p>2.1 How coherent is the overall design of the Project?</p> <p>Has the co-production been well thought out? Does it bring added value?</p>	[10]	
2.2 Is the choice of topic supported by a sound analysis of the proposed problem?	[5]	

2.3 Is the potential audience for the survey/story measurable?	[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?	[5]	
3. Implementation approach		[15]
3.1 Do the Investigation/Production Activities appear feasible and consistent with the proposed timeline/resources?	[10]	
3.2 Is there a clear division of labour between the associated applicants?	[5]	
4. Sustainability of the Project		[15]
4.1 Is the Project likely to have a tangible impact on the target audience?	[15]	
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 Lead 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: Lead Applicant Application form.
- Appendix 4 : Co-Applicants Application form (1 per Co-Applicant)