

Call for Proposals

Enhancing Media Resilience and Quality News Journalism

Application Guidelines

Publication Date: 22/01/2025

Proposal submissions will be accepted from 22/01/2025

Deadline for proposal submissions: 17:00 EET on 07/04/2025



ProMedia

Contents

1. Scope, objective and expected outcomes of the Call.....	3
2. Eligible applicants	4
3. Eligible activities	5
4. Submission of proposals and deadline	7
5. Indicative timetable of the Call	8
6. Financial support, conditions and options	8
6.1. Application budget (detailed cost estimation)	8
6.2. Lump sum of financial support for the implementation of activities	10
6.3 Scheme for payment to beneficiaries	11
7. Administrative compliance of proposals	11
8. Evaluation and selection procedure	12
8.1. Evaluation Criteria.....	13
8.2 Ranking of proposals with equal number of points.....	15
8.3 Circumstances precluding awarding financial support	15
8.4 Informing applicants of results.....	15
9. Questions and answers	15
9.1 Pre-application webinars for improving applicants' capacities to participate in the competition.....	16
9.2 Complaints mechanism	16
10. Criteria and documents for contract signing.....	16
11. Glossary	17
12. List of annexes and samples	18

These Guidelines outline the conditions for supporting media entities operating in Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, and Slovenia under the **Call for Proposals: Enhancing Media Resilience and Quality News Journalism**, announced by the Open Society Institute – Sofia (OSIS) as part of the project [Media Resilience: Nurturing Quality News Journalism](#).

1. Scope, objective and expected outcomes of the Call

The project [Media Resilience: Nurturing Quality News Journalism](#)¹ led by OSIS and implemented in cooperation with the European Citizen Action Service (ECAS) and ProMedia, is co-funded by the EU through the Creative Europe Programme (CREA). The goal of the project is **to strengthen a free, diverse, and pluralistic news media landscape and to promote quality journalism, with an emphasis on enhancing quality media outreach to the most vulnerable groups in society susceptible to disinformation.**

- The total amount allocated for grants in support of media initiatives under this Call is up to **EUR 1,560,000**²
- At least 10% of the funds will be dedicated to supporting investigative journalism, and at least 30% will be allocated to local, regional and community media.
- **The maximum grant per initiative is up to EUR 60,000**
- **Initiatives can last up to 12 months and must be completed by May 31, 2026, at the latest**

The objective of this call is: To support independent media entities³ in Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, and Slovenia in implementing initiatives aimed at: increasing their financial resilience; addressing emerging technological challenges that affect their work; fostering the development of quality journalism; counteracting the influence of populism and propaganda; and enhancing outreach to groups in society vulnerable to disinformation.

The target media of the call are: Independent news media entities including ones on community, local and regional levels and entities engaged in investigative journalism working to promote democracy, pluralism, social inclusion, human rights, media literacy, intercultural dialogue, EU values and help keep decision-makers accountable.

Expected outcomes:

Outcome 1: Increased resilience, pluralism and editorial independence of news media entities such as local, regional and community media, investigative media or media specialised in public interest topics.

Outcome 2: Improved uptake of new technologies across the targeted independent news media entities in as much as this contributes to media pluralism and a diverse media landscape.

Outcome 3: Enhanced outreach of independent news media entities to groups in society most vulnerable to disinformation.

The supported initiatives under this Call must contribute to achieving the **goal of the Media Resilience Project**, the **objective of the Call**, and **at least one of the expected outcomes** of the Call.

¹ Hereinafter referred to as the “Media Resilience Project” or the “Project”

² It is expected that around 30 initiatives will receive support under this Call.

³ including ones on community, local and regional levels and entities engaged in investigative journalism working to promote democracy, pluralism, social inclusion, human rights, media literacy, intercultural dialogue, EU values and help keep decision-makers accountable.

Gender balance and non-discrimination

Ensuring gender balance and non-discrimination in media and communication activities is essential for promoting inclusivity and representation. Applicants will be required to demonstrate how they plan to integrate gender equality and non-discrimination into their proposals, particularly in media, communication, and stakeholder engagement activities. This includes outlining their efforts to use non-discriminatory language to avoid stereotypes and ensure diversity in media outputs, such as images and photos. Project assessors will evaluate the effectiveness of applicants' strategies and approaches in incorporating these perspectives⁴.

2. Eligible applicants

Eligible applicants are independent news media⁵ entities working in Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, or Slovenia, regardless of their legal form of registration, including companies as well as civil society organisations that operate as media outlets. This includes television, radio, print media and online media.

The following criteria will apply:

- **Legal registration:**

Applicants must be registered as legal entities and have a legal seat in one of the following countries: Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, or Slovenia.

- **Editorial independence:**

Applicants must be news media outlets that have internal mechanisms to ensure editorial independence from external interference by governments, political parties, corporations, or other power-holders, as well as from the outlet's administrative, financial, and commercial management. The existence of these mechanisms must be demonstrated by an editorial charter, code of conduct, or another relevant document.

At the proposal stage, applicants are required to submit a **declaration confirming that they meet the eligibility criteria** (Sample No. 3).

The extent to which applicants meet the criteria for editorial independence will also be subject to a quality assessment (evaluation criteria).

Applicants recommended for funding, as a pre-condition for signing a grant agreement, will be required to provide a copy of a document (such as an editorial charter, code of conduct, or another relevant document) that outlines their commitment to editorial independence.

One organisation can submit only one proposal under this Call.



Please note: At the proposals preparation stage, *MediaResilience* project team members cannot respond to queries about the eligibility of specific applicants, proposals, or any of their parts.

⁴ Successful candidates will be invited to participate in workshops on gender-inclusive and non-discriminatory language as part of the planned Summer Academy 2025, organised by ECAS, a partner in the Media Resilience project that has developed guidelines on [gender-inclusive language](#) and [organising inclusive events](#).

⁵ Please see the definitions in the Glossary.

3. Eligible activities

Eligible activities that could be funded under this call include:

Activities related to innovations in editorial production (e.g., formats, content), coverage, and revenue generation models. For example:

- **New Content and Formats Development**
 - ✓ Designing new content creation methods using advanced technologies
 - ✓ Creating multimedia stories (videos, podcasts) that engage audiences in innovative ways
 - ✓ Experimenting with interactive storytelling techniques and data visualization
 - ✓ Creating and distributing materials, including interactive content, to improve citizens' digital capacities, resilience to disinformation, and understanding of the current media environment
 - ✓ Developing hyperlocal content
- **Enhanced News Coverage**
 - ✓ Coverage focusing on underreported issues (e.g., marginalized communities, local governance) through in-depth investigative reporting
 - ✓ Development of specialized journalism focusing on themes such as environmental issues, health, or civic engagement
 - ✓ Conducting fact-checking and developing news and current affairs explainers
- **Innovative Revenue Models**
 - ✓ Developing and implementing new revenue models, including but not limited to: Subscription models with tiered content access based on audience needs; Crowdfunding campaigns or community-supported journalism programs to diversify funding streams.

Activities related to the improvement of distribution and dissemination of news. For example:

- Designing strategies, methods, and tools for news media outreach to audiences vulnerable to disinformation
- Creating user-friendly mobile applications to provide news updates tailored to audience preferences
- Enhancing social media strategies, including:
 - ✓ Using algorithms and audience analytics to optimize content distribution on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok
 - ✓ Participatory campaigns that engage audiences in sharing and disseminating news articles
- Establishing partnerships with other media outlets and stakeholders for sharing content, increasing outreach, and enhancing visibility

Activities related to the development and engagement of audiences and the implementation of community-building strategies. For example:

- Implementing community journalism initiatives that involve community members in story development, ensuring that coverage reflects local voices and needs

- Organizing audience engagement campaigns, such as events, forums, or discussions where audience members can engage directly with journalists
- Utilizing feedback mechanisms, such as surveys and feedback loops, to gather audience insights and adapt coverage according to community interests
- Building awareness by sharing new strategic practices at events for communities and media outlets
- Producing materials/toolkits and interactive content to improve journalists' outreach to vulnerable groups

Activities related to the development and adaptation of technical tools applicable to the above topics and the objective and priorities of the call. For example:

- Acquiring, developing, or using advanced technology, including the ethical use of AI, to increase content production efficiency, distribution, audience engagement, community-building, and income generation
- Developing resources and tools for enhanced reporting, including fact-checking, verification, and source credibility assessments
- Building or adapting collaborative technology solutions that enable collaborative reporting, such as shared databases or joint editorial projects
- Implementing audience analytics tools to understand readership patterns and customize content delivery for varied demographics
- Engaging technical support and expertise for using advanced technologies to diversify media production, outreach, and income generation
- Sharing technical innovations in the above areas between media entities and communities vulnerable to disinformation

Training on the above topics, including participation in international and national events. For example:

- Training and/or mentoring
- Offering internships and organizing study visits
- Facilitating the exchange and sharing of knowledge and best practices
- Developing and disseminating training materials and tools
- Promoting cross-sectoral and intra-sectoral partnerships and networking to improve skills
- Organizing and/or participating in workshops and seminars
- Organizing and/or participating in conferences and events
- Transferring innovations and knowledge
- Other activities aimed at strengthening the editorial independence and media resilience such as trainings for journalists and media to improve their legal skills to limit the risks of defamation cases

Other activities that could contribute to achieving the objective and the expected outcomes of the Call.

4. Submission of proposals and deadline

Proposals are submitted online, via an **Electronic Proposal Submission System (EPSS)**. Applicants must register in the EPSS in order to access the electronic application form. Access to EPSS is provided via the *Media Resilience* project website: <https://mediaresilience.osis.bg>

Proposals for initiatives will not be accepted on paper, by email or by any other means other than by submitting them through the EPSS.

The application form shall be completed in English in the EPSS and submitted in the EPSS together with the mandatory annexes (attached to the application form in the place and file format indicated). The application form and the relevant annexes constitute the complete initiative proposal. All template documents can be found as annexes to the Application Guidelines and are published on the *Media Resilience* project page: <https://mediaresilience.osis.bg>

No additional documents are to be submitted at the proposal submission stage other than those explicitly mentioned in these Guidelines and the Application Form.

Detailed instructions for completing and submitting proposals via the EPSS could be found in **Annex 1. Instructions for completing and submitting proposal applications in EPSS.**



Please note: EPSS will not accept submissions after the deadline, proposals with blank mandatory fields and non-attached mandatory documents. To submit the proposal, applicants must select the **Submit** button in EPSS. If the proposal is not submitted (even though data is filled in as "New" in the "Applicant's project proposals" section) the data will not be considered as a submitted proposal!

The deadline for submission of proposals is **17:00 (EET⁶) on 07.04.2025**

The deadline refers to the time of proposal submission in the ESPP. Upon successful submission of a proposal, the system user will receive an automatically generated email message indicating the successful submission of the proposal and its corresponding Proposal ID Number⁷.

Proposals may be submitted from the time of the announcement of this Call for Proposals until the announced deadline.



Allow enough time to prepare and submit your proposal before the deadline. Please note that the EPSS does not accept applications with incomplete mandatory fields and will return these for completion of the missing information. This process can take time and we recommend that applicants take this into account when planning the timing of their submission to avoid the risk of missing the deadline.

⁶ EET – Eastern European Time is the UTC+2 Time Zone and includes countries like Bulgaria and Greece. Croatia, Hungary and Slovenia are in the CET – Central European Time Zone (UTC+1 Time Zone).

⁷ The message will be sent to the email address registered in the applicant's EPSS profile.

5. Indicative timetable of the Call

22 January 2025	Launch of the Call
February-March 2025	Information campaign (the exact dates and information on webinars on the preparation of proposals are announced on the Project page; https://mediaresilience.osis.bg)
7 April 2025	Deadline for submission of proposals
April 2025	<p>Verification of the administrative compliance of submitted proposals</p> <p>Applicants will be notified of the outcome of the administrative check indicatively within 15 working days after the deadline for submission of proposals.</p> <p><i>NB: Applicants need to check their EPSS accounts and the messages they receive from the system at the email address registered in their EPSS profiles.</i></p>
April - June 2025	<p>Evaluation and selection of initiatives</p> <p>Applicants whose proposals have been recommended for funding will be notified about the competition results via email at the address registered in their EPSS account.</p>
June-July 2025	Preparing grant agreements for approved applicants and starting implementation

6. Financial support, conditions and options

Financial support is provided using a **Simplified Cost Option: Lump sum**

6.1. Application budget (detailed cost estimation)

Applicants justify the requested amount of financial support per activities based on a detailed estimation of costs.

The budget template should be downloaded from the Project webpage:

<https://mediaresilience.osis.bg> and completed in English in accordance with these guidelines.

The completed budget should be attached to the application form in the EPSS as an Excel file.



Please note: An applicant who has not attached a budget to the proposal shall be excluded at the stage of checking the administrative compliance of the proposal as not complying with the administrative requirements.

The total amount of financial support requested, calculated in the budget, must match the amount indicated in the application form in the EPSS. In case the amount filled in the application form differs from that in the attached budget, the amount indicated in the attached budget will be considered valid.



Please note: The budget must comply with the budgetary limits and eligibility conditions for the activities and the associated costs as set out in these guidelines. The budget must be expressed in euros.

The maximum amount of financial support is up to EUR 60,000.

Direct costs: The budget should cover direct cost activities incurred during the implementation period of the initiative under the following categories:

Personnel costs

1. **Costs for employees:** Proportionate share of the costs of wages, social and health insurance and other costs for the staff involved in the implementation of activities, corresponding to the time planned for the activities concerned (months/days/hours), including the management of activities. The unit cost (monthly, daily or hourly rate) shall be in accordance with the terms of the employment contract and the employer's usual practice.
2. **Costs for natural persons working under a direct contract** assigned to the action, under conditions similar to those of an employee (not be significantly different from those for personnel performing similar tasks under an employment contract).
3. **Purchases of other goods, works and services**, including equipment needed to carry out specific activities.
4. **Travel, accommodation and subsistence** for travel of team members and event participants. Unit costs should be planned in accordance with the following unit rates:

Country	Subsistence daily rate EUR	Accommodation per night EUR	for travel of 50–399 km
Bulgaria	57	110	12
Croatia	75	110	36
Greece	82	110	36
Hungary	64	110	28
Slovenia	84	115	35
Belgium	102	140	46

For travel of 400 km or more* (air or rail or combined air/rail):

Distance Band	Unit costs in EUR
400–600	245
601–800	261
801–1200	276
1201–1600	288
1601–2000	295
2001–2500	343



Please note: All applicants shall plan in the budget the costs associated with the participation of 1 representative of the applicant (in case of approval of the proposal) in the following events:

1. Summer Academy in Sozopol, Bulgaria (BG) in 2025. The applicants need to budget the following budget items in accordance with the EC flat rates for travel:
 - travel cost (return travel) from their place of origin to Sozopol (BG)
 - 3-day accommodation (BG rate)
 - 3-day per diem (BG rate)
2. Community of Practice Workshop in Brussels, Belgium (BE) in 2026. The applicants need to budget the following budget items in accordance with the EC flat rates for travel:
 - travel cost (return travel) from their place of origin to Brussels (BE)
 - 2-day accommodation (BE rate)
 - 2-day per diem (BE rate)

Indirect costs: To cover the applicant's indirect costs, including office rent, communication and stationery costs, accounting and administrative management, indirect costs of **7% of the direct costs** shall be calculated in the budget.

NB: When preparing the budget, the following types of expenses **should not be included** in the budget:

- ✓ Costs covered by other funding sources;
- ✓ Costs for periods outside the planned implementation period: before the start of the implementation, including the preparation of the proposal, and after the completion of the implementation of the initiative;
- ✓ Voluntary labour and other types of non-financial contributions provided;
- ✓ Provision of aid to third parties;
- ✓ Provisions for losses and potential future liabilities;
- ✓ Exchange differences and bank charges;
- ✓ Profit generation.

The budget shall be presented in euro, based on an estimated average exchange rate. Values and unit prices are rounded up to the euro.



Please note: Applicants are not required to make their own contributions, including in-kind contributions such as voluntary work. Financial support is provided to the applicant, who is solely responsible for its use and for achieving the objectives of the initiative.

The budget shall be entered in sections I to V by activity corresponding to the activities indicated in the application form, including communication activities. In case the number of activities in the application form exceeds the sections in the budget form, the applicant shall group similar activities in one section.

For each activity, the required number of budget lines shall be entered, describing in turn the specific costs within the specific activity (e.g. distinct implementation phases, event organisation, product development, etc.).

The budget should be based on a detailed calculation of planned costs. The cost justification should contain specific and clear information on the scope and the way activities will be implemented.



Please note: As part of the proposal evaluation, a budget review is carried out, including a technical check, an assessment of the degree of reasonableness and cost-effectiveness, the breakdown by activity/section, phases. As a result of this review, the OSIS may recommend to the applicant a reduction of the budget and/or a reallocation of the budget between activities and/or between phases of implementation.

6.2. Lump sum of financial support for the implementation of activities

The approved amount of financial support per activity and per implementation phase will be specified in a Budget Annex to the Financial Support Contract: Budget Lump sum containing a breakdown of the fixed amount of financial support per activity.

During the contracting process, variations of financial support for a specific activity may also be defined in the Budget Annex depending on the quantitative performance parameters.

6.3 Scheme for payment to beneficiaries

The schemes of payments to beneficiaries is determined on the basis of the initial risk assessment. Based on this assessment, the payment schemes could be as follows:

Planned scheme	Advance payment	Total advance and interim payment	Final/balancing payment
Advance payment scheme with an interim report	up to 40% of the budget	up to 80% of the budget	Remaining funds
Advance payment scheme without an interim report	up to 70% of the budget	Up to 70%, no interim payment planned	Remaining funds
High risk scheme, with an interim report	No advance payment	Interim payment(s) up to the amount reported in the interim report(s);	Remaining funds

The initial risk assessment is carried out by the OSIS team based on the following criteria:

1. Organizational capacity

- 1.2. Availability of similar experience of the applicant
- 1.1. Financial stability to implement the initiative
- 1.3. Availability of a permanent team

2. Specific implementation risks

Based on an assessment of the above criteria, initiatives are grouped into the following categories:

- Initiatives with minimal risk
- Medium risk initiatives
- High-risk initiatives; where a payment scheme is applied to a high risk initiative

The Reporting and Payment Plan, and the inclusion of an interim report and definition of an interim reporting period shall take into account the timelines for the implementation of each project separately in accordance with its activities and Implementation Schedule.

7. Administrative compliance of proposals

Proposals for initiatives are considered eligible when they meet the administrative eligibility criteria.

Checklist for administrative compliance criteria:	
Nº	Criteria
1	The proposal has been successfully submitted on time in EPSS. All sections of the template along with annexes were completed according to instructions ⁸ , in English.
2	The applicant has submitted only one proposal.
3	A completed Detailed Budget is attached to the application. The budget does not exceed EUR 60,000.
4	The duration of the initiative is in line with the terms of the Call – up to 12 months.
5	The attached Detailed Budget has been completed in accordance with the provided sample.

⁸ Fields that are filled in with characters only (e.g. dashes, commas, numbers, in a language other than the specified language, etc.) will not be accepted as correctly filled in.

6	A timeline for the implementation of the initiative is attached to the application form.
7	A fully and correctly filled in <i>Declaration of Eligibility, confirmation of the content of the proposal and the absence of double funding</i> is attached. The Declaration is signed.
8	The declaration referred to in point 7 is signed by the legal representative of the applicant or by a person authorised to represent the applicant on the basis of a notarised power of attorney or other document certifying the legal basis for signing the document – such as an order, decision, etc.
9	The applicant has attached the CV of the project manager in English.
10	The applicant has attached a document that outlines its commitment to editorial independence (editorial charter, code of conduct or another relevant document)

All applicants will be notified of the outcome of the administrative check by email at the email address they registered in EPSS and/or by comment on the EPSS no later than 15 working days after the closing date of the Call.

Applicants who have submitted proposals with administrative deficiencies that could be rectified (the deficiencies under points 4 to 9 of the above table are subject to rectification) will be given the opportunity to rectify them within five working days. The applicant is not allowed to change the content of the budget when the deficiencies are corrected.

All applicants whose proposals have not been approved during the administrative check stage may, within 5 days of receipt of the notification on the results of the check, request a re-examination of the submitted proposal for administrative compliance by sending an email to mediaresilience@osi.bg with the subject heading 'Appeal'.

Requests for reconsideration of proposals for administrative compliance will be considered by OSIS, and information on the final decision will be sent to the applicant within 10 working days after receipt of the request for reconsideration of the proposal for administrative compliance.



Please note: It is the responsibility of the applicant to regularly check the EPSS profile and the email registered in this system. OSIS is not responsible for the applicant's missing a deadline to rectify administrative discrepancies or for his/her not receiving messages from the EPSS due to their being registered as spam or because of applicant's problems with internet access, etc.

8. Evaluation and selection procedure

All competing proposals for initiatives undergo an administrative compliance check and those which meet the administrative compliance will be admitted to a qualitative assessment.

1. Each proposal will be evaluated against the announced criteria by two impartial and working independently from one another evaluators. The final score will be the average of the scores given by the two evaluators. In the event of a difference in the scores of more than 30% of the higher score, and provided that the higher score exceeds the minimum evaluation threshold indicated for participation in the ranking of initiatives (30 points), the proposal will be evaluated by a third evaluator-arbitrator. The final proposal score shall be the average of the two closest scores.
2. Any proposal passing the minimum evaluation threshold will be ranked with all other proposals in the competition having passed the minimum evaluation threshold. The rankings will be submitted for consideration to the **Project Selection Committee (PSC)**.
3. The PSC consists of five experts with proven experience and expertise in the field of media pluralism and having knowledge of the media landscape and socio-political environment in the eligible countries. The PSC will review the list of ranked projects and will provide the OSIS with a list of projects recommended for funding, taking into account their ranking by points and the available budget. The PSC may, by reasoned decision, modify the ranking of

proposals in justified cases based on transparent criteria, outlined in this call for proposals, including to achieve the following:

- at least 10% of the funds for grants under this call to be dedicated to supporting investigative journalism;
- at least 30% of the funds to be distributed to local, regional and community media.

The PSC may make changes in the ranking in other justified cases, including in relation to the eligibility and evaluation criteria and the requirements of the Call, the achievement of the goal of the *Media Resilience* project, the objectives and expected outcomes of the Call as well as to ensure balanced geographical representation of all five countries covered by the Call⁹. The PSC decisions are final.

8.1. Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation scale:

0 – does not meet the criterion; 1 – rather does not meet the criterion; 3 – rather meets the criterion; 5 – fully meets the criterion

Evaluation Criteria	Points	
	Max.	Min.
1. Relevance	35	
1.1 Alignment of the applicant with the scope and objectives of the Call The applicant clearly demonstrates that it is a news media organization whose work contributes to one or more of the following: democracy, pluralism, social inclusion, human rights, media literacy, intercultural dialogue, EU values, and accountability of decision-makers. <i>(Points assigned under this criterion will be multiplied by two)</i>	10	
1.2 Editorial independence and professional standards The applicant convincingly demonstrates the existence of a transparent governance structure that upholds the principles of accountability and independence. This includes the existence of mechanisms for ensuring editorial independence from external interference by the government, political parties, corporations, or other power-holders, as well as from the outlet's administrative, financial, and commercial management. The applicant convincingly demonstrates that it is committed to generally accepted standards of professional reporting and quality journalism. This includes the existence of mechanisms to ensure that its reporting is based on fact-checking and is characterized by accuracy, independence, fairness, impartiality, and accountability. <i>(Points assigned under this criterion will be multiplied by two)</i>	10	
1.3 Alignment of the proposal with the objective of the Call The proposed initiative contributes to the achievement of the goal of the <i>Media Resilience</i> project, the objective of the Call and to at least one of the expected outcomes . <i>(Points assigned under this criterion will be multiplied by two)</i>	10	
1.3 Justification of the needs	5	

⁹ The number of proposals recommended for funding per country will depend on the quality of the submitted proposals, and there is no guarantee that they will be equally distributed among the countries covered by the call. However, the PSC may seek to avoid the concentration of more than half of the recommended proposals for funding in a single country or the complete absence of such proposals in another.

The proposed initiative seeks to address clearly identified needs within the chosen thematic outcome(s) and related to the objective of the Call.		
2. Feasibility and sustainability of the of the proposal	35	
2.1. Adequacy of proposed activities There is a clear logical link between the proposed activities, the expected results and chosen outcome(s) within the expected timeline. <i>(Points assigned under this criterion will be multiplied by two)</i>	15	
2.2. Expected results and impact The applicant demonstrates a well-justified high level of ambition for anticipated results and impact. Indicators and how the results and the impact will be measured are clearly defined. <i>(Points assigned under this criterion will be multiplied by two)</i>	10	
2.3. Sustainability The applicant clearly justifies how results from the proposed initiative will be sustained beyond its life.	5	
2.4. Diversity, equity and Inclusion The proposed strategies to ensure gender equality and non-discrimination in the implementation of the proposed initiative are adequate.	5	
3. Applicant's capacities and team	10	
3.1 Capacity of the applicant to implement the proposed initiative The applicant demonstrates that the experience of the team is adequate for the implementation of the proposed initiative.	5	
3.2. Composition of the team and risk management There is clear allocation of responsibilities among applicant's team members for implementation of the initiative. Mechanisms to identify and manage risks are in place.	5	
4. Budget	20	
4.1 Economy of budget and realistic forecast of costs The budget is cost-effective and the estimated costs are realistic and in line with planned activities. <i>(Points assigned under this criterion will be multiplied by two)</i>	10	
4.2 Proportionality of the budget to expected results and impact The proposed budget demonstrates value for money concerning the anticipated contribution of the proposed initiative to the chosen outcome(s) and the objective of the Call. <i>(Points assigned under this criterion will be multiplied by two)</i>	10	
TOTAL NUMBER OF POINTS	100	30
Additional Information	Yes	No
A. The applicant is a local, regional or community media		
B. The proposed initiative aims to support investigative journalism		

NOTE: Proposals that receive an average total score of less than 30 points from evaluations and/or a score of 0 on the rating scale from both evaluators for any of the the following

evaluation criteria – 1. Relevance; 2. Feasibility and sustainability of the proposal; 3. Applicants capacity and team, or 4. Budget – will not be included in the ranking for the selection of initiatives. This also apply to any of the subcriteria, with exception of 2.3, 2.4, and 3.1.

An applicant will be classified as local, regional or community media if both evaluators indicate “YES” in the “Additional Information” section of the evaluation list. Alternatively, an applicant may also be considered as such if at least one evaluator indicates “YES” and a decision is made by PSC.

A proposal will be recognised as supporting investigative journalism when both evaluators indicate “YES” in the “Additional Information” section of the evaluation list. Alternatively, a proposal may also be considered as such if at least one evaluator indicates “YES” and a decision is made by PSC.

8.2 Ranking of proposals with equal number of points

If proposals receive equal scores, the PSC shall use the same criteria for the ranking decision that applies to any modifications of the ranking as outlined above.

8.3 Circumstances precluding awarding financial support

The following circumstances may be grounds for not providing financial support:

- (a) there are irregularities in the submission process
- (b) there are clear indications that the applicant does not respect EU values, spreads disinformation, uses hate speech, or discriminates against marginalized and underrepresented communities, including minorities and vulnerable groups.
- (c) the content of a proposal or parts of it are found to be identical to other proposal(s)
- (d) there is a discrepancy between the initiative proposal and the current Application Guidelines
- (e) there are suspicions of double funding of the proposed initiative or certain activities thereof

8.4 Informing applicants of results

All applicants will be informed of the decision on their proposal. The decision is final and not subject to appeal.

Successful applicants will be invited to submit contract documents by email and/or by a comment in the ESPP. OSIS will publish a list of contracted entities once the contracting process is complete.

Applicants are encouraged to check the Project web page (<https://mediaresilience.osis.bg>) regularly for information on the results of the competition.

9. Questions and answers

Questions related to the application process can only be asked by sending an email to mediaresilience@osi.bg with the subject header "Media Resilience Call Question". Questions and answers will be published in a dedicated Q&A section of the [project webpage](https://mediaresilience.osis.bg) at <https://mediaresilience.osis.bg> within 10 working days of receipt. Questions can be asked no later than 21.03.2025.

Responses to duplicate/similar questions will not be published.



Before asking any questions, we encourage you to read the answers to the questions already asked, published on the Project's webpage: <https://mediaresilience.osis.bg>

9.1 Pre-application webinars for improving applicants' capacities to participate in the competition

Information on the webinar schedule will be published and updated on the Project webpage: <https://mediaresilience.osis.bg>

9.2 Complaints mechanism

"Irregularity" is any breach of the Contract for financial support, of a provision of European and/or national law which has or would have the effect of impeding the implementation of the Media Resilience Project, for example by taking into account an unjustified or disproportionate amount of financial support. All forms of corruption are also an irregularity.

Information on options and the method of reporting irregularities is published at: <https://mediaresilience.osis.bg>. In order to report an irregularity, it is necessary to send an email to: mediaresilience@osi.bg with the subject "Irregularity alert" with the following content structure:

- ✓ A description of the irregularity (including whether it is alleged or actual and how it was committed);
- ✓ The period to which the irregularity relates or the time at which it occurred;
- ✓ How the sender became aware of the irregularity, including the source of information leading to the suspicion of the alleged irregularity;
- ✓ The natural or legal persons involved in the identified irregularity.

The Project Executive Committee will act on submissions within no more than one month of receipt of the communication. In the event that more time may be needed to investigate and rule on the case, the whistleblower will be informed of the need for more time and provided the relevant reasons.

10. Criteria and documents for contract signing

Grant agreements will be awarded to applicants whose proposals have been recommended by the PSC and meet the eligible criteria for the award of a contract, including, if applicable, any mandatory conditions for the award of a contract set by the PSC.

Before proceeding to contract signing, applicants who have submitted proposals recommended for funding must provide, in a manner and within a time limit to be specified by OSIS, the following necessary documents justifying the eligibility of the initiative for the conclusion of a contract:

1. Copy of their official registration as a legal entity
2. Completed and signed, personally by the person who represents the applicant by law, *Declaration of the Beneficiary, including the absence of double funding of the initiative*
3. Copy of the most recent annual financial statements (balance sheet and profit and loss account) of the applicant (if applicable).
4. A copy of a document (such as an editorial charter, code of conduct, or another relevant document) that outlines the commitment of the applicant to editorial independence.

OSIS will only sign Grant agreements with applicants who meet the eligibility criteria and whose proposed activities are not subject to double funding. Regarding establishment of eligibility, OSIS reserves the right to request additional documents from applicants, if necessary, to certify their eligibility.



Please note: Where non-compliance with the above is identified, the applicant will be given the opportunity to rectify this within five working days after an email notification is sent to the applicant

All payments to independent media approved for financial support will be made on the basis of a *Grant Agreement*.

We wish all candidates success!

11. Glossary

For the purposes of this Call for Proposals the following definitions apply:

Project: The project “*Media Resilience: Nurturing Quality News Journalism*” under which the current call for proposals is announced. The project is implemented by the Open Society Institute – Sofia in cooperation with the European Citizen Action Service (ECAS) and ProMedia. It is co-funded by the EU through the Creative Europe Programme (CREA).

Initiative: A proposal submitted by an applicant seeking funding under this call for proposals.

Media: An entity whose principal purpose is to provide programs or press publications, under its editorial responsibility, to the general public by any means, in order to inform, entertain, or educate. This includes broadcast media, print media, and online media.

News Media: Media entities that gather, produce, and distribute news and information to the general public. Their primary goal is to report on current events, issues, and trends, providing factual information that informs, educates, and sometimes entertains the audience.

Independent Media: Any news media outlet that has internal mechanisms to ensure editorial independence from external interference by the government, political parties, corporations, or other power-holders, as well as from the outlet’s administrative, financial, and commercial management.

Target media of this call: Independent news media entities, including ones on community, local and regional levels and entities engaged in investigative journalism working to promote democracy, pluralism, social inclusion, human rights, media literacy, intercultural dialogue, EU values and help keep decision-makers accountable.

Local and Regional Media: News Media outlets that focus on news, information, and issues relevant to a specific town, city, or a broader area, typically encompassing multiple towns, cities, or municipalities within a specific region. Examples: Local newspapers, community radio stations, local television stations, or on-line media that primarily cover events, issues, and stories directly affecting their city, municipality or region.

Community media: Community media are non-profit and accountable to the community they seek to serve. Their content is created by members of the community. Community media are editorially independent of government, commercial and religious institutions and political parties. They are a separate group within the media sector, along with commercial and public media.

Investigative journalism: Journalism that typically involves in-depth research and reporting to uncover hidden information, reveal wrongdoing, and provide a comprehensive understanding of complex issues. It aims to expose corruption, misconduct, or inefficiencies within governments, corporations, and other institutions. The primary goal of the investigative journalism is to inform the public about matters that may affect their rights, safety, or well-being. This can include issues like corruption, crime, environmental hazards, or social injustices. Investigative journalism relies on corroborating information from various sources, including documents, interviews, and expert opinions. Journalists often use public records and data analysis to support their findings. Journalists critically evaluate information to construct a complete picture of the investigated issue, often looking for patterns or underlying motives.

Quality journalism: Quality journalism is defined as a practice of news reporting that prioritizes factual accuracy and integrity. It entails thorough fact-checking to ensure that information is correct and reliable. Quality journalism is characterized by:

- **Accuracy:** Reporting that is factually correct and based on verified information.
- **Independence:** Journalists operate free from external pressures, ensuring that their work is not influenced by political, corporate, or personal interests.
- **Fairness:** Coverage that represents all relevant viewpoints, giving a balanced perspective on issues.
- **Impartiality:** Reporting that avoids bias and subjectivity, presenting facts without favoritism.
- **Accountability:** Journalists and news organizations take responsibility for their reporting, including corrections when errors occur and transparency about their processes.

Together, these elements contribute to journalism that serves the public interest, fosters informed decision-making, and upholds democratic values.

12. List of annexes and samples

[Annex 1. Instructions for completing and submitting proposal applications in EPSS](#)

Sample documents for submission of proposals:

Sample No. 1	Application Budget (detailed cost estimation)
Sample No. 2	Proposal Timeline
Sample No. 3	Declaration of Eligibility of the Applicant, Confirmation of the Content of the Proposal and Absence of Double Funding
Sample No. 4	Proposal Application Template ¹⁰

Sample documents for signing a grant agreement:

Sample No. 5	Grant Agreement
Sample No. 6	Declaration of the Beneficiary

¹⁰ The Proposal Application Template is attached to provide applicants with a preview of the scope and structure of the application form. Please note that applicants must complete the application form online using the Electronic Proposal Submission System (EPSS).

Contacts:

Media Resilience project page: <https://mediaresilience.osis.bg>

Postal address. Post Office: 56 Solunska St., Sofia 1000, Bulgaria

email: mediaresilience@osi.bg