



Call for Tenders

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Feasibility study for a journalistic media project to map and analyze economic cooperation in the Western Balkans, the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia

n-ost – Netzwerk für Osteuropa-Berichterstattung e.V.

Berlin, 02 Dec 2021

For our upcoming 3,5-year project “Spheres of Influence”, the international media NGO **n-ost** is inviting tenders for an independent feasibility study preceding its implementation. Based on an assessment of the initial objectives and planned methodology, we are looking for recommendations on how to maximize the project’s impact while minimizing risks.

The study must be carried out by independent experts with technical, methodological, and practical expertise as well as regional knowledge who provide a detailed report of max. 30 pages (final report to be submitted in English before **March 6th 2022**). It is intended as a basis for the cooperation with international partners in the region, and for the common planning and implementation of the project activities. This project is funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

About n-ost

n-ost is a media NGO, agency and journalistic network with headquarters in Berlin and more than 290 members across Europe. Since our establishment in 2006, we have been engaged in cross-border and investigative journalism with strong expertise particularly in Eastern Europe. n-ost’s mission is to contribute to a European integrated media sphere which is transnational and collaborative. We strive to connect journalists to counter the shrinking space of free media and the polarized public discourse especially in Eastern Europe. We are currently implementing several joint projects funded by a variety of donors with media outlets and media NGOs across Europe, including the countries of the Eastern Partnership.

About the project

Over the course of 3,5 years, a collective of media from Central Asia, the Southern Caucasus and the Western Balkans works collaboratively to stimulate investigative journalism on the political, social, environmental and economic impact of intensive economic cooperation with large political actors in their neighbourhood (China, Russia, the EU). Although the three regions in question are very different in terms of their domestic political and economic situation, history and culture, they share the experience of being situated in the proximity of contesting economic and political powers that are trying to enhance their economic and political outreach in the neighbourhood (if not even on a global scale). Against this backdrop, the project aims at initiating and fostering collaboration between journalists from the three regions, as well as strengthening their ability to track the economic engagement of their powerful neighbours, analyzing its political, social or environmental impact and activating public debate about the economic policy of their respective governments. Participants will receive funding to produce in-depth content, have opportunities for peer-learning and will be provided training on journalistic skills and approaches such as research and investigation, fact checking, storytelling and data journalism.

Planned time frame: September 2022 - Dec 2025 (40 months)

Total budget: approx. 1,000,000 €

Project countries: Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Georgia, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, North Macedonia

A detailed project description will be provided upon application.

Requirements for the feasibility study

- The study should present the context on several levels (micro, meso, macro).
- An overview of existing structures (institutions, networks, umbrella associations, etc.) relevant to the project and its activities should be given.
- An analysis of the approach to solving the problem situation of the target groups and other actors should be carried out on this basis to examine and evaluate the planned project critically with regard to the [OECD DAC criteria](#).
- On this basis, tangible recommendations for adjustments to the specific project concept, including the target system and measures are to be formulated, taking into account the actors and stakeholders to be involved, suggestions for areas of observation of the results and impact measurement as well as the opportunities and risks.

Guiding questions for the study report (further details will be provided upon application)

- What is the current political and economic situation in the project countries and the respective wider regions - which challenges, problems and debates can be identified especially with regard to cooperation/ integration with large neighbouring actors and the impact of economic interweaving with them (Russia, China, the EU)? What political stances shape public discourse and media coverage?
- What are the strengths, deficits and needs in the reporting on the political, social, cultural, environmental and economic impact of close economic cooperation with large neighbouring countries? Which publishing projects or networks already exist on this topic?
- What political or technical obstacles could participants be confronted with when investigating large economic investment in their respective countries?
- How do you assess the risks with regard to the security of investigative journalists in the respective countries and how can these be addressed?
- Are the local organisations envisaged adequate partners for this project (in terms of administrative capacities, experience in international cooperation, outreach)? Are there alternatives?
- Who are the target groups and relevant actors the project should address on various levels (micro, meso, macro)?
- Independent media play a crucial role in the project countries, but are working under difficult circumstances. What are the most significant structural needs and obstacles to overcome in order to fulfill their potential in civic society?
- How would you assess the potential for intensified cross-border co-operation of media in the project countries? What are the major obstacles and shortcomings in this regard?
- What is the (national) audience's interest in the societies of their neighbouring countries (based on interviews, not quantitative analyses)?
- What are the major potentials and needs regarding professional (journalistic) development in the project countries that should be addressed by the project?

Applications

In order to apply for this tender, please send a short E-Mail, indicating your interest and shortly outlining your strategy and resources to Anneke Hudalla (hudalla@n-ost.org) as soon as possible, but no later than **12th December 2022**, 23:59 CET.

We encourage applications covering only *one* of the two regions (either the Western Balkan countries OR Central Asia plus Georgia) provided you are prepared to cooperate on a comprehensive study together with “complementary” applicants.

We will accept full applications/offers (to be sent in after invitation) until **6 Jan 2021**.

For the full application the following documents will be requested:

- A detailed outline of the objectives and methods to be deployed in the feasibility study;
- A list of products, deliverables, and activities that will be provided, including timeline and specification of costs;
- A structural framework for the final report based on the feasibility study;
- Proof of independence of the evaluators, as well as their technical, organizational, methodological and other capacities, composition, roles and tasks of all those involved;
- A list of sources, such as national strategy / policy papers and briefings, references to other studies and further readings, documents from prior projects, guidelines on the methodology to be deployed etc.;
- A presentation of the team members and their relevant experience for this study.

The successful applicants will be selected by mid-January. We expect to receive the final study until

6 March 2022. Any questions can be directed to Anneke Hudalla (hudalla@n-ost.org).