

Guidelines for applicants

Financial support grant for media and press councils in emergency situations



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Introduction

This Call for proposals is launched within the framework of the project [Media Councils in the Digital Age #4 \(MC4\)](#). The project is funded by the European Commission, Creative Europe Programme.

The overall objective of the project is to support the activities of media self-regulation bodies in emergency situations.

What support will be provided?

The objective is to provide **financial and technical support** to media self-regulatory bodies to strengthen their capacities **to operate in emergency situations threatening their existence**.

An emergency situation refers to press councils that operate:

- In a country at war or conflict;
- In a challenging or difficult political environment (in terms of human rights, rule of law and democratic standards);
- With financial difficulties
- With structural deficiencies.

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), on behalf of the MC4 Consortium strongly believes that supporting journalistic self-regulation bodies in emergency situations is essential to maintain a democratic and accountable media ecosystem. The financial support will take the form of 2 grants of up to €15,000 each with consultancy. It aims to provide different organisational support depending on the needs of the particular country/organisation.

The territorial coverage of this call is the EU Member States, [EU candidate countries and non-EU countries in the Creative Europe Programme](#). All activities shall be conducted in an independent manner.

Timetable

The indicative schedule for the selection procedure is as follows:

Steps	Date
Deadline for submitting applications	16 October 2023
Jury Selection	3 November 2023
Individual workshop for grantees	November-December 2023
Development report for the grantees	15 January 2024
Signature of grant agreement	29 January 2024

Scheduled start date for the action: as soon as possible upon signature of grant agreement. The duration of the project is a **maximum of one year (12 months)**.

Available budget

The total amount available under this call for proposals is **€30,000** divided between **two successful candidates**.

Admissibility criteria

In order to be admissible, [Expression of Interest](#) must be:

- sent before the deadline on 16 October 2023;
- submitted in electronic format (pdf), using the [Expression of Interest form](#);
- supporting documents must also be submitted;
- the [Needs Assessment](#) must be filled; and
- all submitted documents must be written in English

Who is eligible?

Proposals may be submitted by **independent media self-regulatory bodies** in **emergency situations** that **handle complaints** from the public about **potential infringements of journalistic ethics** and **make decisions** based on a transparent complaints procedure and a code of journalistic ethics.

Country of establishment

Only applications from legal entities established in the following countries are eligible:

- EU Member States;
- Candidate countries to the EU (Turkey, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Moldova, Ukraine, and Bosnia and Herzegovina).
- Non-EU participating countries in the Creative Europe Programme (see full list [here](#)).

Type of Organisation

- The self-regulatory bodies must be legal entities officially incorporated for at least one year before the application deadline of the grant call.

Supporting documents

In order to assess the applicants' eligibility, you are requested to provide the following documents:

- copy of articles of association,
- certificate of liability to VAT (if, as in certain countries, the trade register number and VAT number are identical, only one of these documents is required),
- other documents attached to the [Expression of Interest](#).

Eligible activities

The financial support programme intends to support media councils in emergency situations, including financing of their regular operations. The following types of activities are eligible under this call for proposals:

- Office related costs;
- Core staff costs;
- Website, communication;

- Data collection and analysis;
- Events (including general assemblies and periodical statutory Meetings), training and conferences;
- Networking, exchanges of best practices;
- Studies, analysis and mapping

Only one project application is possible per applicant.

Implementation period

The maximum duration of the project is 12 months.

Award criteria

Assessment criteria	Max. score	Threshold
Emergency situation Does the organisation show well that it is in an "emergency situation" as defined by the call?	30	15
Relevance How relevant is the organisation to the objectives and priorities of the call? How clearly are the needs of the media council defined?	25	12.5
Operational & management capabilities Does the applicant sufficiently satisfy the operational, financial and independence requirements of the call?	15	7.5
Impact How will the self-regulation body use the grant to better serve its community and/or the overall media environment?	20	10
Sustainability Is the financial support likely to have a long-term effect?	20	10
	100	55

Minimum score per criterion (threshold): Proposals are considered successful when they obtain a score of 50% and higher for each criteria.

Minimum total score (threshold): Proposals must reach a total score of 55 points or higher in order to be considered successful at the end of the evaluation process.

Procedure for submitting applications

Proposals must be submitted by the deadline.

No modification to the application is allowed once the deadline for submission has elapsed.

However, if there is a need to clarify certain aspects or to correct mistakes, the EFJ and its partners may contact the applicant during the evaluation process.

Applicants will be informed in writing about the results of the selection process.

The Expression of Interest

A complete expression must include:

- [Expression of Interest](#);
- [Needs Assessment](#);
- All supporting documents; where applicable, all additional information considered necessary by the applicant can be included on separate sheets.

Applications must be **emailed** to Rebecca Bonello Ghio (rebecca@europeanjournalists.org).

Applicants can ask further information about the [Expression of Interest](#) also by emailing Rebecca.

Language

The application, including related documents, shall be submitted in English.

Selection Process

The selection will be carried at the sole discretion of a jury of three experts.

The jury will reject incomplete or unsigned Expressions of Interest, as well as those Expressions of Interest not complying with the eligibility criteria.

Information Session

[Register](#) for the online info session about this grant taking place online on 29 September, 14:00hrs CEST.

Financial Provisions

Eligible costs

Eligible costs shall meet all the following criteria:

- they are incurred by the beneficiary.
- they are incurred during the duration of the action, with the exception of costs relating to final reports and audit certificates;
- they are indicated in the estimated budget of the action;
- they are necessary for the implementation of the action which is the subject of the grant;
- they are identifiable and verifiable, in particular being recorded in the accounting records of the beneficiary and determined according to the applicable accounting standards of the country where the beneficiary is established and according to the usual cost accounting practices of the beneficiary;

- they comply with the requirements of applicable tax and social legislation;
- they are reasonable, justified, and comply with the principle of sound financial management, in particular regarding economy and efficiency.

The beneficiary's internal accounting and auditing procedures must permit direct reconciliation of the costs and revenue declared in respect of the action/project with the corresponding accounting statements and supporting documents.

Eligible costs may be direct or indirect.

Eligible direct costs

The eligible direct costs for the action are the costs which:

with due regard to the conditions of eligibility set out above, are identifiable as specific costs directly linked to the performance of the action and which can therefore be booked to it directly, such as:

(a) *the costs of personnel working under an employment contract with the beneficiary or an equivalent appointing act and assigned to the action, provided that these costs are in line with the beneficiary's usual policy on remuneration.*

Those costs include actual salaries plus social security contributions and other statutory costs included in the remuneration.

They may also comprise additional remunerations, including payments on the basis of supplementary contracts regardless of the nature of those contracts, provided that they are paid in a consistent manner whenever the same kind of work or expertise is required, independently from the source of funding used;

The costs of natural persons working under a contract with the beneficiary other than an employment contract or who are seconded to the beneficiary by a third party against payment may also be included under such personnel costs, provided that the following conditions are fulfilled:

(i) *the person works under conditions similar to those of an employee (in particular regarding the way the work is organised, the tasks that are performed and the premises where they are performed);*

(ii) *the result of the work belongs to the beneficiary (unless exceptionally agreed otherwise); and*

(iii) *the costs are not significantly different from the costs of staff performing similar tasks under an employment contract with the beneficiary;*

The recommended methods for the calculation of direct personnel costs will be provided in during the Workshop phase.

(b) *costs of travel and related subsistence allowances, provided that these costs are in line with the beneficiary's usual practices on travel;*

(c) the depreciation costs of equipment or other assets (new or second-hand) as recorded in the beneficiary's accounting statements, provided that the asset:

(i) is written off in accordance with the international accounting standards and the beneficiary's usual accounting practices; and

(ii) has been purchased in accordance with the rules on implementation contracts laid down in the grant agreement, if the purchase occurred within the implementation period;

The costs of renting or leasing equipment or other assets are also eligible, provided that these costs do not exceed the depreciation costs of similar equipment or assets and are exclusive of any finance fee;

Only the portion of the equipment's depreciation, rental or lease costs corresponding to the implementation period and the rate of actual use for the purposes of the action may be taken into account when determining the eligible costs. By way of exception, the full cost of purchase of equipment may be eligible under the Special Conditions, if this is justified by the nature of the action and the context of the use of the equipment or assets;

(d) costs of consumables and supplies, provided that they:

(i) are purchased in accordance with the rules on implementation contracts laid down in the grant agreement; and

(ii) are directly assigned to the action;

(e) costs arising directly from requirements imposed by the Agreement (dissemination of information, specific evaluation of the action, audits, translations, reproduction), including the costs of requested financial guarantees, provided that the corresponding services are purchased in accordance with the rules on implementation contracts laid down in the grant agreement;

(f) costs derived from subcontracts, provided that specific conditions on subcontracting as laid down in the grant agreement are met;

(g) duties, taxes and charges paid by the beneficiary, notably value added tax (VAT), provided that they are included in eligible direct costs, and unless specified otherwise in the grant agreement.

Eligible indirect costs (overheads)

Indirect costs are costs that are not directly linked to the action implementation and therefore cannot be attributed directly to it.

A flat-rate amount of maximum 7% of the total eligible direct costs of the action, is eligible as indirect costs, representing the beneficiary's general administrative costs which can be regarded as chargeable to the action/project.

Indirect costs may not include costs entered under another budget heading.

Applicants' attention is drawn to the fact that if they are receiving an operating grant financed by the EU budget, they may not declare indirect costs for the period(s) covered by the operating grant, unless they can demonstrate that the operating grant does not cover any costs of the action.

In order to demonstrate this, in principle, the beneficiary should:

a. use *analytical cost accounting that allows to separate all costs (including overheads) attributable to the operating grant and the action grant*. For that purpose the beneficiary should use *reliable accounting codes and allocation keys* ensuring that *the allocation* of the costs is done in a *fair, objective and realistic way*.

b. *record separately*:

– all costs incurred for the operating grants (i.e. personnel, general running costs and other operating costs linked to the part of its usual annual activities), and

– all costs incurred for the action grants (including the actual indirect costs linked to the action)

If the operating grant covers the entire usual annual activity and budget of the beneficiary, the latter is not entitled to receive any indirect costs under the action grant.

Ineligible costs

The following items are not considered as eligible costs:

- return on capital and dividends paid by a beneficiary;
- debt and debt service charges;
- provisions for losses or debts;
- interest owed;
- doubtful debts;
- exchange losses;
- costs of transfers from the European Federation of Journalists charged by the bank of a beneficiary;
- costs declared by the beneficiary under another action receiving a grant financed from the European Union budget.
 - Such grants include grants awarded by a Member State and financed from the Union budget and grants awarded by bodies other than the Commission for the purpose of implementing the Union budget.
- contributions in kind from third parties;
- excessive or reckless expenditure;
- deductible VAT.

Reporting and payment arrangements

Payment arrangements

The beneficiary may request the following payments provided that the conditions of the grant agreement are fulfilled (e.g. payment deadlines, ceilings, etc.). The payment requests shall be accompanied by the documents provided below and detailed in the grant agreement:

Payment request	Accompanying documents
<p>A pre-financing payment corresponding to 50% of the maximum grant amount</p>	<p>Signature of the contract</p>
<p>Payment of the balance</p> <p>The EFJ will establish the amount of this payment on the basis of the calculation of the final grant amount. If the total of earlier payments is higher than the final grant amount, the beneficiary will be required to reimburse the amount paid in excess by the EFJ through a recovery order.</p>	<p>(a) final technical report (b) final financial statement</p>

Other financial conditions

Non-cumulative award

An action may only receive one grant.

Non-retroactivity

No grant may be awarded retrospectively for actions already completed.

A grant may be awarded for an action which has already begun only where the applicant can demonstrate in the grant application the need to start the action before the grant agreement is signed. In such cases, costs eligible for financing may not have been incurred prior to the date of submission of the grant application.


Implementation contracts/sub-contracting

Where the implementation of the action requires the award of procurement contracts (implementation contracts), the beneficiary may award the contract in accordance with its usual purchasing practices provided that the contract is awarded to the tender offering best value for money or the lowest price (as appropriate), avoiding conflicts of interest.

The beneficiary is expected to clearly document the tendering procedure and retain the documentation in the event of an audit.

Beneficiaries may subcontract tasks forming part of the action. If they do so, they must ensure that, in addition to the above-mentioned conditions of best value for money and absence of conflicts of interests, the following conditions are also complied with:

- a) subcontracting does not cover core tasks of the action;
- b) recourse to subcontracting is justified because of the nature of the action and what is necessary for its implementation;

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- a) subcontracting does not cover core tasks of the action;
 - b) recourse to subcontracting is justified because of the nature of the action and what is necessary for its implementation;
 - c) the estimated costs of the subcontracting are clearly identifiable in the estimated budget;
 - d) any recourse to subcontracting, if not provided for in description of the action, is communicated by the beneficiary and approved by the Commission. The Commission may grant approval:
 - (i) before any recourse to subcontracting, if the beneficiaries requests an amendment
 - (ii) after recourse to subcontracting if the subcontracting:
 - is specifically justified in the interim or final technical report and
 - does not entail changes to the grant agreement which would call into question the decision awarding the grant or be contrary to the equal treatment of applicants;
 - e) the beneficiaries ensure that certain conditions applicable to beneficiaries, enumerated in the grant agreement (e.g. visibility, confidentiality, etc.), are also applicable to the subcontractors.