

## Public Call for Applications:

# Financial Support to Regional Media Organisations in Armenia

### 1. Background of the Call for Application

The consortium consisting of DW Akademie (lead organization), BBC MA, OSIAF (executed by OSF-Armenia) and two Armenian media organisations Hetq and Factor, were awarded from the European Commission to implement the EU co-funded project “European Media Facility in Armenia – Building sustainable and professional media”. The overall aim of the project is to contribute to a vibrant Armenian media sector that is able to fulfil its role as a watchdog for Armenian society. In particular, the project aims to support independent Armenian media to become more professional and financially sustainable. The project foresees a whole set of activities, for instance the set up of an E-School for media management, capacity building for fact-checking and investigative reporting, strengthening networks within Armenia as well as with Eastern Neighborhood and European counterparts, and the financial support to regional media organisations.

The project started on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020 and will last for three years. Within the project lifetime the project will target media managers and independent journalists from national and regional media outlets, journalism students, small regional media outlets as well as local stakeholders such as universities.

For further information for this project, please find updates on the project on our [social media page](#).

### 2. Priority of the Call for Application

This call for applications is to award 10 regional media outlets (e.g. online, TV, radio, print) in Armenia with financial support **to enable them developing strategies for producing relevant content and becoming more sustainable**.

Regional media is viewed as essential contributors to a vibrant and strong media sector in Armenia because they provide direct access to the communities they serve, especially in rural areas. However, small regional media is often bypassed by their bigger counterparts, also when it comes to international donorship. This call for applications targets small regional media organisations who are interested in playing a more active and reliable role in community lives by improved journalistic standards,



editorial structures and financing methods. For a more vibrant media landscape, it is essential to develop contents and reports on key aspects of local people's lives, be it environmental aspects, peace and conflict, or the rights of marginalized groups. Regional journalists and media organisations carry the expert knowledge about the communities they serve. They are therefore in the best position to contribute to the fulfilment of the project's objectives.

The proposed projects must have:

- an added value to the organization(s)'s ongoing work, and
- activities they carry out to raise awareness about socially relevant topics, such as environmental issues, marginalized groups, people with disabilities, and/or women, making a contribution to the regional stability in Armenia.

### 3. Benefits for Applicants & Requirements for Participation

The awarded organisations will become part of a media network within Armenia as well as with Eastern Neighborhood and European partner countries and benefit from various joint activities. They will also benefit from the audience research via VideoMetrics, and consultation about the research results to better understand audience needs and expectations.

The participation in the below listed activities is obligatory and the organisation has to ensure sufficient resources and time to take part.

Obligatory participation in activities:

- Participation in E-School Program to strengthen capacities in marketing, strategic management, finance and digital strategies (approx. 20 hours within three months online course)
- If circumstances allow, participation in Study Tour to Europe (approx. 1 week)
- Participation in workshops and individual consultations on content production, editorial strategy and management (approx. 2 workshops 2-3 days each)
- Participation in network meetings and events (approx. 1-2 events)
- Participation in supervision of progress (constantly ongoing)

In turn, selected organisations shall be open to offer students the opportunity to practice their skills and gain experience in journalistic work.

A detailed program and timetable of activities will be provided after the award. Costs for the participation in the above listed activities do NOT form part of the financial support. They are provided on top of the maximum amount indicated in section 6.

On the organizational level, the following requirement shall apply:

- Active commitment to the project's objectives:
  - full involvement and engagement in all project activities
  - strive to development and improvement
  - adequate integration of female candidates and people with disabilities
- Sustainability:
  - commitment to stay involved with the applicants beyond the end of the project
  - maintaining of relevant thematic topics
- Organizational values:
  - openness
  - accountability
  - political independence and neutrality
  - journalistic ethics
- Reliability to ensure effective implementation of the project in terms of administration and content:
  - financial reliability (proven through records of the past)
  - transparency
  - functioning personnel structure

#### 4. Eligibility of Activities

Proposed activities should be related to environmental protection and climate change, human rights issues, gender, discrimination of marginalized groups, national conflicts, and/or other social sensitive topics.

Eligible for funding are media productions, such as online and social media, radio, video or TV reports (e.g. series of contents on aspects mentioned above). Priority will be given to online media.

## 5. Eligibility of the Applicant

In order to be eligible to submit the application, the applicant must be:

- a. A registered independent legal non-profit or media entity (online, TV, radio, print media) in Armenia;
- b. Operate outside the capital and have its offices in the region;
- c. Operating since a minimum of two years from its day of registration;
- d. The applicant organization must have a clear accounting system and procedure including proper documentation of financial transactions;

Priority will be given to media outlets that engage in social relevant topics in remote areas and support female journalists.

## 6. Eligibility of costs

The financial support enables the selected media to develop content that is relevant to their audience, mainly the rural population, and that relates to topics of social importance (among them environmental issues; discrimination against members of marginalized groups).

The financial support shall not be used to procure significant amounts of equipment or invest in infrastructure other than that which the selection committee deems essential for the proposed project and also for the future operations of the third party. For example, this could include a small number of inexpensive technical equipment. The majority of the funds will be used to invest in human resources.

### Eligible costs in detail:

- Contribution to personnel costs
- Costs for local travel (car rental, public transport, etc.)
- Costs for hotel and subsistence (per diem)
- Equipment (small items only, such as camera)
- Costs for infrastructure in relation to project proportion: contribution to office rent, electricity, internet, tel/fax
- Other Costs, services, such as publications (layout and print), visibility, financial services
- Costs for activities, such as freelance-journalists, citizen journalists, students, or consultants who receive fees/daily rates, costs for studio rental, etc.

### Non-eligible costs:

- Purchase of bigger items, vehicles or furniture, land or buildings
- Debts and debt service charges (interests)
- Provisions for losses or potential future liabilities
- Costs declared by the recipient and financed by another action or work programme receiving a European Union grant (including through the European Development Fund)
- Currency exchange losses
- Office rent, unless the applicant can demonstrate that additional and specific office rental is necessary for the purpose of the action implementation;
- Taxes, including VAT, unless the Recipient can demonstrate they cannot reclaim them
- Credit to third parties
- In kind contributions (e.g. valorisation of existing equipment, donations, volunteer work etc.)
- Salary costs of the personnel of national administrations, unless otherwise specified in the special conditions and only to the extent that they relate to the cost of activities which the relevant public authority would not carry out if the action were not undertaken
- Performance-based bonuses included in costs of staff

## **7. Size of Financial Support**

A maximum of 20.000,00 Euro will be awarded to each successful applicant.

The funds will be disbursed in three or more instalments (details to be fixed in the contract) according to the project deliverables and reporting timeline. The exact amount to be reimbursed will undergo regular progress monitoring, flagging potential problems and seeking solutions.

Each project will undergo regular reviews by the selection committee in order to determine its continued viability.

## **8. Location and Timetable for Financial Support**

Media outlets applying for financial support should be based in the rural and preferably remote areas of Armenia. Financial support will be given for two periods – the first period will start from 15<sup>th</sup> July 2021 to 15<sup>th</sup> March 2022 and the second period from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022. Each applicant can only apply to one period.

## 9. Number of applications and grant per applicant

Each applicant can submit only one application.

## 10. Documents to Apply for Financial Support

The Application must be written in English or Armenian language. Hand-written applications will not be accepted. The narrative should be limited to 5 pages only. Submission of budgets without pre-given templates.

The following documents need to be sent:

- Annex I for the narrative, using the template provided
- Annex II for the work plan/timetable using the template provided
- Budget (no template provided)

Additionally, applicants should submit by email together with the application and additional Annexes the following documents. Please provide scanned versions or photography of original documents if applicable:

- a. Certificate of registration
- b. Latest annual financial report
- c. List with reference projects (2 or 3 examples with best practices, such as articles, reports (no template provided)
- d. Organisational chart, containing information about permanent and non-permanent staff working in the organisation and their journalistic background (no template provided)

## 11. Prevention of fraud and corruption & Complaint Mechanism

DWA has a policy of zero tolerance of fraud and corruption and always require its staff and partners to act honestly and with integrity. Thus, the applicant and /or co-applicant will develop and apply a thorough anti-fraud- and anti-corruption-system according to local and international best practice standards at any stage of the financial support to third parties process, i.e. during tendering, application and implementation process.

To achieve this, we will:

- develop, maintain and consistently apply effective controls at all levels;
- ensure that if fraud or corruption occurs, a vigorous and prompt investigation takes place, and that findings are reported / reports are shared with stakeholders as appropriate;
- take appropriate disciplinary and legal action in all cases, where and as justified;

- take all appropriate and reasonable steps to recover any financial losses;
- review systems and procedures to prevent similar frauds or acts of corruption;
- ensure fraud and corruption risks are taken into consideration in future program planning.

A sound complaint management system ensures that applicants and grantees have a source for communicating their problems and concerns, including suspicion of any kind of malpractice (whistle blower function) by contacting the following email address: [dw-akademie.complain@dw.com](mailto:dw-akademie.complain@dw.com).

This email address is related to the head office of DW Akademie in Germany where a complaint management team will take up the concern and initiate next steps. As such, any applicant or award grantee will have the opportunity to address matters of any kind confidentially.

## 12. Request for Clarification

The applicant has the right to send a request for clarification until 14.05.2021 to the following email address [dw-akademie.armenia@dw.com](mailto:dw-akademie.armenia@dw.com). All questions will be answered, summarized and shared in a compiled document on the online platform of the call (<https://share.ard-zdf-box.de/s/APym9qcN8ag76gi>) and via email with all applicants no later than 21.05.2021.

After this date, no further answers will be provided. To ensure equal treatment of applicants, the contractor will not give a prior opinion on a work programme, an action or specific activities. The contractor may, on its own initiative, inform interested parties of any error, inaccuracy, omission or clerical in the text of the call for proposals on the respective website. It is therefore advisable to consult this website regularly in order to be informed of any updates and of the questions and answers published. No modification to the proposal is allowed once the deadline for submission has elapsed. If there is a need to clarify certain aspects or to correct clerical mistakes, the contractor may contact the applicant for this purpose during the evaluation process. This is generally done by e-mail. It is entirely the responsibility of applicants to ensure that all contact information provided is accurate and functioning. In case of any change of contact details, please send an email with the new contact details to the functional mailbox indicated above. Applicants will be informed in written form about the results of the selection process. Unsuccessful applicants will be informed of the reasons for rejection. No information regarding the award procedure will be disclosed until the notification letters have been sent to the beneficiaries.

### 13. Deadline for Submission and Procedures to Follow

Step 1: submission of application, work plan and budget as well as supporting documents (certificate of registration, annual financial report, list with reference projects, organizational chart). Please use provided templates. (<https://share.ard-zdf-box.de/s/APym9qcN8ag76gi>)

#### **Deadline for submission: 31.05.2021**

The project proposals can be submitted via email to:

[dw-akademie.armenia@dw.com](mailto:dw-akademie.armenia@dw.com)

Step 2: award of grants and contract signing. Grantee contract template is available here for information (<https://share.ard-zdf-box.de/s/APym9qcN8ag76gi>)

### 14. Information Session

We will hold an information session on the 17.05. from 12.00 to 14.00 Yerevan time. If you would like to attend the session, please register beforehand by sending an email to the email address below, mentioning names, email address and organization of the people wishing to attend: [dw-akademie.armenia@dw.com](mailto:dw-akademie.armenia@dw.com)

### 15. Reporting and Payment Arrangements

Each FSTP recipient should provide the first narrative and financial reports after three months of implementation. The second narrative and financial reports are due after six months of implementation. The final narrative and financial reports must be submitted two weeks after the end of the contract.

Successful projects will be pre-financed with 40% of the total budget after the contract signing. Additional 40% will be transferred after three months when 80 % of the initial payment according to the expenditure plan have been spent and upon approval of narrative and financial reports. Additional 20% will be transferred after six months when 80 % of the previous payment according to the expenditure plan have been spent and upon approval of narrative and financial reports. Depending on the size of organisation, more instalments can be discussed during contract preparation.

### 16. Evaluation and Selection of Applications

The financial support will be awarded through a competitive process to the 10 most suitable regional media outlets (July 2021-March 2022: 5 media outlets;

April-December 2022: 5 media outlets). A selection committee consisting of 2 representatives each (1 Project Manager, 1 Project Director) from DWA, BBC and OSF-Armenia will be in charge of approving the financial support.

The application shall not exceed 5 pages and provide information about:

- the relevance of the proposal to the project
- motivation of the organization to improve its capacities and to take part in the overall project network
- ideas for content productions taking into consideration the local needs and relevant topics for rural population (including environmental issues, human rights, discrimination of marginalized groups, the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the territory Nagorno-Karabakh, and other socially sensitive topics)
- Risks during implementation
- Organizational capacities (e.g. personnel structure, accounting system and procedure including proper documentation of financial transactions, reference projects) as well as its management structure to implement the proposed activities.
- Budget and timetable for planned activities.

The selection committee will evaluate the applying organizations according to the aforementioned criteria and a thorough and fair ranking system (evaluation grid with the categories organization, relevance to the project, motivation, organizational potential, management structure, content, risks). The highest scored projects will be awarded. A list with awarded grants will be published on our [social media page](#).

The evaluation criteria are divided into headings and sub-headings. Criteria under heading 1 are eliminatory. If answer to any of the criteria is “No” the application will be rejected on this sole basis. For heading 2 and 3, each subheading will be given a score between 1 and 4 as follows; 1= poor; 2=adequate; 3=good; 4= very good. Criteria under heading 2.5.2 will be scored based on the quality of documents submitted. Better proposals will receive higher scores.

1. ADMINISTRATIVE CHECK	yes	no
1.1 The deadline for submission has been met		
1.2 The applicant satisfies the eligibility criteria in section 5		

1.3 Supporting documents were submitted in accordance with the guidelines		
*If all previous answers were YES, Application is accepted		
DECISION		
<b>2. EVALUATION OF THE APPLICATION</b>	<b>Sub-score</b>	<b>24</b>
2.1 Relevance of the proposal to the project	Max 4	
2.2 Motivation of participation	Max 4	
2.3 Quality/relevance of ideas for content productions	Max 4	
2.4 Risks during implementation & mitigation measures	Max 4	
2.5.1 Organisational Potential (General experience of applicant and staff, reference projects (Annex), donors/funding sources, accounting and documentation system)	Max 4	
2.5.2 Management Structure (management and personnel structure, number of staff permanent and non-permanent, organisational chart)	Max 4	
<b>3. Evaluation of Budget and Workplan</b>	<b>Sub-score</b>	<b>8</b>
3.1 Are the activities well-planned and realistic to achieve them in the given timeframe?	Max 4	
3.2 Is the budget in accordance with the planned activities? Cost/value analyses	Max 4	
<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>		<b>32</b>

After the applicant's approval, the selection committee and finance administrations of DWA, BBC and OSIAFA will work out agreed deliverables, procurement and project timeline and funds resulting in a grant contract.

### 17. Indicative timetable of the Financial Support

#### Financial Support for 2021 (five organisations):

Publish/announce the Call for Proposal	03 May 2021
Online information Session	17 May 2021
Deadline for submission of applications, work plan and budget	31 May 2021
Evaluation of Applications	June 2021
Notification to applicants on evaluation results	1 July 2021
Contract signing and project orientation with the selected applicants including proper accounting of project expenses	15 July 2021
Start of project implementation	15 July 2021
End of project implementation	15 March 2022



**Financial Support for 2022 (five organisations):**

Contract signing and project orientation with the selected applicants including proper accounting of project expenses (note: selection has already taken place at the first stage – at this stage only a post-check if all criteria are still met will be done before contract signature)	15 March 2022
Start of project implementation	1 April 2022
End of project implementation	31 December 2022

**18. Processing Personal Data**

Any personal data will be processed solely for the purposes of the performance, management and monitoring of this application and may also be passed to the bodies charged with monitoring or inspection tasks under European Union law. Applicant(s) will have the right of access to their personal data and the right to rectify any such data. If the Applicant(s) have any queries concerning the processing of personal data, they shall address them to DW Akademie.

The Applicant(s) must process personal data under this application in compliance with applicable EU and national law on data protection (including authorisations or notification requirements). The Applicant(s) shall limit access and use of personal data to that strictly necessary for the performance, management and monitoring of this contract and shall adopt all appropriate technical and organisational security measures.

**19. LIST OF ANNEXES**

- Annex I: Application form
- Annex II: Workplan/Timetable
- Annex III: Draft Contract Agreement (just for information, not to be submitted)
- Annex IV: General Conditions (just for information, not to be submitted)