

Grant program

“Support for increased quality of media content and strengthening of minority language media production in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania”

(Baltic Media Grant Scheme Phase III in 2020-2021)

GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

1. General information

The current program is a continuation of the Nordic Council of Ministers support provided for the media in the Baltic countries during the years 2015-2016 and 2018-2019. This particular program focuses on the creation of media content in minority languages, addressing communities in ethnically diverse or distinct regions of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The total sum available for grants is approximately 1.700.000 DKK (or 227.000 EUR) for years 2020-2021.

There are substantial Russian speaking minorities in all the three Baltic countries and in addition to that, a considerable Polish speaking minority in Lithuania. Although progress has been made when it comes to their integration into society, it could be argued that integration and inclusion could be enhanced with an increased domestic supply of high-quality information sources addressing these groups, in particular in minority languages. The current situation, where these communities often tend to turn to media content produced outside their own home countries, is not supportive in that respect, and in addition also leaves them with a limited choice. In addition, the media content produced in national languages is not always taking into account the needs and demands of these audiences. Therefore, there is a need to increase the volume and quality of locally, nationally and regionally produced media products in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, particularly in minority languages, in order to promote a more diversified media landscape. The Media Grant Program proved itself as making a contribution to supporting minority language media outlets in improving the content and quality of the media products.

2. Objective and goals

The main objective of the Program is to increase quality and attractiveness of local, regional and national media and media products in the Baltic countries, with a special focus on inclusive content that addresses the needs and demands of communities in ethnically diverse or distinct regions.

The goal of the Program is to augment and enhance production of high-quality content in local, regional and national media products and media outlets in the Baltic countries by providing small scale grants.

3. Eligible applicants and activities

Application can be submitted by editorial offices of media outlets registered in one of the three Baltic States, or by freelance journalists from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The freelance journalists should provide the official document for status of an artist or a self-employed person or any other legal document validating the journalistic activities in the relevant country.

The main outputs expected from a supported project is the high quality print, broadcasted or online media products addressing the Russian and Polish speaking audiences in the Baltic States. Content can be produced in Russian, Polish, Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian language; however priority will be given to the media products produced in Russian or Polish.

The projects that apply new technical solutions and create innovative media platforms, with the aim to get a better outreach to younger audiences, are encouraged to apply. This could also include elements of support for the creation of common platforms, where different language communities will have possibilities to meet in order to strengthen integration in society. Project may as well facilitate cooperation between different media actors in one specific country, as well as between actors in several Baltic countries.

All the media products created during the projects shall be published in relevant local, national or regional media registered in one or more of the Baltic countries. Freelance journalists will need to document their access to publishing in media in order to qualify for a grant.

The projects are encouraged to address or relate to the following cross-cutting themes: gender, sustainable development and youth. Also, the media products produced within the project must comply with the core principles of *good journalism*: truth and accuracy, independence, fairness and impartiality, humanity and accountability. The application and the reports shall include description of the relevancy of the project to the cross-cutting themes and the principles of good journalism.

All funded media products have to be freely accessible to a national or global online audience without any access barriers such as paid access or registration. The grant scheme will concentrate on production of media content, and will, therefore, not be able to support directly the enhancement of skills and capacities of media professionals, study trips, trainings, purchase of equipment, rent of premises etc.

The maximum duration of projects – 12 months.

4. Funding principles

The following expenses are eligible under four key budget categories of the program:

1. Media production costs:
 - 1.1. Salary for production of media products (remuneration to employed journalists, translators, editors, designers, the freelance journalists acting as project applicants, etc.);
 - 1.2. External services for production of media products (payment for provision of external media production services, such as article production, translation, editing, production of video or audio material, etc.).
2. Travel and accommodation costs:
 - 2.1. International travel (expenses for economy flight, train and bus tickets, fuel, insurance, per diem, etc.);
 - 2.2. Local travel (economy local transport tickets, car rent, fuel, etc.);
 - 2.3. Accommodation (economy hotels, etc.).
3. Project management costs:
 - 3.1. Project manager remuneration (payment for the project manager salary or fee) – maximum 10% of grant (ineligible for freelance journalists acting as project applicants);
 - 3.2. Other costs (payment for rent of equipment, distribution and promotion of media products, etc.) – maximum 10% of the grant.
4. Indirect costs (Overheads) (costs related to the administration of the project, such as office supplies, accounting, communication costs, etc.) – maximum 7% of the grant.

The minimum grant is 600 EUR, and the maximum – 10.000 EUR. In some cases, in particular projects that include cooperation between several partners in one Baltic country, between partners in more than one Baltic country, as well as investigative journalism projects where a bigger grant size can be motivated, the maximum grant for the project could be up to 20.000 EUR.

All the expenses shall be well justified and relevant to the project activities. The budget in Application shall be detailed, e.g. clearly indicating the number of units and costs per unit.

The Application shall clearly specify the project outputs, e.g. number of articles published, number of videos produced and broadcasted, number of radio reportages issued, number of posts on social media posted, size of audience reached, number

of the new journalists/editors engaged, new cooperation with other media outlets established, etc.

Applications shall provide clear evidence of project sustainability, covering the further actions of the applicant in continuing project activities, which will be assessed during evaluation stage.

Applications must include at least 5% of co-funding by the Applicant as its own input in launching and running the project. Proposals with a bigger share of co-funding by the Applicant or merged funding by the third party will be viewed favourably during the selection process, and are encouraged.

Co-funding may be given as a monetary or in-kind contribution, either by the Applicant or through a third party (organisation/partner/donor/authority) towards the project.

To be considered as co-funding the contribution needs to be directly linked to the budgetary framework provided and be an integral part of the Application.

5. Application and implementation process

The Application must follow the template of the provided Application Form and take note of the instructions given there. Applicants are encouraged to make themselves familiar with the Application Form before they start drafting the Application.

The deadline for Applications is **1st March 2020 (latest at 23.59 Lithuanian time)**. Applications should be signed by the official representative of the Applicant and submitted to mediagrants@norden.lt in two formats – a scanned document and in a Word format.

Any Application submitted after this deadline will be rejected. It is the sole responsibility of the Applicant to ensure that the Application is made in accordance with these Guidelines and is submitted within the deadlines given.

The Nordic Council of Ministers offices in each Baltic country will form Country Evaluation Committee (EC) which will make decisions on selection and funding of successful projects in the relevant country. The Secretariat of the Program formed by the Nordic Council of Ministers Office in Lithuania will be in charge of management and monitoring of the Media Grant programme.

In case if the grant approved is less than requested in the application, the Applicant will be asked to provide a revised Application including the revised budget, timetable, activities and outputs. The Applicant will be allowed to reduce the quantity and volume of the media products to be produced within the project proportionally to the reduced grant.

The successful Applicants will be notified by e-mail by 17th April 2020. The successful Applicants will sign a Grant Agreement with the Secretariat. Before signing the Grant Agreement, the Applicant may choose the grant payment order from two options: 1) 55+45% or 2) 40+45+15%, where:

- the first payment is paid as advance payment after signing the Grant Agreement;
- the interim payment is paid as advance payment after approval of the Interim Report;
- the last payment is paid as compensation of the expenses paid within the project timeframe after approval of the Final Report.

Implementation of the approved project may start from 1st May 2020, if Grant Agreement is in place by that time. All projects must be finished not later than 30th June 2021.

The grant shall be used according to the project budget agreed in the Grant Agreement. Any shifting of up to 20% of grants between the budget lines within the same budget category are allowed without approval of the Secretariat. The shifting of more than 20% from one budget line to another within the same budget category should be approved by the Secretariat by e-mail. The key project changes, such as reallocation of budget between the budget categories, changing the duration, location, activities, outputs of the project or any other key project elements, should be agreed in the Amendment of the Grant

Agreement.

The project implementer is obliged to pay all the taxes according to the national legislation of the relevant country. All the project expenses (including co-funding) shall be paid over within the timeframe of the project. Only economy class tickets and hotels is eligible to be paid from the grant for travel and accommodation expenses.

The accounting for co-funding (in line with the project budget) and overheads (7%) is not mandatory but encouraged.

The Interim Report might be foreseen in the Grant Agreements for the monitoring purposes. The Interim Report will require to submit a short narrative report on project activities and financial report for advance payment used. The justification of project expenditures at the interim stage can be required to provide in certain cases. The interim advance payment (in case of the second payment order option) is made after approval of the Interim Report.

A Final Report including project narrative and financial parts must be submitted to the Secretariat not later than one month after the official end of the project. The narrative part of the Final Report shall describe the project activities implemented and project outputs and outcomes achieved together with documentation of the produced and published media products. A list of the project outputs produced should be provided together with the active links to the media products to reach them on-line (if relevant). In case of producing printed media outputs, the scanned copies or photocopies of the printed media products should be submitted with the Final Report. No paper copies are requested to be sent by post.

Various audience and accessibility metrics shall be provided using data tools such as Google Analytics, Facebook Ads reports and other.

The financial part of the Final Report (in Excel spreadsheet) shall specify all the project expenses occurred in line with the project budget. The expenses shall be justified with the financial documents: the scanned copies of the signed service contracts, signed invoices, salary calculation tables (indicating taxes paid), timesheets, travel tickets, boarding passes, bank payment orders, bank statements, etc. The expenses on fuel shall be justified in specifying the project related travel goal and destination, date, distance in kilometres, vehicle, etc.

All project documentation (application, reports) must be in English.

6. Management and Information

The overall coordination of the programme will be done by the Steering Group consisting of three directors of the Nordic Council of Ministers Offices in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania under the auspices of the Nordic Council of Ministers Secretariat in Copenhagen. The management and monitoring of the programme will be implemented by the Nordic Council of Ministers Office in Lithuania, which will serve as Secretariat of the program, in close cooperation with the two other offices.

All information about the programme is available on <http://www.nordicmediagrants.org>. All questions related to the program should be addressed to mediagrants@norden.lt or by phone +370 682 52618 (contact person Lina Gumbrevičienė).