

## **Request for Quotation (RFQ)**

**For:** Researchers for the purpose of developing three research papers focused on the following issues:

- Big tech companies and local media in the Balkans,
- Media and their role in influencing the digital environment,
- State and non-state actors regulating/influencing online media outlets.

**Date:** September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2021

### **1. Overview of the Balkan Investigative Regional Network (BIRN)**

The Balkan Investigative Reporting Network is a network of non-governmental organisations promoting freedom of speech, human rights and democratic values in Southern and Eastern Europe.

BIRN has developed a specific network structure that includes local independent organisations, gathered around an umbrella organisation – Balkan Investigative Regional Reporting Network (BIRN Hub) – a structure that has the advantage of combining local, country-based expertise with unique regional cooperation. BIRN has local organisations in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Romania, and Serbia, while the Network is editorially also present in Greece, Bulgaria, Croatia, Moldova, Montenegro, Ukraine, the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia.

While the country organisations address local needs, BIRN Hub, registered in Bosnia and Herzegovina, also implements regional and international programs. BIRN Hub brings extensive expertise to journalists in post-communist and post-conflict societies, mainly through sharing the accumulated knowledge from the Western Balkan region.

Further information can be viewed at <https://birn.eu.com/>.

## 2. Introduction and Specification

BIRN Hub, as a part of the regional “[Media for All](#)” project, would like to request a quotation for the development of three research papers in the six Balkan countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia, and Montenegro) focused on the following issues:

- 2.1.1. Big tech companies and local media in the Balkans;
- 2.1.2. Media and their role in influencing the digital environment, and
- 2.1.3. State and non-state actors regulating/influencing online media outlets.

According to numerous reports, the lack of awareness of digitalisation's influence on professional reporting in the region is directly linked to the lack of research. Media in the region are struggling to reach their target audiences while also combating the immense growth of media operated by government-organised NGOs, smear campaigns and cyberattacks, fake news ‘factories’ and coordinated attacks on people’s reputations.

There is a lack of a strategic approach when it comes to communication between media and big tech companies’ representatives in the region, and it is increasingly difficult for journalists to ensure the proper dissemination of accurate and timely content on social media platforms. Some media outlets in the Balkans have established some level of collaboration with big tech companies in a very minor way. However, there hasn't been detailed research into how those companies are influencing the work of local media in the Balkan and which media have any contact and relationship with them on issues ranging from licensing to the protection of their brands on social networks.

Amid growing trends in the region such as fake news, disinformation and propaganda – particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic – some governments have been pushing forward legislative initiatives to regulate online media outlets’ content through administrative bodies. At the same time, journalists, editors, media stakeholders and civil society organisations have strengthened their efforts to increase the quality of

online journalism through improved ethical guidelines and self-regulatory bodies. But due to content moderation and algorithms, threats to professional journalism in the online space are having a strong impact on media freedom in the region.

BIRN wants to provide stakeholders and other interested parties with comprehensive reports and produce research papers on media and digital rights that present the researchers' findings in an engaging way.

The three research papers that are being commissioned by BIRN are intended to help media outlets better understand the digital environment as well as enhance their planning processes by providing them with clear insights into the effects of digital development. All the research papers should be finalised and sent to BIRN by **February 15, 2022**.

Documents to be included when submitting the quotation:

- 2.1.4. Expression of interest in one of the topics (mail or separate document);
- 2.1.5. Curriculum vitae (CV), and any other evidence of relevant work;
- 2.1.6. Research proposal (In 500 words, including: summary of the research, methodology, detailed outline of the paper, research timeline, and main expected outcome/finding/recommendation)
- 2.1.7. Financial proposal

The financial proposal shall specify a total lump sum amount and payment terms specific and measurable (qualitative and quantitative) deliverables (i.e. whether payments fall in installments or upon completion of the entire contract). Payments are based upon the output. The financial proposal should include a breakdown of the lump sum amount (including travel, per diem, and the number of anticipated working days).

**Important note**, when applying, please indicate for which topic you are sending a quotation. It is possible to send quotations for more than one topic. Individuals, teams and organisations are eligible to send their quotations on one or more research topics. If the same

individual/team/organisation is sending their quotation more than one research topic (which is allowed), it should be sent as a separate proposal.

### **3. Required qualifications**

#### **3.1. Academic Qualifications/Education**

3.1.1. Minimum bachelor's degree in business, information science, journalism, law, social sciences, etc.

#### **3.2. Experience**

3.2.1. At least 3 years of experience in the area of media law, digital rights, and digital media environment;

3.2.2. At least 5 years of experience in research, policy development, advisory services, capacity building, and similar;

3.2.3. Familiarity with media laws and regulations in the region.

#### **3.3. Language requirements**

3.3.1. Excellent written and oral communication skills in English.

#### **3.4. Other Requirements**

3.4.1. Experience working on data management and ICT analysis is an advantage;

3.4.2. Excellent computer skills (MS Office applications) and ability to use information technologies as a tool and resource.

### **4. Quotation Validity**

Your quotation must remain open for acceptance by the BIRN Hub for a minimum of 30 days from the date that it is issued to the BIRN Hub in response to this requirement.

### **5. Payment and Invoicing**

BIRN Hub will pay correctly addressed and undisputed invoices within 30 days of the invoice date. General requirements for an invoice for the BIRN Hub include:

5.1. A description of the goods/services supplied is included.

5.2. The BIRN Hub reference (i.e. Purchase Order number) is included.

5.3. It is sent electronically via email in PDF format to [aida.ajanovic@birnnetwork.org](mailto:aida.ajanovic@birnnetwork.org) or by post to: BIRN Hub, Branilaca Sarajeva 14/2, 71000 Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

## 6. Instructions for Responding

Your quotation must be submitted to Aida Ajanović, email: [aida.ajanovic@birnnetwork.org](mailto:aida.ajanovic@birnnetwork.org) by **October 20<sup>th</sup>**, 2021.

## 7. Clarification Requests

All clarification requests should be submitted to Aida Ajanović, email: [aida.ajanovic@birnnetwork.org](mailto:aida.ajanovic@birnnetwork.org).

## 8. Award Criteria

### 8.1. Best value for Money

When using this scoring method, the award of the contract should be made to the individual consultant whose offer has been evaluated and determined as both:

8.1.1. responsive/compliant/acceptable, and

8.1.2. Having received the highest score out of a pre-determined set of technical and financial criteria to the quotation.

Technical evaluation percentage	70%
Financial evaluation percentage	30%

The financial proposal should account for at least 30% of the total score.

### 8.2. Technical Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation will be conducted through *desk review*.

#### Qualification criteria

Criteria	Points
Relevant education	max 50 points
Relevant professional experience	max 50 points

#### Technical Evaluation Criteria

Criteria	Points
Rating based on qualifications	50%
Familiarity with the topic covered by the request for quotation	20%
Submitted methodology	30%

## 9. Disclaimer

By issuing this RFQ, the BIRN Hub is not bound in any way to enter into any contractual or other arrangements with you or any other potential supplier.

This research is implemented as a part of the regional “[Media for All](#)” project. The project is implemented by consortium led by the British Council, along with BIRN, Thomson Foundation and INTRAC.