

**Local Investigative Journalism Fund 2021**  
**Future Stories Award – Rules and Regulations**

EN/LT/SK

**Preamble**

1. The National Institute for Social Integration (hereinafter referred to as NISI) and European Dialogue (hereinafter referred to as ED) implement the **Local Investigative Journalism Fund** and 1st edition of the **Future Stories Award** in 2021 (hereinafter referred to as the Competition), and launch the Call for Entries that is open for journalistic investigations from Lithuania and Slovakia (hereinafter referred to as the Call). This initiative is part of their project **Media4Change – Future Story Lab** and is independent from all of their other activities.
2. The Media4Change – Future Investigative Story Lab supports cooperation, innovations, professional standards, and ultimately increase quality of content in the field of investigative journalism in Lithuania and Slovakia. The whole project has been co-funded by the **European Commission – DG CONNECT** – under the 2019 call for proposals “Media freedom and investigative journalism” (Pilot Project: Supporting investigative journalism and media freedom in the EU).
3. The aim of the Local Investigative Journalism Fund and the Competition is to support and strengthen the local collaborative investigative journalism and media making in Lithuania and Slovakia and to acknowledge and encourage production of high-quality professional, ethical, and innovative investigative content. It specifically focuses on those who create investigations following public interest and covering locally important topics, especially those that are not sufficiently covered or exposed at all.

**Article I. - General part**

1. The Local Investigative Journalism Fund, Competition, and Call are governed by the laws of the European Union, Republic of Lithuania, and Republic of Slovakia, other legal acts, the Statutes of NISI and ED, these Rules & regulations, and other internal documents.
2. The official timeline of the Competition is from **15 July 2021** (launch of the Call) to **30 September 2021** (Award ceremony). In unforeseen circumstances, such as *force majeure*, the duration may be extended.
3. Should there be any inconsistency or conflict between the English, Lithuanian, and Slovak versions of these Rules & Regulations, the English version shall prevail.

**Article II. - Date of Entries**

1. Entries must be original works of their author or authors and have been carried out and published during the 2020 and 2021 calendar years.

**Article III. - Key dates and deadlines**

1. Competition opens for Entry submissions: 15 July 2021
2. Early submission deadline: 18 August 2021, at 23:59 CET
3. Late submission deadline: 31 August 2021, at 23:59 CET
4. Evaluation period: 1 September - 20 September 2021
5. Public voting period: 17 September - 28 September 2021 (closing at 23:59 CET)
6. Winners announced: 30 September 2021

#### **Article IV. - Eligibility criteria - Applicants**

1. The Future Stories Award competition is open to professional journalists (freelancers or employed, teams or individuals) and media companies residing or established in Lithuania or Slovakia.
2. Entries must be submitted by an individual representing themselves, the team, or the media company (hereinafter referred to as the Applicant) by deadlines stipulated in Article III. of these Rules. Other authors of the Entry will be listed as team members in the application form.
3. Applicants should have a proven track record of at least one year of active journalism. They will prove this by attaching a CV to the application form.
4. Applicants should have been actively working as a journalist during the year of 2021. They will prove this by attaching a CV to the application form.

#### **Article V. - Eligibility criteria - Entries**

1. The Entry can be work intended for print, digital media, television broadcasting, radio broadcasting, or any other medium. One Entry can consist of pieces in more than one media format, e.g. article for print or online medium and video for TV broadcasting.
2. The Entry has to fulfill the following qualitative criteria:
  - a. Have an investigative character (see definition in Article XVIII. of these Rules)
  - b. Be locally oriented - cover topic of a local importance (see definition in Article XVIII. of these Rules)
  - c. Be original (not build on media produced by someone else)
  - d. Respect ethical and other professional principles
3. The Applicants need to declare their and team member's ownership and editorial and independence, in particular on other parties and on political or economic groups and interests.
4. The application form will also include fields, in which the Applicants will be asked to briefly elaborate on the impact of their Entry, its outreach, interactions with citizens (including quantitative data; not obligatory), and usage of innovative media tools (e.g. those for collaboration, data analysis, fact-checking, misinformation debunking, interactions with citizens, etc.; not obligatory), and provide other information or materials that can help Jury to evaluate the Entry (not obligatory).
5. The Entries should be published in Lithuanian or Slovak and submitted together with a summary explaining the theme of the Entry, answers to other questions in English (300 words maximum), and additional files (in Lithuanian, Slovak, or English; not obligatory). If the Applicants need assistance with writing the summary or other parts of the application form in English, they should reach out to organisers at [neringa@zmogui.lt](mailto:neringa@zmogui.lt) (Lithuania) or [b.kolman@europskydialog.eu](mailto:b.kolman@europskydialog.eu) (Slovakia).

#### **Article VI. - Entries - technical requirements**

1. Entries will need to be submitted via official online application form that will be included in the Call for Entries. Entries submitted via email will not be accepted.
2. There should be no more than ten files or hyperlinks per Entry attached to the application form.
3. Each file must not exceed 100MB.

4. Allowed file types are JPG, PDF, MP3, WMA, WMV, MP4, MPEG-2, MOV, MP4, GIF, PNG.
5. In the application form, there will be a 300-word limit for each field.
6. Due to the file size, it's preferred that you provide hyperlinks to published video materials.
7. Organisers recommend submitting just five files and/or hyperlink if possible. Jury members tend to give bonus points for simplicity in Entries.

*Note: Application form will allow certain files to be uploaded, but not all judges have the software that is capable of viewing files other than JPG, PDF, MP3, WMA, WMV, MP4, MPEG-2, GIF, PNG.*

### **Article VII. - Multiple Entries**

1. Applicants may submit only one Entry to each sub-category. The same work cannot be submitted to more sub-categories. However, the Applicants can submit distinct Entries to each sub-category. In such cases each Entry needs to be submitted separately to each sub-category, as it will be judged separately.

### **Article VIII. - Categories and awards**

#### **1. Two main categories**

- a. For investigations from Lithuania and Slovakia in general
- b. For investigations supported by the Local Investigative Journalism Competition

#### **2. Sub-categories**

- a. When submitting the Entry to any of the main categories, the Applicants shall select the sub-category according to format of the Entry:
  - i. human rights
  - ii. environment
  - iii. corruption
- b. One winning Entry in each sub-category will receive an award of 1.000 EUR.
- c. One Entry can receive an award **only in one** sub-category, because each of them will have one distinct winner.
- d. In case there is no Entry submitted to any of the sub-categories or if there is no eligible Entry submitted to any of the sub-categories, the corresponding prize will not be awarded.

#### **3. Four special categories** (stand-alone, meaning they are **not** under each of the main categories or sub-categories):

- for local or regional media
  - for young media makers and new media
  - for the best interactive presentation
  - for connection with citizens
- a. Each special category will have one distinct winner. That also means one Entry can receive only one special award in the amount of 1.000 EUR.
  - b. In case there is no suitable Entry submitted to the Call then the special prize will not be awarded.

## Article IX. - Award criteria

### 1. Main criteria

- a. Jury members will give points to each Entry on scale 1 (poor) to 10 (very good) for each of the following criteria:
    - **Narrative:** quality and persuasiveness of argument, it is presented in an engaging, interesting, clear, and attractive way.
    - **Data reliability:** discovered and revealed facts are accurate and evidence-based, the data of the sources are documented, sufficient data have been collected, the final work complies with copyright and GDPR.
    - **In-depth investigation:** investigation is not based only on already publicly available information, it works with abundant sources and their analyses.
    - **Actuality:** the investigation covers current issues and exposes new facts related to them, discovers and reveals new affairs, or makes new and accurate interpretations of already known facts.
    - **Impact and outreach (audience):** the investigation manages to raise an awareness among certain audience and/or sparks action to move things forward. The size of an audience is naturally depending on geographical coverage of the investigation or medium - national media are expected to have bigger outreach than local ones.
  - b. Sums of points given by each Jury member will be counted up and then divided by the number of Jurors (average points).
2. Entry can get one additional point for fulfilling each of the **additional criteria**:
    - Topic has not been covered yet, less known topic
    - Interaction with citizens
  3. Additional points will be added to average points resulting from the main evaluation criteria and final scores will be determined.
  4. In each submission sub-category, the Entry with the highest score will be selected.
  5. If there are more Entries receiving the highest score, or if the difference between the highest and second highest score is just one point, the Jury will determine the winner through discussion and voting in accordance with the Article XII. of these Rules.
  6. **Award criteria for special categories:**
    - a. for local or regional media - Entry submitted by a representative of medium working at a local or regional level (see definition in Article XVIII. of these Rules) that got the highest score determined in accordance with this Article.
    - b. for young media makers and new media - an Entry with the highest score determined in accordance with this Article and fulfilling these criteria: Applicants are individuals 18 – 30 years old at the time of Entry submission, or representatives of emerging media that are up to 2 years in business at the time of Entry submission;
    - c. for the best interactive presentation - an Entry receiving the highest score under special evaluation criterion “Usage of innovative media tools for presentation” (see definition in Article XVIII. of these Rules);
    - d. for connection with citizens - an Entry receiving the highest score under additional evaluation criterion “Interaction with citizens”;

- e. if one Entry receives a score that qualifies it to receive awards in more than one special category, the Jury will decide on for which special award the Entry qualifies better through discussion and voting in accordance with the Article XII. of these Rules. The Jury will take into account what Entry had the second best score in the special category in question.
- f. if there are more Entries receiving the highest score, or if the difference between the highest and second highest score is just one point, the Jury will determine the winner through discussion and voting in accordance with the Article XII. of these Rules.

#### **Article X. - Disqualifications**

1. Unpublished works, those not focusing on local affairs, and those that are not respecting ethical and other professional principles as defined by the International Federation of Journalists and European Federation of Journalists are not eligible.
2. Organisers reserve the right to disqualify any Entry that fails to conform to these Rules. Disqualified Entries will not be judged. Organisers or the European Commission are not responsible for materials entered in the Competition.

#### **Article XI. - Confidential information**

1. The Entries should not include any confidential information. All Entries will be publicly displayed on the websites of Media4Change and European Dialogue.

#### **Article XII. - Jury**

1. Jury will be composed of representatives of the National Institute for Social Integration, European Dialogue, and external experts. It will have at least 10 members.
2. Jurors are selected by the Organizers on the basis of the competences, professionalism, reputation, and professional experience.
3. Jury members cannot enter the Competition in the year they are evaluating the Entries.
4. Each Entry will be evaluated by at least 10 people on the basis of evaluation criteria listed in these Rules.
5. In the case of voting, the Jury's decisions must be approved with an absolute majority of votes of all Jury members. Each Jury member has one equal vote.
6. If the Jury member or members recognise they are personally involved in submitted work or they know an Applicant or team members, through either a personal or professional relationship, for instance when working for the same organisation, they must declare their interest openly at the beginning of any discussions on the work, do not evaluate the work in question, and withhold their vote.
7. All proceedings and deliberations of the Jury and individual Jury members are conducted in confidence.
8. The decision of the Jury will be final and binding.

#### **Article XIII. - Audience's Choice Award**

1. Entries will be published on Media4Change platform and everyone will be able to vote for the best media there.
2. The Entry receiving most of the votes (simple majority) will become a winner and receive the "Audience's Choice Award".

3. If there are two or more Entries receiving exactly the same amount of votes, the given deadline for voting will be extended by 12 hours. If there continue to be two or more Entries with the exactly the same amount of votes after the extended deadline, the prize that is indicated in point 5.) below will be equally distributed among those Entries.
4. The results of online voting will be final and binding.
5. Winner of the “Audience’s Choice Award” will receive 1.500 EUR.

#### **Article XIV. - Announcement**

1. The National Institute for Social Integration and European Dialogue will announce one winner under each sub-category, each special category, and of the Audience’s Choice Award on 30 September 2021.
2. The results will be published on the websites of Media4Change and European Dialogue.

#### **Article XV. - Transfer of finances**

1. National Institute for Social Integration or European Dialogue and winners will sign an official document confirming the award or awards and acceptance by the winners.
2. The award or awards - if one Entry receives it in sub-category and special category and/or Audience’s Choice Award - will be sent to the bank account of an Applicant. In the case of team application, it will be sole responsibility of an Applicant and team members to distribute the amount among themselves.

#### **Article XVI. - Ownership**

1. The Applicants agree that the Entries will be published on webpages and social media of the National Institute for Social Integration or European Dialogue. Their ownership rights will not be affected by this provision.

#### **Article XVII. - Disclaimer**

1. The European Commission's support for the production of these Rules and implementation of the Future Stories Award does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views of the authors only and are their sole responsibility. The Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained in these Rules or Entries.

#### **Article XVIII. - Definitions**

1. **Definition of the local scope:** In order to define these levels, the Rules & Regulations are using the system of Local Administrative Units (LAUs) and Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) that is maintained by EUROSTAT. The investigation has a local significance when it’s dealing with a topic that is relevant to units LAU 2 and LAU 1, in justified cases NUTS 3. Local media are covering levels LAU 2 and LAU 1 as well. Regional media are covering level NUTS 3.
  - In Lithuania, LAU 2 is *seniūnijos*, LAU 1 is *savivaldybės*, and NUTS 3 is *apskritis*
  - In Slovakia, LAU 2 is *obec*, LAU 1 is *okres*, and NUTS 3 is *kraj*
2. **Definition of investigative journalism:** For the purposes of the Competition, these Rules & Regulations are using the definition of investigative journalism published by David E. Kaplan, executive director of the Global Investigative Journalism Network: “*While definitions of investigative reporting vary, among professional journalism groups there is*

*broad agreement of its major components: systematic, in-depth, and original research and reporting, often involving the unearthing of secrets. Others note that its practice often involves heavy use of public records and data, with a focus on social justice and accountability.”* It is quoted from publication *Global Investigative Journalism: Strategies for Support*, David E. Kaplan, Center for International Media Assistance, 2013, available at <https://gijn.org/investigative-journalism-defining-the-craft/>.

3. ***Definition of the public interest:*** The main aim of investigative journalism is to expose matters of public interest. According to the *Investigative Journalism Manual*, “*what constitutes ‘public interest’ is whether a community would be disadvantaged if this information does not come to light, or it would benefit, either materially or through informed decision-making, from such knowledge.*” Quoted from the *Investigative Journalism Manual*, which is available online at the following website: <https://www.investigative-manual.org/en/chapters/who-is-that-investigative-journalist/1-how-to-define-investigative-journalism/>.
4. ***Definition of innovative media tools used for presentation of an investigation:*** In this context, innovative tools are those that allow interactivity of the media piece (e.g. interactive videos, StoryMaps, various multimedia presentations), appealing presentation of results in general (e.g. mixed-media presentations such as Prezi, hyperzoom, up-to-date data-visualisation tools), or audience engagement after the investigation has been published.