

Local Investigative Journalism Fund 2021

Rules & Regulations for the Local Investigative Journalism Competition 2021

EN/LT/SK

1. General part

1.1. 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 Local Investigative Journalism Competition in 2021 (hereinafter referred to as the Competition), and launch the Call for proposals for journalistic investigations in 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.

1.2. 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.

1.3. The official timeline of the 1st edition of the Competition is **from 23 February 2021** (launch of the Call) **to 30 June 2021** (submission of final results). In unforeseen circumstances, such as *force majeure*, the duration may be extended to allow proper conduct of the journalistic inquiries.

1.4. Should there be any inconsistency or conflict between the English, Lithuanian, and Slovak versions of these Rules & Regulations, the English version shall prevail.

2. Purpose of the Local Investigative Journalism Fund and Competition

2.1. The aim of the Local Investigative Journalism Fund and Competition is to strengthen the local collaborative investigative journalism in Lithuania and Slovakia and to support production of high-quality professional, ethical, and innovative investigative content.

2.2. The grants will be awarded to authors of the best proposals and final investigations. In total, 16.000 EUR in each Lithuania and Slovakia is available.

2.3. 4.000 EUR (hereinafter referred to as the Grant) will be awarded to each of three teams whose duly submitted applications with the investigation proposals (hereinafter referred to as the Applicants) will have been evaluated as the best ones by the Jury against a set of criteria defined by these Rules & Regulations.

2.4.. The rest of the teams that have participated in the Round II will be invited to work on and complete their investigations and apply for the Final prize. The final investigation that will have been evaluated as the best one by the Jury against a set of criteria will get the Final prize of 4.000 EUR. For details, please refer to the Article 5.8. of these Rules & Regulations.

2.5. The Jury reserves the right to allocate the amounts depending on the results of the evaluation, especially in the case of low quality of all Applications.

2.6. In the case of voting, the Jury's decisions must be approved with an absolute majority of votes of

all Jury members.

3. Eligibility

3.1. The *eligibility of the Applicants* will be evaluated against the following criteria. The Applicants who don't meet at least one of the criteria will be considered as ineligible and won't be evaluated further:

- ***Interest in and intention to work on journalistic investigation*** - assessed on basis of motivation (Round I) and Investigation plan (Round II).
- ***Collaboration*** - only teams composed of at least 2 individual journalists, who either represent themselves (as e.g. freelancers), or different media organisations, are eligible Applicants. Teams composed of representatives of only one media organisation are not eligible. ***Individuals may apply to Round I and form teams in the second round of the Competition.***
- ***Local relevance*** - idea to develop an investigation relevant to the local public in Lithuania or Slovakia. The investigation has a local scope if it's dealing with a topic that is relevant at one or both of these geographical and administrative levels: LAU 2, LAU 1. The topic can be also relevant to more units, for example two towns. In justified cases it can cover a topic that is also relevant at level NUTS 3. For details, please refer to the Article 12 of these Rules & Regulations.
- ***Originality*** - the proposal of the investigation (hereinafter referred to as the Proposal) submitted to the Round II has to concern a new and unpublished work of the Applicants. However, follow-ups on previous investigations of an individual Applicant or at least one member of the team are eligible.
- ***Application form (Round I) or application form and the Proposal (Round II) have been duly filled in and submitted*** together with all compulsory attachments (hereinafter referred to as the Application) in Lithuanian or Slovak language by the deadlines published in the Call.
- ***The Applicants declare on their honour the ownership and editorial independence*** by ticking corresponding boxes in the application form for the Round II. In particular, they declare their ownership of the Proposal and final work, editorial independence, and that their work will comply with law, ethical principles, and professional codes of ethics.
- ***Declaration of interests has been attached to the Application for Round II.*** The Applicants will declare their independence from other parties and from political or economic groups and interests.

3.2. The Competition shall be deemed to have taken place if at least 5 Applicants participate in the Round II. If there are less Applicants, the deadlines will be postponed and a new call will be published.

4. Submission requirements for the Round I and Round II

4.1. The Applicants will be asked to fill in all fields included in the official application form that will have been made publicly available in the Call for proposals published on the official websites of NISI – www.media4change.co – or ED – www.europskydialog.eu.

4.2. The compulsory attachments in the Round I are documents proving Applicants' competence, professionalism, and knowledge in the field they propose to cover: CV's and lists of relevant analytical publications (including hyperlinks).

4.3. The compulsory attachments in the Round II are: the Proposal (divided into Investigation plan and

simple Financial plan), and Declarations of interests of each Applicant (team member). All templates will be attached to the Call for proposals. The Proposal must define the hypothesis and questions that the investigation will be focused on. During the investigation, the hypothesis shall be verified or falsified (disproved).

4.4. The application forms for Round I and for Round II need to be duly filled in and submitted together with compulsory attachments (Application) in Lithuanian or Slovak language by the deadlines published in the Call. Submissions via email are not accepted.

5. Evaluation criteria

5.1. The *evaluation criteria for Round I* will be the following:

- **1) Potential to conduct an investigation** - professional competences and capacities of Applicants (individuals or teams) will be evaluated on the basis of their professional experiences (whether they worked on the investigations in the past) and educational background. In the case of teams, potential of team members to complement the expertise of each other will be also evaluated. The Jury will evaluate the Applications only on basis of the information that will have been provided in the application form and documents attached thereto.
- **2) Motivation** - the Applicants should demonstrate why they are interested in investigative journalism, providing their motives why this opportunity is important to them, and what added value the participation in the Competition would give them. If they have little or no experience in investigative journalism, they should express their motivation to develop their professional career in this field.

5.2. Each Application will be evaluated by all Jury members. Each of them will give points on scale 1 (poor) to 10 (very good). All points received by an Application will be counted up and then divided by the number of Jurors. The Applications with the best scores will be selected to pass to the Round II. All Applicants will receive a report showing the total scores and providing short feedback by the Jury members.

5.3. *During the Round II*, the Jury members will evaluate the application against set of the following criteria and give points on scale 1 (poor) to 10 (very good) to each of them:

- **Quality of Investigation plan**
 - **Clarity of the plan** - it's presenting the investigation in a clear and systematic way
 - **Verifiability / falsifiability** of the proposed hypothesis or hypotheses
 - **Investigative character:**
 - **In-depth investigation:** investigation is not based only on already publicly available information, aims to work with abundant sources and their analyses.
 - **Novelty:** investigation aims to discover and reveal new facts (based on own analyses) or new and accurate interpretations of already known facts that have never appeared in the public discourse before and confirm or disprove the hypothesis.
 - **Data reliability:** discovered and revealed facts are accurate and evidence-based, the data of the sources are documented, sufficient data have been collected.
 - **Public interest:** the investigation is raising problematic and topical issues and

will result in publishing facts that are uncovered in public interest.

- **Work with data and materials** - reliable sources are proposed, quotations are included, compliance with copyright and GDPR is clearly secured.
- **Team's potential to conduct research:** professional competences and capacities of Applicants.
- **Roles and responsibilities** of team members are clearly defined.
- **Quality of Financial plan**
 - **Clarity** - all foreseen costs are clearly identified and distributed over the time (teams take into consideration that they will receive 20% of grant after successful finalisation of the investigation in accordance with Article 12 of these Rules & Regulations).

5.4. Proposals will get **additional points** for fulfilling one or more of the following criteria (1 point for each criterion):

- Collaboration of young and older media makers / emerging (up to 1 year in business) and well established media
- Collaboration of emerging media only (up to 1 year in business)
- Interaction with citizens is planned (at any stage of development / production)
- Use of innovative tools
- Geographical remoteness (teams from disadvantaged regions)

5.5. Each Application will be evaluated by all Jury members. All points received by an Application will be counted up and then divided by the number of Jurors. Additional points will be added to these average points and the final score will be determined. Three Applications with the highest score will be selected and supported. The next four Applications with the highest score will be on the reserve lists.

5.6. **Final evaluation.** The supported Applicants (hereinafter referred to as Grantees) will have to submit finalised investigations and report (for details please refer to the Article 11.4. of these Rules & Regulations) **by 30 June 2021** using official emails of Organisers: media4change@zmogui.it or info@europskydialog.eu. The final investigations will be evaluated against the following final evaluation criteria:

- **Compliance with the foreseen investigation plan** - the investigation (verified or falsified hypothesis) must be in accordance with the foreseen design of the investigation that was submitted in the Round II. Only changes that come up from unforeseen investigation findings will be approved.
- **Hypothesis or hypotheses have been verified or falsified.**
- **Investigative character:**
 - **In-depth investigation:** investigation is not based only on already publicly available information, it works with abundant sources and their analyses.
 - Grantees have to be ready to demonstrate that findings are based on their **own research** and are not derived from work by the police or other institutions.
 - **Novelty:** investigation discovered and revealed new facts (based on own analyses) or new and accurate interpretations of already known facts that have never appeared in the public discourse before and confirm or disprove the hypothesis.
 - **Data reliability:** discovered and revealed facts are accurate and evidence-based, the data of the sources are documented, sufficient data have been collected.
 - **Public interest:** the investigation covers actual, problematic and topical issues, and results in publishing facts that are uncovered in public interest.

- **Work with data and materials:** reliable sources were used, quotations are included, the final work complies with copyright and GDPR.
- **Narrative:** the investigation is presented in an engaging, interesting, and attractive way.

5.7. The Grantees, whose finalised investigations will have fulfilled all final evaluation criteria and who submitted the report as well, will receive the remaining 20% of the grant.

5.8. The team or teams, which have participated in the Round II and were not awarded the Grant, but who decided to work on and complete their investigations, will be invited to submit their final investigations **by 30 June 2021** to compete for the Final prize. Their submitted investigations will be evaluated by the Jury members against final evaluation criteria listed in the Article 5.6. of these Rules & Regulations. The team receiving the highest score will get the Final prize of 4.000 EUR. In case the difference between the highest and other scores is not significant (less than 1 point), the Jury and Organisers reserve the right to divide the Final prize among more teams.

5.9. The Grantees that are not able to finalise their investigations or whose final work does score below given threshold during the final evaluation have to return the Grant in its entirety to NISI or ED.

6. General regulations

6.1. The Rounds of the Competition will be implemented according to the following timeline:

Date	Task
<p>Round I</p> <p><i>Matchmaking and submission</i> 23 February – 23 March 2021</p>	<p>The Call for applications announced on 23 February 2021.</p> <p>Deadline for submission of the Applications is 23 March 2021.</p> <p>Results of Round 1 will be announced by 1 April 2021. This date may be postponed if the number of Applications is too high to provide Jurors with enough time for proper evaluation of all Applications.</p>
<p>Round II</p> <p><i>Workshops and Proposals</i> 12 – 21 April 2021</p>	<p>In the period of 12 and 16 April 2021, the selected participants will attend the creative workshops. During this period, when working with journalism practitioners and experts, the Applicants will elaborate detailed Proposals.</p> <p>Participation in the creative workshops is not a prerequisite for participation in the Round II of the Competition.</p> <p>Deadline for submission of the final Proposals will be 21 April 2021.</p> <p>Results of the Round II will be announced by 3 May 2021.</p>
<p>Round III</p> <p><i>Investigations</i> 3 May – 30 June</p>	<p>Teams will work on their investigations for 8 weeks. If for any objective reasons, that was out of control of the teams, for example <i>force majeure</i>, the investigations cannot be finalised by the deadline (30 June 2021), the deadline can be extended and needed time to finish the work may be given.</p>

<p>Special round</p> <p><i>Awards</i></p> <p><i>August –</i></p> <p><i>October 2021</i></p>	<p>All supported teams will be encouraged to submit their final investigations to the Call for entries to the Future Stories Award. However, this competition will be open to any other professional journalists from Lithuania and Slovakia.</p>
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6.2. The Applicants selected to pass to the Round II will have an opportunity to participate in the creative workshops. In cooperation with investigative journalism experts they will have an excellent opportunity to refine the whole investigation idea and draft the Proposal, and/or find new team members.

6.3. The NISI and ED will each appoint an advisor, who will be available to provide consultations and help during realisation of the journalistic investigation, e.g. on administration of the Grant, engagement with an audience, use of innovative tools, final reporting, etc.

6.4. The deadline for submitting the final investigations via email indicated in the Call is 30 June 2021.

6.5. The Proposal, the process of investigation, and final work must comply with law, ethical principles, and professional codes of ethics.

7. Topics

7.1. Topics are chosen independently by the Applicants. In the case they pass to the Round II, they can refine the topics on the basis of, for example, new findings, perspectives, or expert advice.

7.2. The topics will need to be of a local relevance.

7.3. Suggested framework topics are: human rights, corruption, environmental issues. They are divided into following subtopics (the list is not exhaustive and Applicants can choose any other sub-topic):

- Human rights: human trafficking, participation and inclusion in society of persons with disability, domestic abuse and sexual violence, reproductive rights, role of women in Roma communities, ineffectiveness of suicide prevention programs and policies, mistreatment and abuse in mental health institutions, human rights abuses linked to the economic activities of business, discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, discrimination based on ethnic and religious identity, working conditions of migrant workers, the impact of technology on human rights, homeless people, people who have been given a custodial sentence;
- Corruption: political corruption in democratic process, illegal sources of political party funding, charitable organizations and foundations of politically exposed persons (PEPs) serving political interests, political influence on local or regional media, corruption in public procurement;
- Environmental issues: illegal and dangerous waste, impact of big projects on the environment (e.g highways), impact of intensive agriculture, emission of pollutants, water management, forest management, issues related to national parks or national conservation areas, issues related to endangered biotopes, the impact of corporate lobbying on environmental protection laws and policies.

7.4. The topics chosen by the Applicants are indicated in the Application form and, if relevant, in the Proposal that are evaluated by an independent Jury.

8. Independent evaluation Jury

8.1. An independent evaluation Jury (hereinafter referred to as the Jury) is established by NISI and ED to assess Applications from their respective countries. Each national Jury consists of at least 7 professional investigative journalists and experts in the field of investigative journalism and ethics in media, who must fill in the Declaration of interests according to the form provided by the Organisers. The Jury also includes representatives of the Organisers.

8.2. Jurors are selected by the Organizers on the basis of the competences, professionalism, reputation, and professional experience.

8.3. The activities of Jurors related to the Competition are carried out publicly and transparently. Jurors who provide pieces of advice to specific supported teams shall have the priority right to publish the given investigation in their own media.

8.4. The Jury will assess the eligibility of and evaluate the Applications and final investigations against sets of criteria (articles 3, 4, and 5 of these Rules & Regulations). They also provide recommendations for the improvement of the Proposal during creative workshops, provide recommendations during the implementation of the investigation, and assess the final results.

8.5. Each Jury member must complete the Declaration of interests and, in the event of a threat of conflict of interests, withdraw from the evaluation of certain Application.

9. Requirements for the investigation Proposal

9.1. Each investigation Proposal must meet the thematic, methodical, technical, professional, ethical, and legal requirements for journalists and publishers set out in these Rules & Regulations.

9.2. It has to consist of two parts - Investigation plan and Financial plan.

10. Requirements for Grantees

10.1. Grantees need to comply with the eligibility criteria set out in these Rules & Regulations.

10.2. The Grantees will sign a Grant agreement with NISI or ED and attach a declaration of private interests signed by each team member, which must reflect their interests in the context of the topic they decided to investigate.

10.3. **Editorial independence:** The organizers have no right to interfere in any form, directly or indirectly, in the conduct of journalistic research by the Grantees, but they have the right to receive all information about the conduct of journalistic research that helps them assess whether it is going according to plan and comply with professional standards and law. The Grantees have to comply with professional and ethical standards as defined by the International Federation of Journalists¹.

11. Financing of the journalistic investigations

11.1. The Local Investigative Journalism Fund is a part of the project „Media4Change – Local Investigative Story Lab“ that has been funded by the European Commission – DG CONNECT.

¹ Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists (<https://www.ifj.org/who/rules-and-policy/global-charter-of-ethics-for-journalists.html>) and IFJ principles (<https://www.ifj.org/media-centre/news/detail/category/europe/article/status-of-journalists-and-journalism-ethics-ifj-principles.html>).

11.2. The grant is distributed to the Grantees in two installments: 80% at the beginning of investigation (collaboration) and 20% after the submission of a quality investigation approved by the Jury and the report approved by the Organisers.

11.3. The grant installments are sent to the bank account of one of the Grantee's representatives, an individual journalist (coordinator).

11.4. At the end of collaboration the Grantees **will submit a final investigation and report**. The final investigations will be evaluated by the Jury against the criteria set in the Article 5.6. of these Rules & Regulations. Said report will contain: a) short description of how the investigation and collaboration went, what were the main challenges, whether and how the Grantees engaged with an audience, and indicate whether the team members want to continue collaborating together or work on new investigations in general, b) short feedback to Organisers of the Competition (e.g. what can be improved next time), and c) a simple breakdown of expenditures (types of expenditure and amounts).

11.5. The Grantees that are not able to finalise their investigations or whose final work does score below given threshold during the final evaluation have to return the grant in its entirety to NISI or ED.

11.6. The Jury and Organisers together have the right to terminate the Competition or funding if the Grantee or Grantees cease to fulfill eligibility criteria and do not respect ethical and other professional standards as defined by the International Federation of Journalists. Such Grantees will be suspended from the Competition and have to return financial support in its entirety to NISI or ED. In this case, a new call for collaborative projects will be opened.

11.7. Team or teams that received the Final prize (as defined by the Article 5.8. of these Rules & Regulations) will receive the full amount in a single payment. It will be sent to the bank account of one of the team's representatives, an individual journalist (coordinator).

12. Definitions

12.1. **Definition of the local scope:** In order to define the local scope, these 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 scope when it's dealing with a topic that is relevant to one or more units. Those are LAU 2 and LAU 1. In justified cases it can cover a topic that is also or only relevant to 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*.

12.2. **Definition of the 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/>.

12.3. **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/>.