1.2A Overall Approach

This document describes the overall approach and methodology by BBC Media Action (BBCMA) working in partnership with Aktis Strategy and the Thomson Reuters Foundation (TRF). Our organisations bring a long and successful portfolio of innovative, high-impact media development projects in the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries. The breadth and depth of our experience, expertise and local networks makes our Consortium particularly well placed to respond to the rapidly changing information environments and media habits in which the FCO's Counter Disinformation and Media Development (CDMD) Programme operates.

Key experience and competency areas include:

- Unparalleled media development experience and established relationships with independent Russian and other language media in EaP countries – BBC Media Action has an exceptional track record for nearly 20 years in media development and extensive experience working with PSBs in EaP countries, supporting their transformation from state media to professional organisations that serve the public interest. BBC Media Action is currently working with the Ukrainian Public Service Broadcaster, UA:PBC, on its news provision as well as with the first media outlet in Ukraine incorporated as a non-governmental organisation, Hromadske TV. Previously, BBCMA has also worked in Georgia with the national broadcaster, GPB, and different radio stations as well as with media professionals from different outlets in Moldova. Aktis Strategy delivered a strategic support analysis to independent and public media in EaP countries, including UA:PBC, Moldova's TV8 and Canal Regional, and Belsat TV in Belarus. The Thomson Reuters Foundation (TRF) also has a long history of engagement in EaP countries and is currently working on improving the newsroom capacity at TV8 in Moldova and Belsat in Belarus.

- A trusted reputation - BBC Media Action is part of one of the most trusted and respected global broadcasters. The BBC is well-known and highly regarded in the EaP region and provides millions of viewers, listeners and online users in the region with world-class news on a daily basis. Our ability to recruit talented and experienced BBC staff to work on capacity strengthening projects is a great asset which will be harnessed for this initiative. TRF is the international development arm of one of the world's most trusted global news and information companies, Thomson Reuters. Reuters' Trust Principles guarantee its independence, freedom from bias and reliable news coverage. Since 1982, TRF has pioneered media development and information services around the world, drawing on the expertise and global footprint of the Reuters News Agency. Aktis Strategy is a global consultancy specialised in behavioural communications work across fragile and conflict-affected states, with a specific focus on media development, business strategy support, target audience analysis and multiplatform content creation.

- Relevance to a digital world - BBC Media Action always seeks innovative strategies to reach and connect with audiences. As such, responding to fast-paced technological developments in the media environment, particularly growth in the penetration and use of smart phones by our audiences, is vital. Throughout the project, the Consortium will work with local media partners to create social media outputs that are informative, balanced, engaging and shareable. There will be cross-cutting focus on ensuring that partners approach social media output with the same rigour and editorial values as radio and TV outputs. TRF has extensive experience of providing digital news through its own as well as dedicated project-based news platforms[1], training journalists on the use of digital technology, including social media, and of helping media organisations improve digital news management and better publish online. As part of its support to journalism development, TRF funds the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, part of the University of Oxford, which produces the highly regarded annual Digital News Report[2]. Aktis Strategy will leverage its experience of strengthening digital skills of the media in the region from scalable start-ups to established local and hyperlocal players focused on building online audiences via multi-platform content production and innovative distribution strategies and revenue models.

- A successful track record of project delivery as well as appropriate capacity and capability of staff: BBC Media Action has a very strong track record of implementing national and regional multi-million

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[1] https://news.trust.org/
[2] https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report

pound projects under the strictest financial and administrative controls. BBCMA delivered a complex, multi-country, £90m Global Grant for DFID between 2011 – 2017. BBC Media Action's performance consistently exceeded expectations, with externally evaluated scoring of A+ or A++ at all Annual Reviews. Through the Global Grant, BBC Media Action reached an estimated 283.5 million people through TV, radio and online content and achieved considerable impact in terms of shifting knowledge, attitudes and practice around health, governance and resilience. In total 178 capacity-building partnerships and over 500 broadcast partnerships were formed. The Thomson Reuters Foundation has decades of experience of providing journalism training. In 2017 alone, TRF trained 700 journalists on 59 courses, covering 20 topics, in 26 countries. This was supplemented by 400+ hours of mentoring to journalists to help them produce high quality, well researched, and unbiased news stories. Aktis has a proven track record and capabilities of delivering region-wide work in Eastern Europe, such as CSSF Target Audience Analysis in Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus and Support to Independent Media in the Baltic States.

1.2B Context

The potential of media in Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia to bring plurality of opinions and resilience to external influence is hampered by four distinct, yet often intertwined, challenges: structural inadequacies, domestic pressures, organisational issues and a continuing dominance of Russian content in local markets. The structural problems of the media landscape include a lack of editorial independence, ineffective regulation and poor levels of media literacy amongst domestic audiences. The domestic pressure from economic and political interests continues to dominate the media landscape as outlets are either controlled or owned by political groups and businesses, allowing them to control media narratives and rhetoric to suit their own interests. At an organisational level there is limited skill base or little specialist knowledge on the part of media practitioners to disseminate content, as well as a lack of innovation as how to best reach and engage audiences, exacerbated by limited revenue streams. Russian influence remains prevalent in local markets, as sophisticated and aggressive misinformation campaigns stoke divisions and undermine trust. Regional economies are not strong enough to support a broad and diverse media market, characterised by ineffective business models and poor resourcing.

In Ukraine, trust in mainstream media – both TV and online – is in decline, as shown by a survey carried out in 2017 by InMind[3]. Although TV remains a major source of news in Ukraine, there is a clear trend of younger audiences increasingly getting most of their news, information and entertainment content via digital and social media - with two-thirds of Ukrainians aged between 18 and 45 desiring more independent media options according to research conducted by Aktis in 2018[4]. Television is also the most popular medium in both Moldova, where Russian influence is most prevalent with the leading TV station, Prime, rebroadcasting Russia's Channel One alongside its own output, and Georgia. [5] Across all three countries the influence and political interests of key media owners exacerbate social divisions. Reflecting the major political divisions in society, the two largest TV networks in Georgia, Imedi TV and Rustavi 2, support different political parties in their coverage[6]– and the Georgian Public Broadcaster discontinued major talk shows open to opposition voices in 2016.

1.2C Theory of Change

The Terms of Reference outlines the overall objective of the project as being: *Bring balance and plurality to the media space by identifying and supporting independent media in Eastern Partnership countries that have potential for growth.*

The following section outlines the Consortium's understanding of the key components which will interact to create sustainable change. The media sector in each of the target countries has reached a crossroads and this three-year initiative seeks to provide a strategic, multi-levelled approach to building the skills and audience share of strategically selected independent media outlets in the region. The theory of change can be summarised as follows.

If we:

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3 https://www.internews.org/sites/default/files/2017-09/USAID_UMedia_AnnualMediaConsumptionSurvey_2017_FULL_eng.pdf
4 Aktis Strategy, Strategic Support for Independent Media in Eastern Europe: Target Audience Analysis Media Uplift (April 2018)
5 https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-17602346
6 https://medialandscapes.org/country/georgia

- Identify key independent media actors, including a wide spectrum from PSBs to medium-to-large established organisations, as well as small but scalable outlets with the potential to bring innovation to the media market; and
- Provide a flexible, adaptive and bespoke programme of capacity strengthening, addressing the managerial commitment, financial viability and technical know-how required to produce objective, relevant and attractive high quality content on audience-appropriate platforms; and
- Integrate a consistent, locally driven focus on content co-production and/or acquisition with media partners, as an effective starting point in seeking journalistic and institutional level change, as well as simultaneously ensuring audiences benefit as quickly as possible from improved programming; and
- Facilitate timely, strategic and well-targeted inputs to feed into policy and regulatory processes.

Then we will contribute to:
- An increased supply of high quality public service-oriented programming, with content produced by an increased number of outlets in the target countries being more objective, trustworthy and better able to resonate with local audiences.
- A more resilient and viable independent media outlets in the target countries, with the technical skillset to produce high quality content, improved capacity to respond to changing information ecosystems and media markets, greater financial viability and robust managerial commitment to resist political pressures.
- A more enabling operating environment at sectoral level for independent media in the target countries.

As a result of which:
- The editorially independent online and traditional media partners trained by the project will increase their audience share.
- Audiences in EaP countries will benefit from improved, sustainable access to objective, trustworthy and high quality media content.
- A more balanced and plural media space will be created in the target countries, which is more resilient to misinformation and disinformation, propaganda and political or other interests.

This theory of change is based on the following principles:
- It is vital to work at multiple levels to achieve sustainable change – and as such this initiative foresees activities which target: a) audiences – through the co-production of content on digital and mainstream platforms; b) practitioners – through bespoke capacity building activities; c) organisations – working at an institutional level with media partners, through a hands-on mentoring approach and core support; and d) systems – through well-designed interventions related to policy and regulation.
- It is essential to use an adaptive approach, to enable the programme to respond quickly to emerging threats and capitalise on opportunities.
- Audience insight is central to all components – in terms of working with partners to develop relevant and impactful media products and tailoring content to the media consumption habits of different demographic groups.
- Financial viability is absolutely critical, both to sustainability and also the ability to withstand pressures of co-option.

The theory of change is also based on the following assumptions:
- Audiences will respond positively to improvement in content.
- Media partners will remain committed to the capacity strengthening process throughout the project.
- Even within the economic context of the three countries, there are steps that can be taken by independent media outlets to improve their income generation and business models.

1.2D Methodology
The overall project will be delivered using an adaptive methodology, accounting for political, gender and conflict sensitivities, whereby activities will be agreed on an annual basis but subject to constant monitoring. As such, the following sections outline indicative activity strands but will all be subject to discussion with the key governance groups outlined in section 1.2E below. Our approach to media

capacity strengthening will be holistic and integrated, both in terms of the capacity strengthening areas we will focus on, and the methodologies we propose to use. The combined expertise of the Consortium members will enable us to operate across the entire media landscape of the target countries, strengthening national, regional and local independent media through hands-on co-production of content, capacity building and upskilling training, as well as working at regulatory level where appropriate. We will address the diverse and interrelated needs of the media outlets supported through this programme and co-develop tailored solutions to grow audiences and build trust in independent media in Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova. Throughout all planned capacity strengthening, we expect that an embedded mentoring methodology will be the preferred model wherever possible. Through regular visits, mentors embed themselves within beneficiary organisations, thus ensuring learning is a constant, two-way process closely connected to the daily realities arising within people's working lives. Mentors are then able to provide bespoke, responsive support across editorial, production and wider management systems and processes as well as on the co-production of content. Experience shows that this approach delivers more meaningful and long-lasting change than other methodologies. As such embedded mentoring is at the core of this Consortium's approach, although we would where relevant also use other tools such as peer networking, workshops and training of trainers.

The following will be main activity areas, to deliver change across the entire media landscapes of the target countries.

Partner scoping and needs assessment: The mentoring model always begins with a detailed, participatory needs assessment to ensure that change processes are locally owned and led. Such assessments then act as a baseline against which specific objectives can be set and progress can be monitored. Needs assessments will be conducted by a mentor/key expert who evaluates existing programme output and programme schedules, the skills of staff at different levels, the current management structures, including business strategy, model and planning, the extent to which management support exists for training and, crucially, the kinds of barriers that may stand in the way of success (for example, censorship, corruption and/or ownership bias). The Consortium has conducted consultation in the media sector in the target countries in preparation for this bid and under section 1.2F below has an initial long-list of possible media partners for this programme. However, we would conduct much more in-depth scoping at project inception and would discuss and agree with the FCO which partners would be the most strategic to select. We will ensure a geographic as well as demographic balance in terms of audiences and also wish to include a mix of platforms – TV, radio and digital first outlets.

Delivery of capacity strengthening: We will be seeking to deliver across the spectrum of media outlets, from established national outlets including public service broadcasters and mid-size media, through to local and hyperlocal media organisations and freelance journalists. As noted, much of this work will be through mentoring at an institutional level, enabling the consortium to work across the broad range of learning needs – managerial, business, editorial, technical and research. BBC Media Action will focus on work with public service media, especially UA:PBC, to i) Increase both quality and supply of balance and trusted information across TV, online and Radio; ii) Increase skills of media practitioners at selected outlets; iii) improve formats, reach and engagement of existing programmes at selected partners; iv) Develop new formats/co-productions for new programmes. Experience shows that while work with public service media can be complex, a responsive, flexible approach to these partnerships, which takes change step-by-step and starts with a focus on content rather than top-down institutional reform, can support the development of editorially robust programming that genuinely meets public needs.

Based on a local scale-up programme "the Local Media Development Programme "(LMDP), Aktis Strategy will lead on building the capacities of 6-9 independent small media partners and hyperlocal outlets that offer potential for growth. Under LMPD, Aktis will provide a bespoke training and mentorship aimed to i) Build audience through multi-platform content production and distribution, emphasising social media engagement; ii) Integrate business strategies and evaluation procedures to equip the editorial teams with skills to develop as a sustainable business; iii) Increase capacities to tackle mis(dis)information and propaganda via better storytelling and robust networks of producers, distributors and broadcasters of content. The methodology proved successful in the Baltic States where Aktis' scale-up programme led to

a fourfold increase of supported media's audience in Latvia and generated 68% increase of local audience base in Lithuania.

The Thomson Reuters Foundation will focus on selected media outlets that fall between the national and local/hyperlocal, as well as freelancer journalists and v/bloggers, to develop their capacity to sustainably deliver high quality and objective journalism, tailored to different audience segment's needs. Following an in-depth assessment of selected media organisations in relation to business strategy and operations, editorial planning, systems and output, a bespoke capacity development plan will be developed. Skilled and experienced consultants will provide face-to-face training, mentoring, and coaching with each selected outlet to improve both business operations and editorial standards, addressing both policy and practice development.

Content co-creation and/or content acquisition: In the Consortium's consultation with possible partners during the design of this bid there have been a range of strong potential content ideas shared. For instance, UA: PBC is very interested in accessing support through this programme to develop a new debate show for the 2019 elections, to enable audiences to think critically about the process and choices. Hromadske TV has a multimedia concept around the role of IT in our lives, cyber security and how technology can be used to increase government transparency. Adjara TV is interested in developing youth programming, a gap in the market in Georgia. The Consortium will work with partners on both content co-production and where relevant acquisition, which will be absolutely critical to achieving the project's objectives in relation to building audience share. Content acquisition can happen quickly. Content co-production often takes more time to set up but clearly delivers greater sustainability in terms of building long-term skills. Formats could be entirely new or revitalised versions of existing programming. All content will belong to the media partner in order to increase local ownership and enhance the likelihood of the outputs being continued post-intervention.

Policy, legislative and regulatory inputs: Ofcom have agreed to be involved in the project to share regulatory good practice with local regulatory organisations. Individual experts will be hired to provide targeted and timely interventions as appropriate throughout the programme to facilitate the sharing of good practice between UK and local regulatory organisations.

Digital offer: The Consortium will seek to work with both "digital first" media outlets and with mainstream media to maximise the supply and quality of their digital offer. For this initiative the Consortium will develop a strong digital offer which is expected to include: a) integrating a focus on digital within all capacity strengthening – in terms of using digital platforms for distribution, developing digital first content, using social media to extend audience reach and drive audiences to other mainstream media content and harnessing the power of social media to enhance audience engagement, secure rapid feedback and provide spaces for people to voice and discuss the key issues affecting their lives; b) integrating training on safe, responsible and effective use of social media across the entire portfolio of projects; and c) working with media partners to document and utilise key social media metrics systematically and develop tools to measure the impact of social media output.

Cross-cutting strands: There will be a cross-cutting focus on gender throughout the portfolio of work. This will include working with partners to address inequities in the representation of women and girls in their content, developing strategies with partners which specifically seek to increase their engagement with female audiences, and developing gender transformative programming under the content co-creation and acquisition strand. We will also ensure gender balance in our training activities and will specifically seek to build the capacity of women to play leadership roles within the project's media partners. Audiences will be at the heart of the project, to ensure that the programmes and content developed by the project's media partners are not only objective and balanced but also resonate and are popular with audiences.

1.2E Governance structure

Given the wide geographical reach of the project, and hence the risk of its activities becoming disparate and unconnected, a Programme "Eastern Partnership Board" will be established and will meet quarterly. Suggested participants include representatives from British Embassies in beneficiary countries,

consortium partners and representatives of the CDMD Programme team. The approach for developing and agreeing proposals at the start of each year, and for responding to any ad hoc requests will be agreed with the FCO, but the Board will play an important role in guiding project implementation and preventing duplication of efforts. The latter is particularly important to ensure the sustainable development of the Ukrainian Public Broadcaster, which is also being supported by the EC and USAID. As the Consortium lead, BBC Media Action will implement a co-ordination and reporting framework applying a number of tools to ensure the effective delivery of the project. Monthly meetings between the consortium partners, donor and stakeholders as well as quarterly project board and partnership board meetings coupled with regular internal and external project progress reports, expert reports, participant feedback forms and quarterly FCO reports will provide the necessary tools for project management to monitor progress and will ensure that the project will remain on track to achieve its objectives and potential risks are taken into account and mitigated. The project will be managed and coordinated by BBC Media Action HQ in London with local logistical and coordination support offered by Reuters offices in the region (Kyiv and Tbilisi).

1.2F Local Partners and Networks
The Consortium partners' strong profile in the target region is further reflected by its enduring training links with broadcasters and media centres across the target region. As outlined above, the Consortium members have already conducted broad consultations with a number of key stakeholders in Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia and plan to work with the following local partners:

- UA:PBC – The 2014 law on public service broadcasting has set up the appropriate legal framework for the development of an independent service. BBCMA is working in a Consortium with Deutsche Welle and NIRAS to actively support the process by establishing an integrated Newsroom. We intend to build on this work and established relationship to provide essential support to UA:PBC aimed at improving its existing programmes and increasing UA:PBC's content provision by developing new and innovative formats for factual and non-news programmes. Aktis provided audience insights and recommendations for UAPBC on how to increase audience share and content resonance by improving their digital footprint without overloading limited human and financial resources. The findings and recommendations of this research will be shared with consortium partners to complement their capacity building activities with a data-driven baseline.
- Hromadske - BBC Media Action is already working on building the capacity of Hromadske TV to produce objective news and information for Ukrainians and would like to embed these skills through working on co-productions under this programme as well as and extend the capacity building support to Hromadske Radio;
- Adjara TV – BBC Media Action already conducted a preliminary visit to discuss training priorities and possible co-productions.
- Independent Association of Broadcasters (IAB) - BBC Media Action will rely on local support including experts from the IAB, Ukraine's largest professional organisation which serves to protect freedom of speech and promote independent media.
- Another possibility under consideration in Georgia is working with independent online outlets such as liberali.ge, investigative studio Monitor, Reginfo.ge, batumelebi.ge ifact.ge and netgazeti.ge.
- TV8 – Thomson Reuters Foundation undertook a detailed needs assessment of the station in 2017, and provided in-depth governance, business development, and editorial support to help them become more sustainable, and produce informative, balanced, and accurate programmes. Following this, TRF would look to providing ongoing support to TV8, to help develop and implement a more sustainable business model, especially in relation to internet broadcasting.
- Digital Communications Network (DCN) –Aktis will utilise DCN's regional presence in Eastern Europe to bring relevant experts for digital upskilling training and facilitate cross-country lessons learnt in areas of building online audiences, innovative business models and reaching out to breakaway regions susceptible to Kremlin narratives.
- Ukraine's Local Media Development Agency "Abo" – Aktis have had preliminary discussions on possible collaboration with the Abo, which has extensive experience in the region, and has built the capacities of over 25 local and hyperlocal media outlets.