

Terms of Reference for a primary contractor to run independent media interventions in the Baltic States

INTRODUCTION

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office are looking for a primary contractor to run independent media interventions in the Baltic States.

OBJECTIVE

To use British soft power interventions aimed at target audiences in the Baltic States, whose primary language is Russian, to develop greater affinity with the UK/EU/Baltic States. The ultimate aim of these project interventions is to foster greater plurality in the Russian language media space.

1. Background

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office aims to promote plurality and balance in Russian language media.

Russian speaking audiences outside Russia have inadequate access to good quality, impartial public service broadcasting and independent media in the Russian language. In the absence of alternatives, audiences are drawn towards tendentious news and entertainment programming which makes them susceptible to misinformation campaigns. This is a particular concern in respect of audiences in Europe neighbourhood, notably the Baltic States.

In terms of defining the target audiences to influence, there are two age categories of particular interest: 40+yrs and below 40 yrs. It will include those chiefly or primarily reliant on Russian-language media. They may be more likely to have an affinity with Russia but they are not a homogeneous group. The balance of national, Russian and Euro-Atlantic identities will differ amongst sub-groups of this demographic.

Older Russian-speakers (40+ yrs) are more likely to have a strong affinity with Russia and be vulnerable to Russian propaganda. They grew up under the Soviet system and have been shaped by its education and 'culture'. This makes them supportive of and advocates of (perhaps to the point of acting out) Russian narratives and be primary consumers of its 'culture'. They will have low awareness of; knowledge of; interest in; support for; or be advocates of Euro-Atlantic narratives and 'culture'. This is because of a lack of access. They also probably lack the skills to critique the 'culture' they consume. They are less likely to speak English so it will be necessary to engage them in their native tongue.

Younger Russian speakers (below 40yrs) will have a moderate identity and may be less vulnerable to Russian propaganda. They grew up under national governments and have been shaped by their education and 'culture'. This may make them more open to alternative narratives and less likely to consume Russian 'culture' exclusively. They will have medium-high awareness, knowledge and interest of Euro-Atlantic narratives and 'culture' because of greater access. They may be more likely to have the skills to critique the 'culture' they consume. However, the influence of the (Soviet) family of younger Russian speakers is not fully understood (e.g. Children of ex-Soviet military officers may have strong Russian identities, despite receiving nationalist education and having access to Euro-Atlantic 'culture').

To become viable entities in the long-term, capable of building and retaining audiences, public service broadcasters and independent media outlets including independent TV, radio, digital media, online platforms, newspapers etc. serving Russian language audiences need reliable access to good quality varied entertainment programming, balanced evidence based factual reporting and to provide a product that people want to consume.

2. Desired Outcomes

The ultimate aim of these project interventions is to foster greater plurality in the Russian language media space. To achieve this, we are seeking a supplier to manage and deliver media interventions in the Baltic States that aim to:

- Support independent media interventions that will develop audiences amongst Russian language speakers in the Baltic States ;
- Provide assistance to public service broadcasters seeking to improve audience share amongst Russian language speakers in the Baltic States.
- Helping the delivery of good quality Russian language media to audiences in the Baltic States through a range of media channels with the potential to become self-sustaining.
- Complement more traditional forms of engagement employed by other Organisations.*

To deliver these desired outcomes, the primary contractor will be organised and set up with competent resources and thus able to manage a range of interventions that could include but would not be restricted to, face to face training programmes/workshops aimed at strengthening the competencies/skills of investigative journalists; the provision of equipment if necessary; and consultancy on business strategies for independent media.

3. Proposal/Project scope

The primary contractor will undertake their own due diligence to ensure that only entities committed to good working practice and ethical standards are engaged.

Interested parties are asked to provide a proposal with a full breakdown of costs, as set out in the template provided to manage this work as the primary contractor with an indicative phase 1 design stage working to a budget of £400,00 for the first 6 months. Followed by an outline proposal for the remaining phase in the first year with additional funds of £400,000.

The submitted proposal with timelines against activities will include:

- Identify how quarterly activity for the year will be planned;
- Outline how the implementer plans to build a pipeline of costed project interventions to build up capacity of digital and traditional channels, studio facilities, training of journalists/media reporters/TV studio technical crews etc. to reach audiences and particularly those that have been most susceptible to negative Kremlin aligned propaganda.
- Recommend the operational structure, legal footing, success criteria and commissioning/acquisition focus for planning, designing, procuring, implementing, monitoring/evaluating and measuring impact of independent media interventions in the Baltic States.
- Include the governance and reporting structure, roles and responsibilities, CVs of the proposed primary contractor project team (to include language skills) that will be deployed. Reporting mechanisms to include reporting structure/hierarchy, escalation procedures and managing risks/mitigation strategy. Provide a list of daily rates “dayworks” remuneration chargeable fees for each of the project team members to enable the client (FCO) to commission additional project activities based on these agreed rates.

- **4. Competencies**

The primary contractor project team will ideally possess:

- a) A strong consultancy background;
- b) Working knowledge and proven positive track record of work in the Baltic States. Knowledge of media production and acquisition processes; Knowledge of the legal frameworks and regulatory regimes in place for Baltic States;
- c) Experience of qualitative and quantitative research;
- d) Extensive programme and project experience;
- e) Prior scoping study experience;
- f) Access to commercial knowledge of independent television, quality newspapers, digital platforms;
- g) A good understanding of issues around media credibility and ethical reporting.

The successful contractor will be asked to develop a detailed results framework in conjunction with the FCO programme team. The primary contractor will demonstrate how the protection of data will be handled including how to keeping data secure and measures to ensure appropriate handling of sensitive data. Towards the end of the contract, the primary contractor will provide final completion and handover documents during a robust handover period (including the final lessons learnt report with any recommendations for future work) suitable for a smooth transfer to new primary contractor.

5. Scope

The FCO are asking for the supplier to suggest an intervention or intervention(s) that will make a positive impact on how target individuals perceive the UK/EU/Euro-Atlantic values. The supplier is asked not to engage target audiences directly out of the scope of this contract. The scope for this project is confined to the Baltic States i.e. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

6. Dependencies

The supplier is asked to assume that they will deliver an entirely independent intervention should they win the competition. Items such as office space, translation costs, security, legal fees, insurance, transport and accommodation costs should be priced into the contract.

The supplier is responsible for due diligence of potential partners and for assessing, reporting on and mitigating all risks at a project level. Risk register to be updated monthly.

7. Reporting and M and E

The supplier will meet at least monthly with the FCO during the implementation phase. There will be flexibility on the location of these meetings e.g in London or in –country. The assumption is that the majority of meetings will be in-country as representatives of the British embassy will be assigned to meet the supplier representatives. For costing purposes, the supplier should note the costs of their representatives attending London based meetings. The project will report to a board consisting of a representative from the supplier and 4 x representatives from different FCO stakeholders. The supplier will need to report on progress against their project plan, risks and impact.

The supplier will be asked to formally evidence quarterly progress and submit financial reporting and monitoring and evaluation reports. A lessons learnt document will need to be submitted on a six monthly basis followed by a final lessons learnt document at the project end.

8. Financial Management and Payments

The supplier will be reimbursed as per the CSSF Framework contract on a call-down basis following the submission of monthly line by line fee and expense reports.

9. Budget

The FCO is budgeting up to £800,000 for this intervention.

10. Timeframe

The project is expected to start during Q1 2016-17 and be complemented before March 2017.

11. Duty of Care

Duty of care and security: the FCO has no specific knowledge of any direct threat to the implementers of this project. The implementer will hold the duty of care responsibility for its staff and the security of the project; it is to ensure that all reasonable security measures (physical, information and communication) are taken to reduce the threat to as low as is reasonably possible, and to expose any risks that are identified. The project, as with the rest of the FCO's Russian Language Strategic Communication Programme is overt, no attempt should be made to disguise activity. The project board will approve an outline engagement/communication plan for the project.

*<https://www.britishcouncil.org/>