

SOFT POWER* AND RUSSIAN SPEAKING AUDIENCES

INTRODUCTION

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office are looking for an implementer (including collaboration in consortia) to provide overt innovative soft power interventions that will foster better links between the United Kingdom and individuals in the Baltic States whose primary language is Russian.

OBJECTIVE

To use British soft power to work directly with target audiences in the Baltic States, whose primary language is Russian, to develop greater affinity with the UK/EU/Baltic States.

*As defined by Prof Joseph Nye, Harvard: "soft power is the ability to affect others through the co-optive means of framing the agenda, persuading, and eliciting positive attraction in order to obtain preferred outcomes"

BACKGROUND

1. Russia has used malign propaganda as well as soft power in attempts to radicalise Russian speaking audiences as part of her hybrid war methodology. This weaponisation of Informationⁱ has played a part in the undermining of sovereignty in Georgia and Ukraine and it poses risks to the UK's national security. The UK remains committed to a sovereign and stable Ukraine; to standing shoulder to shoulder with our NATO allies; and reassuring all NATO members – especially those closest to Russia.
2. HMG is developing a diverse programme of overt soft power activity aimed at audiences in the countries around Russia's periphery that will seek to de-weaponise information. Part of this programme will see the British Council implement a series of projects in the Baltic States aimed at developing greater support for Euro-Atlantic values amongst Russian speaking communities. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is seeking an implementer or implementers to provide complimentary but independent activity that can deploy British soft power in innovative ways.
3. Identity is shaped by a number of factors, including (in order of relative influence): state education > family > friends > exposure to 'culture'. These factors inform an individuals' awareness of; knowledge of; interest in; support for; or advocacy of certain political/historical narratives; their interpretation of current affairs; and their propensity to consume a particular 'culture'. Access to a particular 'culture' is also an important factor (i.e. do I have the right language skills to consume it? Can I travel there easily? Are there study/employment opportunities there?).
4. People in the Baltics have competing identities. Identity is influenced by national governments, exposure to Russian 'culture', and exposure to Euro-Atlantic 'culture'.

The proportional influence of each will depend on the individual's social demographic.

5. Those chiefly or primarily reliant on Russian-language media 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.
6. 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.
7. 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').

Target Audience and Impact

8. It will be important that bidders:
 - identify the target audience of populations particularly vulnerable to hostile propaganda but potentially open to Euro-Atlantic values;
 - demonstrate how each activity will reach that audience;
 - demonstrate how their project is innovative, different to traditional British Council methods but not limited to, and how it can work in parallel to it; and
 - if selected can demonstrate the impact that the activity has on that audience.
 - Demonstrate an indicative outline project plan showing what will be delivered during Q1, Q2, Q3 and Q4.

Assessment criteria

9. Bids will be assessed on the following criteria:

- a) Potential impact on those most vulnerable to hostile propaganda;
- b) The level of creativity and innovation in the bid;
- c) Previous relevant experience and ease of implementation;
- d) Risks from the bid including political and financial; and
- e) Assessed value for money from the bid.

10. Our current thinking on the range of possible impact is in the table below:

POLICY OUTCOMES				
I have awareness of.. [Minimal]	I have knowledge of..	I have interest...	I support...	I take action [Maximal]
...Euro-Atlantic narratives, though I do not believe them. ...Culture, though I do not consume it. I do not act against my government.	...Euro-Atlantic narratives, though I do not believe them. ...Culture, though I do not consume it. I do not act against my government.	...Euro-Atlantic narratives, and I am sympathetic towards them. ...Culture, and I consume some of it. I do not act against my government.	...Euro-Atlantic narratives, and I am believe them. ...Culture, and I consume it. I do not act against my government.	...to advocate Euro-Atlantic narratives, and I am believe them. ...I advocate its culture, and I consume it. I act to counter Russian narratives.

Scope

12. 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 Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Suppliers are encouraged to be innovative and creative with their approach without compromising functionality and effective delivery.

Dependencies

13. 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.

14. The supplier is responsible for due diligence of potential partners and for assessing, reporting on and mitigating all risks at a project level.

Reporting and M and E

15. The supplier will meet at least monthly with the FCO during the implementation phase. 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.

16. The supplier will be asked to formally submit financial reporting and monitoring and evaluation reports on the project on a quarterly basis.

Financial Management and Payments

17. 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.

Budget

18. The FCO is budgeting up to £700,000 for this intervention.

Timeframe

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

Duty of Care

20. **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 full 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.