



TRF Response to Enhance Journalistic Capability in Russia through Themed Press Tours Programme

ITT 1818

2. Technical Response

2.1 Part A - Methodology

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Explain in detail your understanding, overall approach and methodology to meeting all the services and requirements as indicated in the statement of requirements. Your response should focus on the key areas, including understanding of the Russia media environment and how this impacts your approach (Max 1 page).

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2.1.1 Russian media environment and impact on our approach

Thomson Reuters Foundation (TRF) has been working in Russia since the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s when it worked with journalists from across the regions to help them understand the core values of journalism practiced in the UK. Since then, it has adapted its approach as the media landscape has continued to adjust to changing geo-political and technological developments. Since 2015, TRF has been implementing the Bosch-funded *Perspektivy* Programme to address the lack of quality professional development and training opportunities available to Russian journalists. Through workshops and cross-border, mentored initiatives, 100 Russian-speaking journalists to-date have been exposed to new perspectives and critical thinking that help them to report impartially.

It is clear the apparent liberation of the media in the decade after 1990 has now been all but reversed, and the Russian State actively seeks to control public discourse and influence international dialogue through what some people refer to as 'information warfare'. In 15 years Russia has gone from a relatively free and Internet-less nation to a fully authoritarian state with a web-savvy population. Internet audience in Russia has increased from [9.9 million monthly users \(9% of adult population\) in 2003](#) to 73.8 million monthly users (63%) in [2015](#).

It is fair to say that the government sees itself as the legitimate owner of the media space (a view that much of the public has no reason to question) and has been extremely effective in dampening any demand for a more independent or more balanced media. Meanwhile, whilst foreign journalists working within Russia continue to lose their accreditation or face increasing restrictions, reports on international events by Russian news organisations are often framed to be in-line with official positions, and are used as a method to control domestic opinion and give 'alternative visions' to Westerners interpretations of news events (such as with Syria or Ukraine).

Moreover, the last five years have been shaped by the increasing role of government regulation affecting mass media and the online space. Particularly worrying for defenders of free media are new requirements to reveal sources in certain situations, and the wording of legislation that is unclear, meaning the interpretation of the Russian authorities such as the Roskomnadzor takes precedence. New legislation that looks to limit the ability of journalists who publish in Russian to collaborate with international organisations or access international funding highlights the State paranoia and potential difficulties of working in Russia. As a consequence, young journalists may well think twice before engaging in programmes with international organisations.

TRF local understanding of current Russian media environment is underpinned by two key elements. Under the *Perspektivy* programme, TRF convenes regular strategic meetings with an Advisory Board made up of domestic and international media practitioners and experts, academics, and international development experts to analyse current and future needs of journalists. Secondly, TRF's access to Reuters bureau chiefs, Reuters journalists, and the [Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism](#) at Oxford University provide TRF with unique access to the latest analysis and trends of media in Russia, in the context of the wider economic and political situation.

TRF has learned to navigate the increasing risk of isolation of Russian journalists in terms of lack exposure to different viewpoints on a range of issues and their understanding of the role, and the skill sets required, of a journalist as a sceptical watchdog. We have developed a soft but successful approach to identify Russian journalists and senior staff in state news organisations who value 'real journalism' and resent the need for self-censorship and 'on-message' reportage.

TRF's approach is rooted in our ability to constantly adapt our operations, and capitalise on opportunities to deliver the programme objectives. For instance, working across Russia through our *Perspektivy* programme, we have seen a demand from young to middle-career journalists for professional development opportunities, and curiosity about the way organisations such as Reuters and other Western news organisations cover events. We have steered our outreach and accessed our local networks to reach this particular group.

Russia is a huge country, and standards and opinions vary widely. Events that bring together such a geographically diverse group of reporters have helped these journalists to get to know their own country better. Through quantitative surveys we also understand the issues in which they are looking for support which include meeting and exchanging ideas with Western journalists and professionals, digital skills and increasing collaboration across borders. We will appeal to these journalists' desire to undertake an international reporting tour and expose them to Western standards of ethics, impartiality and accuracy, and the role that journalists play holding all to account.