

Terms of Reference (ToRs)

Group of experts for the monitoring research of the political discourse in digital media in Albania

Name of the Project:	“Evidence Based Monitoring of Local Public Spending during Electoral Processes”
Reference number:	NDCINEAR/2023/451-721
Job title:	Group of experts for the monitoring research of the political discourse in digital media in Albania
Location:	Tirana
Working days:	53 days
Duration:	June - October, 2024
Deadline for application:	20.06.2024
New extended deadline:	01.07.2024

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Contracting authority

Balkan Investigative Reporting Network in Albania (BIRN Albania)

Project background

The overall objective of the project “Evidence Based Monitoring of Local Public Spending during Electoral Processes” is *to contribute to the enhancement of electoral integrity, transparency, and equal competition in Albania's electoral processes.*

In order to address the fundamental challenges and deficiencies within Albania's electoral system, particularly those in relation to the misuse of public funds, the engagement of public administration in politics, the misuse of digital media and prevalence of hate speech in political discourse, as well as the barriers encountered by women and youth to political participation, the activities and outputs of this action will focus in achieving the following outcomes:

- Increased transparency and accountability on use of public funds and public administration in relation to electoral processes.
- Improved governance of electoral process - More engaged civil society, media and youth in election monitoring, including watchdog role on issues related to misuse of public funds, political party finances, media coverage and representation of women candidates and gender mainstreaming in the 2025 electoral campaign.

- Enhanced public trust and confidence in the electoral process - Civil society actors and communities better informed on election processes in order to strengthen multi-stakeholders discussions on election integrity and related reforms

The project is implemented by Qëndresa Qytetare in partnership with BIRN Albania and is financially supported by the European Union.

Background of the assignment

In order to increase knowledge and publicly available data on the use / misuse of digital media in the political discourse in Albania, during the first year of the implementation of this project, BIRN Albania will conduct a research study based on the following components. Design a monitoring methodology to track political discourse on digital sphere, especially focused in identifying misuse of public funds and administration for political gain. Conduct digital media monitoring of at least 50 political actors and respective local and public institutions communication in order to identify quantitative and qualitative data on the trends, reach, distribution channels and topics raised in their public discussion. The data will also enable data based comparison between political actors and type of institutions. Also, the research team will make use of at least 15 FOI requests to gather information from public institutions, and will conduct at least 10 in depth interviews with relevant stakeholders. The analysis will take into also evaluate the preparedness of Albania in adopting related ODIHR recommendations and EU directives, such as the Digital Services Act. Both quantitative and qualitative data will be analysed and use for the publication in Albanian and English language of a research report on political discourse in digital media.

In order to fulfil this assignment, BIRN Albania will engage two different groups of experts:

- The first group of experts, related to this specific TORs, will be responsible for developing the research methodology for monitoring the political discourse on digital sphere, conduct the in-depth interviews, analyse the qualitative and quantitative data gathered through field work and write the final research report.
- The second group of experts, contracted by BIRN Albania through a different call, will be responsible for monitoring and coding the online content of the social media selected as part of the methodology.

The experts of both groups should closely collaborate to ensure the successful completion of this assignment.

Specific work

Results to be achieved by the group of experts under this call are detailed below:

- Develop the methodology to track political discourse on digital sphere, especially focused in identifying misuse of public funds and administration for political gain. The methodology should include at least the following sections: a short theoretical

background and respective definitions; specific research questions of the research; list of qualitative and quantitative indicators that will be measured; tools needed for the quantitative monitoring and in-depth interviews. Estimated workload for this task is 10 working days.

- Make use of FOI requests to gather information from public institutions and conduct at least 10 in depth interviews with relevant stakeholders. Estimated workload for this task is 18 working days.
- After the monitoring data are gathered and in-depth interviews conducted, the group of experts should analyse both quantitative and qualitative data made available by the other team responsible for the field research. Estimated workload for this task is 15 working days.
- Based on the data analysed, the group of experts should draft the research report, shared it with the project team and finalize the report. The research report should include at least the following sections: Context and literature review; the methodology; main quantitative and qualitative findings; conclusions and recommendations, as well as necessary annexes with complimentary data. Estimated workload for this task is 10 working days.

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE ASIGNMENT

General qualifications

The experts involved should fulfil the following criteria:

- University degree in media, public relations, political or social sciences or other relevant fields;
- Good knowledge of the political context in Albania;
- At least 5 years of working experience;
- Very good skills in writing and speaking English and Albanian;
- Be able to communicate clearly and effectively;
- Strong time-management and organizational skills;
- To be able to ensure confidentiality of project information.

Specific qualifications

The experts involved should fulfil the following criteria:

- Proven experience in conducting semi-structured interviews and/or focus groups for qualitative researches;
- Proven experience in conducting qualitative data analysis for previous research reports in similar areas;
- Proven experience in writing research reports based on qualitative and quantitative data.

The experts must be independent and free from conflicts of interest in the responsibilities they take on.

Reporting requirements

The experts should submit the following reports / documents in the Albanian language:

- **One report on the methodology developed and agreed.** This report shall be submitted no later than July 10, 2024.
- **One report on all the interviews and data gathered through FOI requests submitted.** This report shall be submitted no later than August 31, 2024.
- **One report with all the datasets of quantitative and qualitative data analysed.** This report shall be submitted no later than September 15, 2024.
- **One research report on the political discourse in digital media in Albania.** This report shall be submitted no later than October 15, 2024.

Submission and approval of reports

The report referred to above must be submitted office.albania@birn.eu.com. The project manager is responsible for approving the reports.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Proposal:

The group of experts is expected to submit a proposal, including:

- *Letter of Interest*, summarizing previous relevant experiences with this call;
- *Technical proposal*, including a summary of steps / approaches to be implemented for the successful fulfillment of the assignment and division of work between experts (max. 2 pages);
- *Financial offer* for working days in Euro. The service provider should submit a Financial Offer as described in Annex A.
- *CV* of the expert/s;
- *The contacts of two possible references.*

If successful, the applicants will be asked to complete the following forms that can be found in the file ‘Documents to be completed after the selection phase’:

- *Declaration on honour on exclusion criteria and selection criteria;*
- *Statement of Exclusivity and Availability;*
- *Financial Identification Form;*
- *Legal Entity File.*

Fee-based

This is a fee-based contract based in the number of days for each task.

The payment will be done following the submission of the main deliverables.

- One report on the methodology developed and agreed – 10 working days;
- One report on all the interviews and data gathered through FOI requests submitted – 18 working days;
- One report with all the datasets of quantitative and qualitative data analyzed – 15 working days;
- One research report on the political discourse in digital media in Albania – 10 working days.

Application Process

The deadline for submission of applications is **June 20, 2024**.

All applications should be sent by email to the following address:

office.albania@birn.eu.com, indicating the title of the TORs in the Subject.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

If the submission deadline has been met and all the required documents are sent, the expert/s will be evaluated on their quality, technical proposal and financial offer. They will be evaluated using the evaluation criteria in the table below.

Evaluation Criteria	Score
Qualifications	
Formal and continues education of the candidate and work experience	10
Good knowledge of the political context in Albania	10
Proven experience in conducting semi-structured interviews and/or focus groups for qualitative researches	10
Proven experience in conducting qualitative data analysis for previous research reports in similar areas	10
Proven experience in writing research reports based on qualitative and quantitative data	10
Implementation	
Technical proposal	30
Financial offer	20
Total Value	100