

Balkan Fellowship for Journalistic Excellence

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APPLICATION GUIDELINES 2018

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BALKAN FELLOWSHIP FOR JOURNALISTIC EXCELLENCE: BACKGROUND AND AIMS

The Balkan news media are increasingly required to report on complex reform issues with regional and European dimensions. Journalists, however, are often under-prepared to tackle these, lacking resources for appropriate training and foreign travel.

To encourage regional networking among journalists and advance balanced coverage of topics that are central to the region as well as to the EU, ERSTE Foundation and the Open Society Foundations are supporting the Balkan Fellowship for Journalistic Excellence programme in cooperation with the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network.

The programme

Ten fellows will be selected on the basis of applications submitted. The fellowship programme is designed for journalists from Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia. It will run from **April** until **December 2018** and three winning articles shall be selected during the final seminar held at the end of the year.

Fellows are expected during this period to produce one in-depth journalistic article of maximum 2,500 words, based on the research proposal they submit. Editorial guidance shall be provided by BIRN.

The fellowship programme involves the following elements:

- i. Fellowship bursary of €2,000 per selected fellow
- ii. Introductory seminar in Vienna, with regional and international speakers (May 2nd – 6th, 2018)
- iii. Grant of up to €2,000 for research expenses, including one regional trip and one trip within the EU, with guidance and organisational support provided by programme partners
- iv. Ongoing mentoring and support from programme editor and BIRN representatives in Balkan countries
- v. Two-day editing sessions in the region
- vi. Final evaluation seminar and award ceremony in the region (December 2018)
- vii. Worldwide publication of reports in all local languages and English
- viii. Membership of fellowship alumni network

Award

The independent Selection Committee, SC, composed of international journalists, editors and experts, judges the quality of the reports and awards prizes. The top prize-winner will win €4,000, the second will receive €3,000 and the third €1,000.

FELLOWSHIP RULES

1. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

1.1. Who can participate?

Individuals from Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia with demonstrable journalistic experience are eligible to apply for the Balkan Fellowship for Journalistic Excellence. Applicants should have citizenship of one of the countries covered by the programme. Applicants should be proficient in English (speaking, reading and comprehension), although reports may be written in local languages.

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1.2 Employer consent

Applicants must be able to dedicate adequate time to the fellowship, in terms of research, trips, attending the opening and closing seminars, writing and attending publicity events. To that end, any necessary permission from the applicant's employer to participate in the fellowship should be secured in advance.

2. THEME OF THE 2018 FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME: TRUTH

The theme for this year's fellowship is TRUTH. Use this topic to inspire a new idea for a story. Or think of a story you've wanted to write and see if you can link it to the topic. The most important thing is to produce a strong story proposal, even if it is only loosely connected to the theme.

The theme is deliberately broad to allow a wide a range of story ideas.

TRUTH lends itself to story ideas that dig for root causes and challenge falsehoods. It also speaks to the news values we expect fellows to hold dear: accuracy, impartiality, independence.

Maybe your approach is to follow the money. Can you track dirty cash or uncover organised crime and corruption? Can you scrutinise the interests of big business? Put a number on lobbying? Find foul play in the markets? Is there a story in the murky world of cryptocurrencies?

Perhaps consider TRUTH in political terms. Is there a political mystery that needs solving? Can you add substance to a political debate characterised by misunderstanding or mendacity?

Can you hold dishonest power to account? Unpick populism? Decode the high-frequency signals of dog-whistle politics?

Maybe your story idea involves a social phenomenon or trend. Perhaps it addresses attitudes based on misconceptions or delusions. Can you explore the beliefs and prejudices that undermine peace, stability and social justice?

Perhaps your idea involves the baggage of the past. In a region riven by divisions and haunted by historical ghosts, truth and reconciliation go hand in hand.

Or maybe your story is about the media industry itself: the war on truth, attacks on press freedom or the erosion of trust in the Fourth Estate. It might touch on media ownership, control or innovation.

Whatever your idea, remember this – the fellowship is about crossing borders.

The fellowship offers the chance to examine an issue in different countries in the region and in the European Union. Do some research to see how the experiences of other countries fit into your story idea.

Your story should have an investigative or analytical element. It should also be topical, reflecting a current issue, and it should tell the reader something new — something that has not been widely reported. If you want to tackle an issue that has already had a lot of coverage, think of a new angle, an element that has been neglected in media reports so far.

In your proposal, make sure you answer the usual journalistic questions (who? when? where? why? how?) and also “so what?” — why should readers be interested in this story? Explain what makes this story relevant and interesting.

3. ELIGIBILITY AND COMPULSORY ACTIVITIES

3.1 Project idea and implementation

The theme of the Balkan Fellowship for Journalistic Excellence 2018 is TRUTH (see section 2 above). The submitted project proposal must refer to this theme and demonstrate an original approach to researching and reporting an important aspect of the topic.

Appropriate research should be conducted in order to produce an article of maximum 2,500 words. The article should feature fresh information and interviews, and be analytical or investigative in nature.

The report may be written in a local language or English, at the fellows' discretion. Editorial support will NOT be available in the local language, but only in English.

Applicants' proposals should refer primarily to the country where they normally reside, but include plans to conduct useful cross border research in other country in the SEE region and/or EU member state.

Research and travel costs provided by this programme shall not exceed €2,000. Practical support shall be provided by programme partners to help organise research trips and access information and sources.

Fellows may carry out all forms of journalistic research necessary to further their approved project. Illegal means of gathering information or trips without relevance to the fellowship will not be approved and should not be carried out.

Fellows must attend the opening and closing programme seminars, and work cooperatively with the BIRN editorial team throughout the training, research, reporting and editorial phases. During the programme, fellows must keep in touch with, and respond promptly to requests of the appointed BIRN editor and programme manager.

Fellows must cooperate with the programme's editorial team throughout the editorial phase to resolve outstanding issues and prepare the submitted report for publication.

Research and training should result in the timely submission of an article of around 2,500 words (see schedule below, section 3.4).

3.2 Editorial control

BIRN editors shall edit all fellows' reports. While fellows retain the right to approve the version of the report which is published, BIRN editing shall be compulsory.

The English-language edition shall be the definitive version, with other language versions provided by translating it.

Guidance and training in editorial style and standards shall be provided at the introductory seminar, and supplemented by the BIRN programme team throughout the project phases.

3.3 Publication

Reports shall be published exclusively by BIRN. Further media outlets shall be encouraged to republish them, providing they inform BIRN and credit the fellow-author and the Fellowship programme.

BIRN shall retain all rights to the reports, in all language versions and formats in which they are published.

Fellows may not use, promote or publish versions of the reports other than the approved BIRN edit.

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3.4 Duration and location

Please note that this is only tentative schedule and that it may be changed during the year.

The fellowship programme officially begins in **April 2018** with preparatory activities, which include conducting initial research and submitting travel and interview plans prior to the opening seminar. Four-day seminar is scheduled to take place in Vienna in early May, from May 2nd to May 6th.

The research phase, during which time research travel must be completed, lasts until the end of **July 2018**. First drafts of reports must be submitted by **July 20, 2018**. This will be followed by a three-week period in which fellows address editors' comments and submit their article, which will be judged by the Selection Committee and also go through a detailed editing process.

The editing phase lasts from **September to the end of November 2018**. The articles are published during November/December and programme promotion take place during **December 2018** across the region.

The three-day final seminar shall take place in early **December 2018** in a regional country covered by the programme.

3.5 Number of applications

Applicants should complete and submit only one application with one research proposal. Multiple applications by individuals and joint applications by more than one individual are not eligible.

4. AWARDS FOR FELLOWS' ARTICLES

The author of top prize-winning story shall receive €4,000, the second €3,000 and the third €1,000. Winning articles will be selected by members of the selection committee, based on transparent evaluation criteria. Selection committee members will be judging original, unedited, versions of articles submitted by fellows.

5. FINANCIAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- Fellows shall receive their €2,000 fellowship bursary at the project's outset
- Research and travel expenses of up to €1,000 shall be given in advance
- Research and travel expenses of up to €1,000 shall be reimbursed in arrears
- Research expenses shall only be reimbursed upon provision of adequate receipts and approval by BIRN
- Eligible expenses include: travel costs incurred on the basis of approved travel plans; per diem costs according to official scale; reasonable accommodation costs; reasonable telecommunications costs; costs incurred to access databases; reasonable representation costs.
- Further details of eligible costs and receipts shall be provided to fellows at the programme's introductory seminar.
- Fellows should include the cost of travel insurance as a research expense. Balkan Fellowship for Journalistic Excellence programme shall not be held liable for fellows' health, safety or security during the programme
- Should research costs amount to less than €2,000, the balance shall not be provided to fellows
- Should any fellow fail to make appropriate efforts to participate in the programme and complete his/her report, the award and travel expenses shall be returned to BIRN

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6. HOW TO APPLY

6.1. Application form

The proposal for a fellowship reporting project must be submitted using the Balkan Fellowship for Journalistic Excellence application form. It must be accompanied by the signed declaration of the applicant.

In order to be properly assessed, all parts of the application form should be filled in as carefully and clearly as possible. Any additional information attached to the application must be clearly marked and included in the same e-mail in which the application is submitted.

The application must be in English.

Applicants are encouraged to read material available on the programme web-site to maximise their chances of a successful application.

6.2. Example of applicant's work

Applicants shall provide at least one relevant example of their writing. Samples may be provided in English or local languages.

6.3. Deadline for applications

The deadline for applications is **March 12, 2018**, at 24h.

BIRN will advise applicants if they have any questions about the application procedure. To reach us please use official programme address fellowship@birn.eu.com

6.4. Where and how to send the application?

Completed applications should be sent as electronic files by email to: fellowship@birn.eu.com.

Or by post to:

Balkan Fellowship for Journalistic Excellence - Application
c/o: BIRN
Kolarceva str. 7/V
11000 Beograd
Serbia

Applicants will receive an email acknowledging receipt.

7. EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF APPLICATIONS

Final decision on the allocation of fellowships is made by the international Selection Committee, composed of journalists, editors and experts. Considering the large number of applications received every year, the programme editor, in cooperation with BIRN editors throughout the region, will prepare a shortlist of recommended applications for the Selection Committee. This shortlist is advisory and committee members retain the right to examine and select other applications as well.

To be able to assess the submitted applications in a transparent way, members of the SC will use the following evaluation criteria.

The 10 best applications for research and reporting projects will be chosen on the basis of scores submitted by SC members.

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Fellow Selection	Reference to questions on the application form	Maximum score
PROJECT PROPOSAL CONTENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Relevance● Feasibility● Originality	15
CANDIDATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Professional qualifications● Motivation● Journalistic approach	15
Maximum total score		30

8. NOTIFICATION OF SELECTED PROJECT PROPOSALS

Successful candidates will be informed by email about the results of the evaluation and awarded project proposals during first week of **April 2018**.

Information and coordination

For Information about the fellowship and application documents visit: fellowship.birn.eu.com.

Information on ERSTE Foundation: www.erstestiftung.org

Information on the Open Society Foundations: www.opensocietyfoundations.org

Information on BIRN: www.birn.eu.com