

CALL FOR PROPOSALS FOR JOURNALISTS FROM MONTENEGRO & KOSOVO

Project:	Society Against Corruption in Montenegro and Western Balkans Region
Project Partners:	Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) and Civic Alliance (CA)
Funded by:	US Department of State
Reference number:	SAQMIP22GR0367
Submit electronically to:	grants@birnnetwork.org
Call for Proposals issued:	22 May 2026
Deadline for Submission of Applications:	14 June 2026 at 23:59 CET

1. BACKGROUND

Corruption remains one of the main obstacles to strengthening the rule of law across the Western Balkans, undermining democratic governance, public trust, and fair access to public services. Politicised decision making, weak oversight and limited accountability mechanisms continue to create space for abuse of power, particularly where public resources and appointments intersect with narrow political or private interests.

In Montenegro, corruption continues to affect public confidence in institutions and the credibility of reforms. Progress on transparency and accountability remains uneven, and civil society and independent media have repeatedly flagged gaps between formal commitments and practice. For example, reporting has highlighted how the state still lacks key transparency tools in areas like public procurement and access to data that would enable meaningful scrutiny and oversight.¹ Reporting has also underlined the importance of ensuring that anti-corruption bodies have the independence and resources needed to function effectively.²

¹ <https://balkaninsight.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/DRVAR-2024.pdf> .

² <https://balkaninsight.com/2026/01/12/montenegro-court-dismisses-djukanovic-lawsuit-against-anti-corruption-agency/>.

In Kosovo, corruption and clientelism remain persistent challenges, particularly in areas such as public contracting and institutional governance, where accountability mechanisms are often perceived as weak or inconsistently applied. Balkan Insight's country governance profiling similarly points to ongoing issues linked to corruption risks and the need for stronger transparency and oversight in public decision-making.³

Across both contexts, education, healthcare, and the environment remain sectors vulnerable to politicisation, conflicts of interest, and misuse of public funds. Addressing these risks requires stronger cooperation between citizens, civil society, and local media, so that community concerns translate into credible evidence, public scrutiny, and pressure for institutional follow-up.

This initiative in a broader sense aims to contribute to free speech, open debate and free sharing of information, reducing corruption, all forms of organised crime including drug and human trafficking, influence from hostile entities and countries, creating a more favourable democratic and business environment.

2. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

This open call aims to support independent journalists in Montenegro and Kosovo to investigate and report on corruption-related issues affecting their communities. Through the call, BIRN will provide technical assistance and on-the-job mentoring to four journalists from Montenegro and Kosovo.

Through individual reporting projects, the initiative seeks to address systemic corruption challenges particularly in healthcare, education and the environment, among other sectors, by producing impactful, evidence-based stories that inform the public and encourage accountability.

By strengthening the role of independent journalism, the project contributes to greater public awareness of corruption, its consequences and the need for transparent and accountable institutions and demand concrete results, while raising public awareness of the damage that corruption causes, especially in the strategic sectors of healthcare, environment and education.

The objectives for this round of grants include:

³ https://balkaninsight.com/birn_source/birn/page/1041/.

- Increase capacities of independent journalists to identify corruption in their communities, report it to responsible authorities and hold institutions accountable;
- Support the production of in-depth, high-quality anti-corruption content that highlights systemic issues at local and national levels, with a particular focus on healthcare, education, and environmental governance;
- Encourage accountability by increasing public access to credible information, enabling citizens to better understand corruption risks and demand transparency and action from institutions;
- Promote collaboration and engagement between journalists, civil society actors and the public, contributing to a more informed and active response to corruption;
- Contribute to improved public discourse and policy attention on corruption-related issues through impactful reporting and dissemination of findings.

3. OUTPUTS AND ACTIVITIES

Output 1.1

Corruption cases and systemic challenges in Montenegro and Kosovo identified, investigated, and publicly exposed through independent journalistic content production.

Activity 1.1

Providing sub-grants, technical assistance and on-the-job mentoring to independent journalists for the production of in-depth investigations and multimedia anti-corruption content focused on priority sectors affecting local communities.

Output 1.2

Increased public awareness in Montenegro and Kosovo regarding corruption-related issues, the importance of anti-corruption efforts, and the role of independent journalism in strengthening accountability and public oversight.

Activity 1.2

Disseminating anti-corruption investigations and multimedia content through mainstream media, digital platforms and social media channels to encourage public engagement and informed debate.

4. ELIGIBILITY OF COSTS AND SIZE OF GRANT

The table below summarises the grants to be given within this Call for Proposals.

Maximum Amount per Grant	Country	Number of Grants (Journalists)	Total Grants	Estimated Amount
\$ 1,500	Kosovo	4	4	\$6,000
\$ 1,500	Montenegro	4	4	\$6,000
Total			8	\$12,000

BIRN reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted.

5. APPLICATION

This section includes important information on the rules for application, including eligibility criteria, activities and costs eligibility, application and evaluation procedures among others.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

In order to apply, applicants must fulfil the following criteria:

- 3-5 years of working experience in journalism and media
- Be an independent journalist (freelancer or affiliated contributor) who is a citizen or resident of Montenegro or Kosovo;
- Submit application form in English;
- Propose one (1) impactful anti-corruption story (or a small series/multimedia package, if relevant) addressing issues in the sectors of environment, education or healthcare;
- Letter of intent submitted by beneficiaries outlining commitment to publish the story in a media outlet.

IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD AND LOCATION

The planned duration of each supported project is **up to 3 months**, starting from **June 2026**.

All activities must be carried out in **Montenegro or Kosovo**, depending on the applicant's country of residence, and should focus on issues relevant to local communities within these contexts.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

To ensure a fair and competitive application process, applicants should complete and submit **only one application / proposal** under this Call for Proposals. Multiple applications by one journalist are not eligible.

APPLICATION FORM CONTENT

To apply for the sub-grants, individual journalists should:

- **Complete the Application Form** (download the template – [HERE](#)),
- **Attach the CV**
- **Attach the letter of support from the media outlet/editor where you would publish the story**

The complete application, including the Application Form, and supporting documents, must be submitted electronically to:

grants@birnnetwork.org

CLARIFICATIONS, QUESTION & ANSWERS

Questions about the Call for Proposals may be sent in English to the email address: grants@birnnetwork.org until 30 May 2026.

EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

All received proposals will go through the following three steps:

1. [Administrative and eligibility check by BIRN](#) to ensure the applicants have followed the application procedure set out in the Application Form, according to [eligibility criteria](#), and have submitted all required documents by the [deadline](#).
2. [Evaluation by the project jury](#).
3. [Notification of the application outcome](#).

