

# APPLICATION GUIDELINES

## 2020

## FELLOWSHIP FOR JOURNALISTIC EXCELLENCE: BACKGROUND AND AIMS

Journalists are increasingly required to cover complex issues, trends and events that are shaping the future of society in Central, Eastern and Southeast Europe. The fellowship provides editorial guidance, training and adequate funding to do so.

Keen to encourage professional, in-depth, cross-border reporting in Southeast Europe, the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) and Erste Foundation set up the Balkan Fellowship for Journalistic Excellence programme in 2007.

In 2020, we have expanded the programme to include countries in Central Europe: Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia.

### 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, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia. It will run from **April** until **December 2020** and three winning articles shall be selected during the final seminar held early next 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 €3,000 per selected fellow including at least one research and reporting trip, with guidance and organisational support provided by programme partners
- ii. Introductory seminar focused to enhance each fellow's reporting, writing and structuring skills and to further develop suggested stories.
- iii. Ongoing mentoring and support from programme editor and BIRN representatives in targeted countries
- iv. Two-day individual editing sessions
- v. Final evaluation meeting where stories will be presented to the Selection Committee and the award ceremony
- vi. Worldwide publication of reports in all local languages and English
- vii. Membership of fellowship alumni network

### Award

The independent Selection Committee, SC, composed of international journalists, editors and experts, judges the quality of applications and awards fellowships. At the end of the programme they judge quality of produced reports and awards prizes. The top prize-winner will win €3,000, the second will receive €2,000 and the third €1,000.

## **FELLOWSHIP RULES**

### **1. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

#### **1.1. Who can participate?**

Individuals from Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia with demonstrable journalistic experience are eligible to apply for the 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.

#### **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 2020 FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME: RULE OF LAW**

The theme of this year's Fellowship is Rule of Law. The phrase refers to the principle that no one should be above the law; that a commonly agreed set of rules should apply equally to everyone in society. In the broader sense, this year's theme is about fairness as well as justice. It is about the many rules – spoken and unspoken, public and hidden – that influence our everyday lives in a democracy.

If you are still searching for a story, the theme can help by making you ask the right questions. If you already have a story that you want to pursue, you can try and link it to the theme. This link can be a literal one – for instance, if you propose an investigation into an abuse of power. However, the link does not have to be literal, and nor does your story have to be an investigation. You can also propose a ground-breaking feature story that revisits basic questions about right and wrong, fair and unfair, or that says something new about the relationship between the powerful and the weak.

We will always prefer a strong proposal that is loosely linked to the theme over a weak proposal that is tightly linked to the theme. In the end, we want deeply reported stories that reveal something new about our world – or that reveal the familiar in a new light.

What will your story reveal that has not already been reported? What will it tell us that we could not have guessed? Your proposal cannot answer all these questions with certainty – that will be the work of your story, over several months. However, your proposal should offer hypothetical answers to these questions based on the facts at hand.

Your proposal should demonstrate that you have researched the story as far as you can without actually hitting the road and reporting it. It should also try to articulate what you do not know and hope eventually to uncover – the mystery at the heart of your story.

The Fellowship is a bursary for cross-border reporting. Its scope and audience are international. While your core story may seem intensely local, the underlying phenomena are unlikely to be confined to one country alone. Please research those interesting elements of your story that extend beyond the country where you live. Make sure your proposal includes appropriate comparisons or case studies from another country in the region, as well as in the broader European Union.

Your proposal should indicate the potential for a strong narrative, brimming with characters and colour. It should be comfortable with nuances and shades of grey, and it should not be shy of facts that challenge your preconceptions. As well as answering the who, what, when, where and why of your story, your proposal should answer the question: so what? Why should your readers care? The Fellowship is unique in the time and editorial support it dedicates to each story. Make sure yours is worth it.

### **3. ELIGIBILITY AND COMPULSORY ACTIVITIES**

#### **3.1 Project idea and implementation**

The theme of the Fellowship for Journalistic Excellence 2020 is RULE OF LAW (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. 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.

#### **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.

### 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 2020** with preparatory activities and the opening seminar scheduled to take place in early April.

Seminar is followed by the research phase. At the initial seminar each fellow will, together with editor, develop its research and reporting plan and will **agree on individual deadlines depending on the complexity of the story**.

Submission of first drafts of reports will be followed by a three-week period in which fellows address editors' comments and submit their article, which will go through a detailed editing process. Also, this versions will be judged by the Selection Committee and thus it is important to submit them on time and allow the process to run smoothly. In case of delays feedback time will be shortened.

The editing sessions will be in the region in **June, September and November**. The articles are published and promoted on the rolling basis, depending on individual schedules.

The final seminar and award ceremony shall take place in December 2020.

### 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 €3,000, the second €2,000 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 €1,000 fellowship bursary at the project's outset. Remaining €1,000 shall be paid after the first draft of the story is submitted while the last €1,000 will be paid after the final version of article is approved by both editor and author, and is ready for publishing.
- Fellows should include the cost of travel insurance as a research expense. Fellowship for Journalistic Excellence programme shall not be held liable for fellows' health, safety or security during the programme
- Should any fellow fail to make appropriate efforts to participate in the programme and complete his/her report, the award shall be returned to BIRN

## 6. HOW TO APPLY

### 6.1. Application form

The proposal for a fellowship reporting project must be submitted using the 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 10, 2020**, 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](mailto: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](mailto:fellowship@birn.eu.com).

Or by post to:

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 in eligible countries, 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.

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

## 8. NOTIFICATION OF SELECTED PROJECT PROPOSALS

Successful candidates will be informed by email about the results of the evaluation and awarded project proposals during the last week of March 2020.

### Information and coordination

For Information about the fellowship and application documents visit: [fellowship.birn.eu.com](http://fellowship.birn.eu.com).

Information on ERSTE Foundation: [www.erstestiftung.org](http://www.erstestiftung.org)

Information on BIRN: [www.birn.eu.com](http://www.birn.eu.com)