

## **Call for Proposals/Terms of Reference**

### **Evaluation of DW Akademie's project in the Western Balkans, funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)**

DW Akademie  
Research and Evaluation  
20 August 2024

DW Akademie is calling for proposals for the evaluation of its project in the Western Balkans funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). DW Akademie invites interested and qualified persons to submit proposals. These Terms of Reference are to be taken as the basis for the evaluation.

### **Tender information**

**Title:** Evaluation of DW Akademie's project in the Western Balkans based on the OECD/DAC-criteria, with a particular focus on the criterion sustainability.

**Type of contract:** service contract

**Start Date:** 01 November 2024

**Duration of assignment:** The contract will be effective for 6 months from date of signing

## **1. Introducing DW Akademie**

DW Akademie is Deutsche Welle's center for international media development, journalism training and knowledge transfer. Our projects strengthen the human right to freedom of expression and unhindered access to information. DW Akademie empowers people worldwide to make independent decisions based on reliable facts and constructive dialogue. DW Akademie is a strategic partner of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. We also receive funding from the Federal Foreign Office and the European Union and are active in more than 70 developing countries and emerging economies.

DW Akademie strengthens the human right to freedom of expression. It enables people throughout the world to make decisions based on independent information, reliable facts and constructive dialogue. We stand for free media, free expression and free societies worldwide.

We are journalists, consultants and experts in media and education. Together with our partners, we work to promote free expression, human rights and the development of functioning media systems worldwide. We believe that journalism, education and culture improve people's lives. Powerful stories support positive social dialogue. People need reliable facts, independent analysis, unbiased presentation and universal access to knowledge.

Our work centers on Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which proclaims freedom of expression and access to information as a basic human right. Free expression is the prerequisite for people to use reliable information and exchange ideas with others. In Eastern Europe, DW Akademie and its partners are implementing BMZ-funded projects in the Western Balkans, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

## **2. The BMZ-funded project in the Western Balkans**

### **a) Context and project summaries**

DW Akademie's project in the Western Balkans is currently being implemented over a three-year period from January 2023 to December 2025. During the last year of the project, an evaluation is scheduled to take place in time to provide actionable information for any subsequent proposals.

The focal points of the project are as follows:

Young people in the Western Balkans have too few opportunities to participate in social discourse via the media and to articulate their opinions and interests. Only a few traditional media offer them interactive or participatory content. Those young people who run their own media (channels) for children and young people have difficulties establishing themselves journalistically, personally and financially in the long term. They also have to contend with hate speech, cyberbullying, and disinformation on a massive scale.

As part of the "Young Media" program (since 2017), DW Akademie is focusing on supporting the Young Media Network, which is currently being established and brings together children's and youth media from the Western Balkans. This network is establishing itself as a competence center for children's and youth journalism and economic sustainability. It also acts as a consultancy center for young media professionals on hate speech, cyberbullying, and disinformation. The two Serbian media associations Asocijacija medija and Local Press as well as the youth umbrella organization KOMS actively support the network with their expertise.

### **b) Project aims**

The theory of change of our projects includes inputs (activities), outputs (deliverables) and outcomes (project aims).

The expected outcome of the project in the Western Balkans is as follows:

Young media professionals strengthen the resilience of children's and youth media through a regional network.

The project in the Western Balkans contributes to a common overall regional objective for Eastern Europe (at the impact level):

People in war and crisis regions who are exposed to massive disinformation have access to relevant and reliable information provided by resilient and independent media in order to be able to make self-determined decisions.

### 3. Principles and criteria of the evaluation

All evaluations of DW Akademie projects are based on principles that both the contracting authority and the contractor must adhere to. These principles stem from the OECD/DAC and the German Association of Evaluators (DeGEval): impartiality and independence, credibility, usefulness, participation, feasibility, fairness, and accuracy. In addition to accountability to the BMZ, the evaluation focuses on mutual learning for future project work.

The OECD/DAC criteria are used as the basis for the evaluation design. All OECD/DAC criteria are to be examined (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability). However, the evaluation concept of the DW Akademie for the evaluations of the projects in Europe foresees specific priorities for each country. The focus for the Western Balkans project will be on the criterion sustainability. The following key questions have been identified:

- How sustainable is DW Akademie's contribution to strengthening all four partner organizations? Have the partners been sufficiently strengthened to be able to continue working independently after the end of the project? How stable are the created structures and capacities (including expertise)? Where does the Young Media Network stand? How can it be empowered to continue and grow after the support finishes at the end of the next project phase?
- What recommendations can be derived with regards to the design of the follow-up project? What recommendations can be formulated for the exit strategy to be developed and implemented in the final project phase?

Additionally, the evaluation serves to find out what efforts the project has undertaken to counter the spread of (Russian) mis- and disinformation in the Western Balkans. This is in line with DW Akademie's regional strategy for Eastern Europe and the Balkans and leads to the following additional questions under the relevance criterion:

- How relevant is the topic of disinformation in the current Western Balkans project? How relevant do the partners see the problem?
- In what way has the project addressed countering disinformation?

Apart from the BMZ-funded project there are two projects in the Western Balkans implemented by the DW Akademie. One of them is co-funded by EU and BMZ and implemented in cooperation with GIZ and Internews; the other one is funded by EU and implemented in cooperation with Goethe-Institute. Therefore, under the efficiency criterion, the following aspects shall be analyzed:

- How are synergies identified and utilized?
- In how far do the capacities that were built up with the support of DW Akademie during the "Young Media" program create benefits for the implementation of the two projects?

#### **4. Evaluation process**

All proposals received will be assessed according to an internal set of criteria. Following contract clarification, DW Akademie will provide the contractor with the detailed project information. In a Kick-off Workshop with the project team, the exact procedures and focus of the evaluation will be determined, including agreeing on how DW Akademie staff can support the evaluator(s) in scheduling and organizing (face-to-face and remote) interviews in various locations.

Based on the decisions made during the Kick-Off Workshop, the evaluator(s) will produce an inception report detailing the evaluation questions, interview partners, methodology and work schedule (a template will be provided).

A data collection trip may be conducted to meet project partners. The trip will be planned in cooperation with DW Akademie and independently conducted by the evaluator(s). For the data collection phase, proposals can be submitted detailing how and where the team(s) plan to conduct face-to-face interviews and for how many days. A visit to the Brave New Media Forum at the beginning of November is considered to be useful, as the evaluators can make direct personal contact with nearly all potential discussion partners and also gain an impression of this event. It should be noted, however, that building on the experience of remote evaluations in previous years, the evaluation should include as many remote elements as possible (especially fewer flights). The particular arrangements in this regard will be clarified at the Kick-Off Workshop

At the end of the evaluation process, an independently written report detailing the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation is to be submitted by the evaluator(s), based on a template provided by DW Akademie. A draft version of the report will be discussed in a so-called Change Workshop with the project team, after which the final version of the report is to be prepared by the evaluator(s).

#### **5. Deliverables**

The following services are to be rendered on assignment:

- Participation in the Kick-off Workshop with the project team and evaluation consultant from DW Akademie's Research and Evaluation Unit (REVAL), carried out online.
- Inception report (max. six pages, plus appendix)
- Data collection phase – including the preparation and execution of evaluation interviews (face-to-face or online)
- Presentation of the findings of the evaluation

- Participation in a Change Workshop at the end of the evaluation, during which the results and recommendations will be presented and discussed with the same participants invited to the Kick-off Workshop, carried out online.
- Final evaluation report of max. 20 pages (plus appendix) in English or German. Additionally, an executive summary in English or German of about four pages should be submitted, as well as an appendix containing any additional information that supports the understanding of the evaluation results. This includes research tools such as questionnaires, interview guidelines, and a list of interviewees. DW Akademie will be responsible for the proof-reading of the executive summaries in German and English, which will be edited by DW Akademie and then published on the DW Akademie website.

## **6. Application Requirements**

### **a) Applicant's profile**

Applicants should have experience in designing and carrying out evaluations in the field of international development (including OECD/DAC criteria). They should be proficient in information and data collection and analysis, as well as having excellent analytical skills. Experience in the media sector and in international development cooperation / media development, as well as relevant regional and in-countries expertise, will be preferred. The applicant – or, if applying as a team, at least one of the applicants – should have extensive knowledge of the region, including any relevant language skills. Fluent English language skills are a prerequisite. Please note that the project documentation is mainly in German; however, the main documents can be provided in English.

### **b) Format of the proposal**

Interested applicants should outline a coherent proposal for the design of the evaluation. The proposal is mainly intended to assess the competence and motivation of the candidates and will not necessarily be used as a basis for the evaluation itself. The final methodology and procedures will be discussed and agreed upon by the contracted evaluator(s) and DW Akademie at the Kick-Off Workshop.

Furthermore, the applicant's own evaluation expertise as well as the context of the project region, evaluation objectives, methodology, and evaluation design should be described. The specific documents to be submitted are listed below (6 c).

Overall, each applicant can only be contracted for one evaluation. Each evaluation will be awarded separately as they will all be conducted at the same time. Submitting a proposal does not constitute an entitlement to the conclusion of a contract.

### c) Budget & documents

The budget for the evaluation is **16.500 Euros** net, including any travel expenses. This amount should not be exceeded.

The following documents should be included in the proposal:

- Cover letter, detailing the suitability of the applicant(s) for the specific evaluation
- CV(s) of evaluator(s), documenting relevant experience, including contact details for two references
- Proposal (max. 6 pages) detailing the proposed evaluation design, including a draft schedule and budget, indicating the honorarium for the entire team, the number of anticipated working days, and any travel expenses.

### 7. Timetable and deadlines

- Deadline for all proposals: **15 September 2024**.
- Evaluators will be selected by **30 September 2024**.
- Evaluation contract begins on **01 November 2024**.
- Kick-Off Workshop: between **mid Nov – mid Dec 2024**.
- Data collection is scheduled for **February 2025**.
- Draft evaluation report should be available by **early March 2025**.
- Change Workshop is scheduled for **March 2025**.
- Final evaluation report is due by **mid-April 2025** at the latest.

Evaluation proposals should be emailed to Laura Moore (laura.moore@dw.com), with Andrea Gellert (andrea.gellert@dw.com) and Stefan Elsing (stefan.elsing@dw.com) cc'd. Only electronic formats will be accepted.

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