

Terms of reference for a Tech Agency or Software Developer to produce an application to support journalists in Serbia to fact-check content

Combatting disinformation in the Western Balkans

About ARTICLE 19

ARTICLE 19 is an international “think/do” organisation that propels the freedom of expression movement locally and globally so all people can realise the power of their voices. We do this by working on five key themes:

- Promoting media independence;
- Increasing access to information;
- Protecting journalists;
- Expanding civic space; and
- Placing human rights at the heart of developing digital spaces.

Together with our partners, we develop cutting-edge research and legal and policy analysis to strengthen expression worldwide, lead work on the frontlines of expression through our 9 regional hubs across the globe and propel change by sparking innovation in the global freedom of expression movement.

About this project

ARTICLE 19 is a partner of the EU funded project Combatting Disinformation in the Western Balkans (CDWB). The purpose of this project is to help tackle disinformation across 4 countries in the Western Balkans (Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina).

Based on the collective analyses conducted by the project partners, ARTICLE 19 will work within its sphere of influence to support media professionals in Serbia to:

A) co-design and develop a digital software that uses AI to support media professionals in Serbia to fact-check online content.

B) Support the rollout, adoption, and use of the software by media professionals through a campaign that emphasizes quality journalism in the four target countries.

Approach and vision:

As a collaborative and consultative approach, informed by the target audience of media professionals in Serbia, and co-designed around their needs, this proposal addresses their main points, removes a key barrier they have identified, and contributes to our vision of a society where the media (regardless of their knowledge, age, or skill) can:

1. Check the veracity accuracy of information they research and use to produce news.
2. Improve their capacity to distinguish between disinformation and accurate information.
3. Practice a higher standard of journalism.

We believe the application must be used to support and speed up, rather than replace the work of human fact-checkers. Moreover, other methods must continue to be deployed to strengthen media literacy across the board.

Product requirements (Features and functionality):

We currently have a limited budget (75,000 EUR) and time available (Oct-April 2024). We envisage this product as a minimum viable product, or an MVP which can fact-check content in a few keyways, including:

- i. by automating tedious, manual, fact-checking processes used by the fact checking professionals, speeding these up where possible.
- ii. to use a combination of algorithms and/or machine learning to rapidly scan and flag up images and videos that have been manipulated.

iii. to use natural language processing to rapidly identify and flag up stories or statements made by politicians and/or public officials that other human fact checkers have already labeled or categorised as false or misleading.

iv. to enable detection of re-purposed or plagiarised content by rapidly scanning content and flagging up cases where matches with older content are higher than a specified threshold (e.g., 75% or more).

Purpose of the consultancy:

ARTICLE 19 is looking to collaborate with a **tech agency, ideally the combination of a product-UX designer and a technical developer** to help us design and develop an AI fact-checking tool in Serbia to be used by media professionals.

The agency will need to scope out key requirements for design and development, advise on the feasibility of required functionality, suggest technical improvements, ensure the tool is designed based on user feedback, that it is easy to use, that a prototype is tested with users, and user feedback is implemented to refine the tool prior to launch.

The agency will be accountable to ARTICLE 19's Media Freedom team but will also work in close collaboration with the Senior Campaigner, the Local Senior Campaign Coordinator, and the Strategic Comms Lead within ARTICLE 19, along with a focus group of core users to **ensure that a minimum of 25% of media houses in Serbia, adopt the application.**

A collaborative, user-centered, and iterative approach to product design, including user testing are essential objectives for the project.

ARTICLE 19 will help to identify potential media houses in Serbia to consult with to adopt the tool.

Description of the role / Key responsibilities:

1. Lead a session with a user group to understand their current fact-checking processes, their challenges, and which of these could be sped up and automated by machine

learning, NLP, or other relevant technologies.

2. Put together a product proposal that:
 - Scopes out the functional and technical requirements for the application. Advises on the time and cost implications to design and build the application including making recommendations for which technologies to use.
 - Provides recommendations for additional features, functionality, or improvements that may be cost-effective to include for the MVP.
 - Provides a timeline for discovery, prototype, and final product delivery, using agile sprints to phase out delivery of a prototype, time for user testing, incorporating feedback, and refining the product for launch.
3. Design and develop the product to a prototype stage and run sessions with users to test the prototype.
4. Ensure that all stakeholders are regularly consulted across key stages of design, development, and user testing.
5. Ensure user feedback on the prototype is implemented and refinements are made.
6. Ensure the final iteration of the tool is delivered on time and to budget.
7. Ensure online and offline events are conducted in collaboration with ARTICLE 19 to demo and promote the tool to intended users.

Objectives, deliverables, and key results (OKRs):

1. By **Nov 2023**, in collaboration with the A19 team, a survey / online focus group session has been designed and conducted to understand the existing methods of fact-checking, and to map out the requirements for the tool.
2. By **Nov-Dec 2023** the focus groups of journalists and fact checking professionals have fed into the design requirements for the application.
3. By **Jan 2024**, a session is run with all those who have contributed to test the first prototype of the tool, and their feedback is implemented for the next iteration of the

tool.

4. By **March 2024**, the refined prototype and MVP of the tool have been announced and shared with all relevant stakeholders
5. By **end March 2024**, online and offline events have been conducted to demo and promote the tool to intended users, the process of collaborative design and development of the application has been highlighted.
6. By **end April 2024** date **at least 25%** of media houses are using the tool. (Please note that these targets are indicative and will be finalised and confirmed once the appointment of the consultant has been completed).

Qualifications and competencies / Person specification:

To accomplish the objectives and deliver the OKRs for this project, the post-holder will require the following key qualifications and competencies.

Essential:

1. A demonstrable track record of practicing user-centered, iterative, product design
2. A deep understanding and commitment to ensuring flawless user experience, including working collaboratively with a group of users to understand key challenges, needs, and requirements.
3. Proven experience of building strong working relationships, ensuring frequent updates, and obtaining timely feedback to queries.
4. Demonstrable experience of convincing audiences to adopt a software product or tool.
5. Demonstrable experience of using an agile approach, with sprints for design, development, testing, etc.
6. Excellent time-management, communication, and administrative skills, with the ability to keep the momentum of the project deliverables on schedule.
7. Fluency in Serbian.

8. Working proficiency in English.

Desirable:

1. A demonstrable, track record of designing and developing user-friendly, applications that can scan, categorize, and assess images, video, and text statements.
2. Knowledge of the media landscape in Serbia and surrounding Balkans region, including knowledge in the field of one or more of the following: Freedom of Expression / disinformation / media ethics / media literacy.
3. Good networks and relationships with editors in chief, journalist’s unions, media literacy organisations, etc.
4. Professional experience working in the Western Balkans, with knowledge of the social and political situation in the region.
5. At least 5 years’ experience working on projects/campaigns/communications for non-profit organizations.

Key working relationships:

The post-holder must work in close collaboration with the Project Lead, the Local Senior Campaign Coordinator, the Senior Campaigner, and the Strategic Comms Lead within ARTICLE 19. They will report to the Project Lead.

Project timeline:

November 2023 - May 2024.

- Phase 1: Discovery and Design - running from Nov-Dec 2023
- Phase 2: Design, Development, and Prototype testing running from Jan-Mar 2023
- Phase 3: Roll out and adoption: Mar 2023 – April 2024
- Project evaluation will take place in May 2024

Expression of interest and deadline:

Proposals should include:

1. The proposed approach
2. The proposed technologies
3. Intended ways of working
4. A detailed schedule
5. A budget breakdown covering costs not exceeding 75,000 EUR for the full product (discovery, design, final product and roll-out)
6. 3 or more references of relevant work and clients handled (particularly non-profit organisations).

The agency is encouraged to adopt an innovative approach towards the assignment. In assessing the proposals, ARTICLE19 will ask the Agency to make a presentation on the strategy they will be using and examples the agency has delivered in the past.

Your proposal should include:

- Details regarding experience of AI product or tool design

NB: Proposals from agencies that have worked in Serbia will be prioritised.

If you or your agency are interested in applying, please send your full proposal to sarahourahmane@article19.org by the deadline of 23rd of October, 2023.