

# INNOVATION. MEDIA. MINDS.

EU SUPPORT TO PUBLIC  
SERVICE JOURNALISM  
IN WESTERN BALKANS

#EU4MediaMindsWB

## Application Guidelines for the Innovation project grants for Public Service Media in the Western Balkans

Call for Proposals issued in the framework of  
Innovation. Media. Minds:  
EU Support to Public Service Journalism  
in the Western Balkans, a project funded by  
the European Union

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## Disclaimer

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<b>Opening date</b>	November 11, 2024
<b>Closing date</b>	December 11, 2024, 23:59 CET
<b>Grants duration</b>	Maximum twelve (12) months
<b>Who can apply?</b>	Available exclusively to Western Balkan Public Service Media. These grants support initiatives aimed at innovative approach and development.
<b>Goethe Application Portal (GAP) link to online application form</b>	<a href="https://portal.gap.goethe.de/cases/c12a71b0-bd00-4a17-82a8-1a13b6306ae7/create">https://portal.gap.goethe.de/cases/c12a71b0-bd00-4a17-82a8-1a13b6306ae7/create</a>

## 1. General information

The Innovation. Media. Minds: EU Support to Public Service Journalism in the Western Balkans Programme objective is to assist Public Service Media (PSM) in enhancing organisational performance and internal governance while also enhancing the individual capacities of journalists, technical personnel, top and middle management, and staff members.

### 1.1. About the Innovation. Media. Minds: EU Support to Public Service Journalism in the Western Balkans

Funded by the European Union, the Innovation. Media. Minds Programme is managed by the Goethe-Institut on behalf of the European Commission and in collaboration with its implementing partner DW Akademie. Innovation. Media. Minds: EU Support to Public Service Journalism in Western Balkans seeks to promote an environment that is supportive of media freedom and improve participatory democracies and the EU approximation process in the region through a strengthened contribution by civil society and media. The Programme will collaborate with public service media in the Western Balkans to specifically address the following objectives:

- a) improve internal governance and organisational performance of public interest journalism;
- b) enhance the professional capacity of journalists, both women and men equally, in public broadcasters and,
- c) expand the cooperation and partnership between public service media in the Western Balkans.

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Specific methodologies and areas of institutional and capacity development required for each PSM will be defined based on an initial needs assessment and audience research from the baseline assessment. Using both financial and technical support, a set of priority areas of intervention and corresponding targets will be created in cooperation with each funded PSM based on the comprehensive research. Until the completion of the Programme, a **total of EUR 900,000** will be distributed within several grant schemes.

## 1.2. Objectives of the grant scheme

The grants scheme particularly seeks to:

- improve PSMs' internal governance and organisational performance;
- elevate the level of quality and applicability of the content created;
- increase audience participation and engagement;
- support PSM editors and journalists in the Western Balkans in advancing their professional abilities and gaining insight, expertise and knowledge about contemporary EU journalism standards and practices.

Please refer to Section - [Timetable and Implementation](#) for more specific details regarding the current call for proposals.

## 1.3. Innovation project grants

The call for *Innovation project grants of PSMs* is open exclusively for the following: *PSMs with a legal body established in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo<sup>\*1</sup>, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia* that have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Goethe-Institut and the DW Akademie and participated in the in-house needs assessment. The issues and areas of action identified during the needs assessment phase, along with the demands of certain target audiences (minorities, gender, youth, socially vulnerable groups, etc.), may serve as the foundation for the Innovation project grants. The Innovation project grants have a specific objective of improving the internal governance and organisational performance of Western Balkan PSMs, expanding the audiences, increasing their engagement and involvement, and elevating the quality and relevance of the created content. A **total budget of EUR 420,000** will be distributed in two calls for proposals. The highest grant amount that can be awarded is **EUR 60,000**.

PSMs may apply to cover the following costs:

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<sup>1</sup> \*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999.

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- Costs for new productions such as fees for freelance contracts (filming team), training costs, catering, materials for filming, etc.
- Expenses for technical support and office equipment (IT, multimedia platforms, mobile journalist sets for mobile reporting, operating new software/apps/equipment, data protection, copyright, etc.) including new and innovative technical solutions to improve value for money and effective programming, content production, etc.

PSMs must demonstrate in their project proposals that the activities they propose are consistent with the reform/change process and hold a sustainability element. Examples of such activities include research activities, organising events, participation in workshops and trainings, producing news, etc.

## **Important notes:**

- Only Western Balkan PSMs that have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) are eligible to apply for Innovation project grants.
- Any content production should rely on the existing capacities (human & technical) and resources of the PSM as well as include the development of new capacities and resources. Sustainability and ownership of content production are preconditions, and both must be guaranteed by PSMs.

## **1.4. Duration**

Applicants have the opportunity to apply for Innovation project grants, with project implementations lasting a maximum of twelve (12) months.

## **2. Eligibility criteria**

### **2.1. Who can apply?**

Applicants must comply with the following criteria:

- Operate as a PSM with a legal entity (media outlet) established in one of the following IPA beneficiaries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo\*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia;
- Have signed a MoU with the Goethe-Institut and DW Akademie;
- Have participated in the in-house needs assessment.

Within their project proposals, Western Balkan PSMs should demonstrate the following selection criteria:

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- Impact: The proposed project/project activities have a significant impact on the PSM's operations, audience reach, or societal role.
- Innovation: The project introduces new and innovative approaches to public service broadcasting.
- Sustainability: The project is sustainable and has the potential to be replicated or scaled up.
- Alignment with program objectives: The project is aligned with the specific objectives of the Programme.
- Potential for cross-border collaboration: The project should have the potential to foster collaboration among PSMs from different regions.

The IMM Programme welcomes cooperation between two or more Western Balkan PSMs in implementation of project activities suggested within this grant scheme. Applying in partnership with another media outlet/organisation for the grant application purpose is not allowed, as the grant scheme is focused on building individual capacity of Western Balkan PSMs. The applicant cannot be a beneficiary of EU funds or another donation or grant scheme financing activities that are identical to the ones proposed for this grant scheme. Western Balkan PSMs that already received funding within the first call for Innovation project grants are eligible to apply. However, financing activities that are identical to the ones already approved within the first call for project proposals will not be accepted.

## 2.2. Eligible and ineligible expenditures and principles of funding

The expenses required must be indicated by applicants in the budget part of the GAP (Goethe Application Portal). Details on the kinds of expenses that can be covered by the budget, the amounts that can be paid, and the method used for calculating those amounts are given in the tables below.

Eligible costs		Financing mechanism	Amount	Rule of allocation
Registration fees	Fees for conferences, seminars or forums (Offline/Online)	Actual costs	a maximum of EUR 1,000 can be funded	/

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Equipment	Technical support and office equipment (IT, multimedia platforms, mobile journalist sets for mobile reporting, operating new software/apps/equipment, data protection, copyright, etc. Use of equipment should be clearly justified.	Actual costs	100% of actual costs	/
Costs for new productions	Fees for freelance contracts (filming team), training costs, catering, materials for filming, etc.	Actual costs	100% of actual costs	/

Table 1: Eligible costs

Ineligible costs	
Category	Explanation
VAT costs	VAT (value added costs) will not be accepted within this project. Recipients of EU funds in the Western Balkans are exempt from paying VAT. Beneficiaries will be informed about the VAT exemption procedure before signing a grant contract.
Human resources costs	Costs related to the PSMS' staff are not eligible within this grant scheme.
Entertainment	Entertainment costs such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gifts.</li> <li>- Alcohol.</li> <li>- Restaurant bills or hospitality costs for personnel not directly participating in the project.</li> </ul>
Double funding	Expenses that are already fully covered by another source, grant, or programme or expenses that are already



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	covered by the already approved Innovation project grant (first call for project proposals).
Not approved project expenses	Expenses that have not been indicated in the budget and approved, as well as expenses that are not directly related to the proposed and approved project activities by the grant contract.
Other	Foreign currency exchange losses, debts and debt service charges (interest), provisions for losses, debts or potential future liabilities, credit to third parties, benefits in kind, performance-related bonuses that are included in staffing expenses.

*Table 2: Ineligible expenses*

## **Can the original budget be modified or adjusted during the implementation stage?**

The overall budget cannot be increased after the project application and budget are approved. It may, however, be modified or altered if, for instance PSM chooses to allocate funding for alternative equipment or capacity-building training. The recipient of funds may reorganize the amounts under each "real costs" budget line by up to 10% of the total amount originally specified.

### **Please note:**

Co-funding of the projects from other source(s) is possible, e.g., co-funding of equipment, registration fee for the targeted conference, etc. However, if these costs are covered by another source, they cannot be included in the budget of this grant scheme, but must be clearly mentioned in the application form.

## **2.3. Additional information**

Applicants may only submit one application. If an applicant submits several applications, only the last submitted application will be considered.

The Programme team may revise the procedure, the application structure, or the financial support mechanism used for upcoming calls for proposals in response to new regulations or other situations. Every call for proposals has its own set of guidelines that are issued individually. As a result, we strongly advise applicants to carefully consult the guidelines of the relevant call for proposals if they want to apply to future calls for proposals. Any conflict of interest must be avoided at all times.

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DW Akademie offers in-house trainings to accompany the projects submitted. When writing the project proposal, PSMs are expected to consider what kind of in-house training is requested. DW Akademie covers experts' fees, travel, and accommodation costs. All other costs linked to these activities - such as equipment, room rent, as well as catering, travel, and accommodation costs for the participants of the training have to be planned in the project proposal budget.

## 2.4. Visibility

Beneficiaries of the Innovation. Media. Minds (IMM) Programme grant scheme must clearly acknowledge the European Union's contribution in all publications or in conjunction with activities for which the financial support is used. In this respect, beneficiaries of the grant scheme are required to highlight the name and use the logo of the European Union on all their publications, posters, programmes, and other products produced under the financed project.

To do this, beneficiaries must follow the Communication and Visibility Manual for IMM Programme Beneficiaries. Non-compliance with these requirements can have financial/administrative consequences. Finally, beneficiaries are also encouraged to post on social media mentioning the EU and the IMM Programme with the hashtag *#EU4MediaMindsWB*.

After the completion of project activities, IMM Programme will publish the following information, in summary form, for each of the IPA<sup>2</sup> beneficiary part of the Programme:

- Total number of projects funded, and total amount of financial support provided;
- Objectives and main activities of the projects;
- Main results of the projects.

## 3. How to apply?

### 3.1. Application procedure

To respond to this call for proposals, applicants must follow these steps:

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<sup>2</sup> The Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) is the means by which the EU has been supporting reforms in the enlargement region with financial and technical assistance since 2007. For this grant scheme, eligible IPA beneficiaries are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo\*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia.

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- Check the thematic compliance of the project (cf. Section 1.3 – types of actions or activities);
- Develop a budget for the project that adheres to the eligibility of the costs and funding principles detailed in section 2.3;
- Fill in and submit the application form and additional documentation before the deadline.

Western Balkan PSMs applying for Innovation project grants must clearly demonstrate that implementation of proposed project activities will enhance the internal governance and organisational performance of Western Balkan PSM, expand the audiences, enhance their engagement and involvement, and improve the quality and relevance of the created content. Additionally, a project proposal may indicate that proposed activities are connected to the needs assessment that PSM participated in within the IMM Programme. PSMs applying for Innovation project grants need to submit the following supporting documents:

- Registration documents (certificate) confirming the legal entity status as a registered PSM within the country of application;
- CVs of proposed key personnel;
- Financial statements for the last two fiscal years.

**Note:** the IMM Programme reserves the right to request the original versions of submitted documents from applicants. Clarifications will only be requested when the information/documents provided is not sufficient to conduct an objective assessment.

## 3.1.1. Filling and submission of applications

To apply for the call for proposals, applicants should:

1. Register in the Goethe Application Portal (GAP) <https://gap-online.goethe.de/en/>.
2. Provide information according to the instructions or guiding questions provided in the GAP.

After submitting their online application, applicants will receive an automatic confirmation of receipt in their GAP profile. In case of technical problems, please contact IMM Programme team (see Section 7 - [Contact Information](#)).

## 3.1.2. Submission deadline

The submission deadline is **11 December 2024, 23:59 CET**. Applicants are strongly advised not to wait until the last day to submit their application.

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Applications submitted after the deadline will not be evaluated.

### 3.1.3. Additional information

The Programme team will deliver online informative sessions. Beneficiaries will be notified about the dates of informative sessions after the call for proposals is published.

The information sessions will cover the following topics:

- Understanding the nature, aims and benefits of funding opportunities within the call for proposals;
- Developing project proposal and applying.

Additionally, potential applicants may submit questions by e-mail (see Section 7 - [Contact Information](#)).

Individual online consultations in the framework of this call for proposals will also be available. Additionally, to ensure that all applicants have needed and relevant information, all questions and answers (**Q&A section**) as well as other important information will be published on the Programme's website and accessible to everyone.

### 3.1.4. Application language

The application form and all supporting documents (CV/portfolio) must be submitted in English.

**Note:** documents confirming the registration of a legal entity (statute, extract from the court register, balance sheet and income statement) can be submitted in the language the documents were originally issued. However, if possible, please submit the registration documents in English.

### 3.1.5. What happens once the application is submitted?

All submitted applications will undergo a standard assessment procedure, which is composed of:

1. Formal and eligibility assessment – checking whether the application fulfils the formal eligibility criteria;
2. Quality assessment – evaluation of received applications' content;
3. Final selection – based on the quality assessment, but taking into consideration geographical balance, gender balance and inclusion.

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## Formal and eligibility assessment

The formal and eligibility assessment will be performed according to the following criteria:

No.	Formal and eligibility criteria
1.	The application has been submitted within the deadline.
2.	The application and supporting documents are submitted in English (documents that need to be submitted in English specified above).
3.	The application fulfils the eligibility criteria (applicant, target IPA beneficiary, maximum amount of the grant, duration).
4.	The application form is complete, and all required documents are uploaded.

Any application that passes this check will be evaluated further as part of the quality assessment.

## Quality assessment

The applications that pass the formal and eligibility assessment will be further evaluated by the selection committee, according to the following evaluation sheet.

The evaluation criteria are divided into sections and subsections. Applications with the highest number of points will be recommended by the selection committee for a possible grant award, subject to available funding.

	Maximum no. of points	Points
<b>1. Relevance</b>	<b>30</b>	
1.1. How closely does the project relate to the objectives listed in the call for proposals?	10	
1.2. Does the proposal identify which part(s) of the needs assessment will be implemented (worked on) through the support of this grant?	5	
1.3. Are the results, deliverables, and activities clear and feasible?	5	

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1.4. Does the proposal clearly identify target groups and audience (to be reached by proposed project)?	5	
1.5. Does the proposal clearly outline specific engagement in the activities by diverse groups of citizens, such as women, young and underrepresented groups, and journalists?	5	
<b>2. Methodology</b>		
2.1. Are the suggested activities reasonable, realistic, and compatible with the objectives and expected results?	5	
2.2. In general, how consistent the project's design is (particularly, does it consider the study of the difficulties that have been discovered and potential outside factors)?	5	
<b>3. Sustainability</b>		
3.1. The proposal clearly identifies activities and results that contribute to the sustainability of the media outlet in one or more of the following ways: production of quality and engaging content; attracting and diversifying audiences; integration of new/innovative strategies and tools; engaging audiences beyond project lifetime; financial and operational model.	10	
3.2. Is the action likely to have multiplier effects for exponential impact including the potential to scale, extend, build on already evident success or capacity, or share best practices?	5	
<b>4. Organizational capacity</b>		
4.1. Applicant demonstrates operational capacity to implement the project.	5	

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4.2. Applicant has proven audience engagement and relationship with at least one of the following: local community, women, LGBTI, young people, older persons 65+, diaspora, ethnic, national, religious minorities and/or other marginalized or vulnerable communities.	5	
4.3. Applicant's audience reach meets the criteria, and the plan for improved and/or diversified audience reach, is clear and feasible.	5	
4.4. The risks and challenges identified are specific and manageable, and there is a mitigation plan proposed.	5	
4.5. Applicant demonstrates commitment to professional and ethical standards of journalism.	5	
<b>5. Budget and cost efficiency</b>	<b>20</b>	
5.1. Is there a satisfactory relation between estimated costs and anticipated results?	5	
5.2. Are estimated costs necessary for project implementation?	5	
5.3. Budget - Does it have a narrative budget and is it clear? - Does the proposed budget demonstrate value for money, and is it feasible? - Are costs realistic and reasonable?	10	
<b>Maximum total:</b>	<b>100</b>	

The score attributed to each application will correspond to the average of the scores attributed by each independent expert who is part of the selection committee.

If the scores attributed to an application by each expert differ by more than 30 points, the application will be assessed a third time. In this case, the score of the application will correspond to the average of the two closest scores.

## Final selection

The final selection of projects will be based on the scores obtained in the evaluation, but geographical balance, and inclusion.

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The applicants will be informed of the results of the assessment via GAP.

## 3.1.6. What happens once the application is approved?

### Signing of the grant contract

If the applicant is selected for funding:

- The budget will be reviewed, and the approved funding amount will be confirmed.
- The applicant will receive the draft of the grant agreement to be completed with relevant information, signed, and returned to Goethe-Institut.
- After the grant agreement has been signed by both parties (the applicant and Goethe-Institut), the applicant becomes a beneficiary of the Programme's grant scheme. Western Balkan PSMs will receive funding in three instalments: 45% after signing the grant agreement, 50% after the approved financial and narrative midterm report and 5% after completing all project activities and approved final financial and narrative report.

## 3.1.7. Changes of the project proposal

The beneficiary who signed the grant contract and received approval of the proposed project idea is required to carry out the project activities stated in the approved project proposal is required to carry out the project activities until March 31, 2026, at the latest.

Changes to the already approved project proposal or activities can only be considered in justified cases and must be discussed in advance with the Programme team. Otherwise, costs for project activities that are different than the activities stated in the initial application form, cannot be accepted, or will be recalculated and deducted from the final calculation.

### Reporting and final payment

Within one month of the project's conclusion, beneficiaries are required to submit an activity report consisting of a narrative and financial report, along with necessary supporting documents. The balance of the funding amount will be disbursed after the submission and approval of the report. Payments will be made in Euros to the account specified in the grant contract.

The report consists of two parts:



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1) Narrative report:

- Description of the activities implemented and results achieved;
- Attachments: Videos, a minimum of 3 photos demonstrating some of the activities within the project (photos of activities or equipment purchased), social media posts demonstrating some activities during the project (if any).

2) Financial report:

Budget form including supporting documents:

- For the real costs: proof of expenditure (invoices, proof of payment, e.g., conference fee).

Proofs (examples)	
Proof of real costs (purchase of equipment)	Invoices, proof of payment (bank statements)

**Important note:** Expenses not made/paid in EUR but in the local currency, must be converted to EUR using the exchange rate provided by the relevant Goethe-Institut after ending of the project implementation period and before submission of the final financial report, upon request of the beneficiary. The relevant Goethe-Institut will use the average exchange rate according to SAP (internal accounting system) as a basis for the settlement of the entire grant amount.

## 3.2. Principles applying to this grant scheme

*Non retroactivity*

Beneficiaries may begin implementing their project only after their grant agreement is signed. Costs incurred before the signature of the grant agreement will not be eligible.

*Non-cumulative award*

Programme will not cover costs that are otherwise covered, for example by other grant schemes. To avoid the risk of double funding, the applicant must indicate in the relevant section of the application form, the sources and the amounts of any other funding received or applied for in the year.

*Multiple submissions*

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In cases where several applications from the same applicant have been submitted, the Programme will assess the last submitted application. Applications with identical or similar content submitted by different applicants will be subject to a special assessment and may be rejected, due to suspicion of fraud.

## *No-Profit*

Projects supported by the European Union must not have the purpose or effect of producing a profit within the framework of the project implemented by the beneficiary.

The Goethe-Institut is responsible through the EU Commission for indirect fund management of EU funds in accordance with Article 62 in conjunction with Article 154 of the Financial Regulation (FR)<sup>3</sup>. For this reason, appropriate requirements and processes are applied when awarding EU funds to ensure compliance with EU budgetary law. In this context, the Goethe-Institut observes the principles to which grants are subject.

## 4. Timetable and implementation

The indicative time schedule of the first call for proposals is as follows:

	<b>Date</b>
Launch of the call for proposals	11 November 2024
Deadline for submission the applications	11 December 2024, 23:59 CET
Earliest possible start of the project	27 January 2025
Latest possible end to the project	31 March 2026

## 5. Data protection

Unless indicated otherwise, the questions and any personal data requested are required to evaluate the application in accordance with the specifications of the call for applications will be processed solely for that purpose by the Programme evaluation team. Details concerning the processing of personal data are available within the Data protection clause within the GAP application form ([Data protection](#)).

<sup>3</sup> The Financial Regulation can be accessed through the following link: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/e9488da5-d66f-11e8-9424-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-86606884>.

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## 6. Who implements the Innovation. Media. Minds: EU Support to Public Service Journalism in the Western Balkans?

The Innovation. Media. Minds: EU Support to Public Service Journalism in Western Balkans Programme is implemented on behalf of the European Commission by the Goethe-Institut, in collaboration with its implementing partner DW Akademie.

### 6.1. About the Goethe-Institut e.V.

As the cultural arm of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Goethe-Institut runs 151 institutes in more than 98 countries. The Goethe-Institut has 70 years of experience in supporting international cultural relations, strengthening education, creating educational exchanges, fostering creativity, and reinforcing vital civil societies. We convey information about cultural, social, and political life in Germany, and promote German-language teaching and learning. Furthermore, the Goethe-Institut has a long-standing presence and is a recognized and trusted Institution in the Western Balkans with offices in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia. The regional center for the Western Balkans is the Goethe-Institut Athens. There are additional Goethe-Centers in Albania and Kosovo\*, opened in 2005 and 2013 respectively. While these are legally and administratively independent entities, they receive funding support from the Goethe-Institut for their core programmatic activities.

### 6.2. About the 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.

## 7. Contact information

If you experience technical difficulties during the submission process, please contact the Programme team. If you need language support, the Programme team will invest additional effort to provide assistance in applicant's native language.

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Please contact the Programme team (contact person Dajana Celebic, [dajana.celebic@goethe.de](mailto:dajana.celebic@goethe.de)) if you have any questions regarding the application process.