



CONSULTANCY | RESEARCH PROJECT: CHALLENGES TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

Home-based assignment

Deadline to apply 2 January 2023

Salary: £200, day rate

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

PEN International, the world's largest association of writers, has long supported PEN Centres in the Balkans. The Balkans network, established at the 77th PEN International Congress in 2011, brings together PEN Centres in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, and Turkey – and aims to encourage and facilitate collaborative work and exchange across a region with much shared history and culture.

PEN International is concerned by the worsening situation in the Western Balkans, where the rise in hate speech, the denial of genocide and other atrocity crimes and the glorification of war criminals, highlight the failure to comprehensively acknowledge and address the past. Independent journalists, writers, artists, intellectuals as well as human rights defenders, particularly women, have faced increasing pressure, intimidation, and threats by both state and non-state actors who aim to silence their work and critical reporting. LGBTI people, Roma people and other minorities have also been targeted. The stigmatization by political leaders of independent voices and the failure to prevent and sanction such acts, fuel a climate of growing anxiety, fear, and insecurity.

PEN International seeks a consultant to conduct research and draft a report on the state of freedom of expression in the Western Balkans and explore how the rise in hate speech, the glorification of atrocity crimes, attacks against writers and journalists and the failure to prevent and sanction such acts, remain major obstacles to trust-building and reconciliation. The report will focus on direct and indirect forms of censorship that target journalists and creatives, specifically writers.

The report will focus on Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia and address areas of concerns of particular relevance to PEN's work, including but not limited to:

- The right to create without censorship or intimidation
- Safety of journalists and writers
- Impact on freedom of expression, including literary expression

The report will include a series of recommendations and form of basis of advocacy towards the relevant authorities and other stakeholders at national, regional, and international levels – including the relevant ministries in the focus countries, the Council of Europe, the European Union, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the United Nations. The report will further seek to inform and mobilize the PEN membership into action.

PURPOSE OF THE CONSULTANCY

The consultant will produce a research report of 30-35 pages on challenges to freedom of expression in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia. The methodology will include desk-based research and remote interviews on behalf of PEN International.

The consultant will:

- Gather, analyse, and assess information on the right to create without censorship or intimidation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia
- Deliver a first draft of a report in English that includes:
 - An executive summary
 - Main areas of concerns
 - Recommendations
- Collaborate with PEN International in revising and finalizing the research, committing to a minimum of two rounds of revisions based on PEN International's feedback
- Liaise as appropriate with PEN International, PEN Bosnia and Herzegovina, PEN Kosovo, the Montenegrin PEN Centre, and Serbian PEN
- Uphold the key principles of accuracy, impartiality, and confidentiality

TIMELINE

This assignment will start as soon as possible upon joint signature on the agreement with an expectation of deliverables completed by end of April 2023. The estimated time needed for the assignment is approximately 30 days. The total budget should not exceed £6000.

ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS

- Previous experience in working on freedom of expression and the safety of journalists and writers
- Thorough knowledge of the political environment in the Western Balkans
- Considerable experience in conducting practice-oriented desk research
- Fluency in English and Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin/Serbian, with Albanian as highly desirable and considered a plus

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Interested individuals should submit an expression of interest to Aurélia Dondo, Europe Programme Coordinator at PEN International: aurelia.dondo@pen-international.org by 2 January 2023.

The expression of interest should include the following:

- Your CV
- A cover letter outlining your experience and proposed approach (no more than 2000 words)
- Two examples of past work relevant to the current project

ABOUT US

PEN International promotes literature and freedom of expression. It is a forum where writers meet freely to discuss their work; it is also a voice speaking out for writers silenced in their own countries.

Founded in London in 1921, PEN International connects an international community of writers, journalists, poets, bloggers, playwrights, translators – all those using the written word to promote

ideas – in the common belief that it is through this sharing that bridges of understanding can be built between peoples. PEN International champions the freedom to write and read around the world through government advocacy and international campaigning, the coordination of events and solidarity initiatives by writers, publishers, PEN Centres, and members around the world, as well as practical and humanitarian support.

Governed by the PEN Charter, PEN operates across five continents through 145 Centres in over 100 countries. It is a non-political organisation that holds Observer Status with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, Special Consultative Status at the United Nations, and Associate Status at UNESCO.

In 2021, PEN International celebrated its Centenary. One hundred years since its foundation, today PEN is recognised as the world's foremost and largest association of writers, as well as a leading international charity and expert on freedom of expression.

Website link: <https://pen-international.org/>