Request for Proposal (RFP)

For: Drafting learning lessons and strategic directions for AI-related programmes and work

Deadline application: 8 October 2025
Contractor: Thomson Foundation

The Thomson Foundation is issuing this Request for Proposal for the consultancy and expert support in drafting key lessons learned and strategic guidance based on research results and implementation lessons from its AI-learning programmes.

The integration of AI into newsrooms across the V4 countries—Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia—shows both promise and restraint, as Thomson's research indicate. While global media increasingly rely on AI for automation and content recommendations, adoption in the V4 averages under 15%. Experiments exist with AI-generated content and multimedia, but use remains largely limited to technical support. Barriers include scarce resources, lack of expertise, ethical concerns, and cultural and linguistic challenges, all compounded by declining public trust in journalism. Broader trends—eroding media credibility, passive "blind scrolling" on platforms like TikTok, and social media fatigue—underscore both the risks and opportunities of AI adoption in already fragile information ecosystems.

These findings have been applied within Thomson's Business Innovation Synergizer programme in Central and Eastern Europe, where beneficiaries piloted AI-driven tools and services. Examples include Denník N's automated tagging system, 444.hu's large-scale categorization, Boulevard Bulgaria's modular assistants, and Azet.sk's hybrid hate-speech detection adapted to local linguistic complexity. Smaller outlets such as Slazag have experimented with AI journalist avatars for audience engagement. Collectively, these cases show that scalable AI solutions are feasible across different newsroom sizes and contexts when supported by training, shared models, and targeted mentoring.

The programme demonstrates that AI innovation in journalism is both transferable and scalable. Combining technical skills in transcription, SEO, automation, and disinformation response with ethical frameworks makes these tools adaptable to diverse contexts—from independent outlets under political pressure to fast-growing digital platforms in the Global South. The modular design allows for tailoring to varying levels of digital maturity while reinforcing trust, transparency, and resilience in media systems. With structured support, such programmes can strengthen efficiency, content quality, and credibility across media ecosystems facing the disruptive challenges of AI.

We are seeking to hire a vendor to provide us with the following support:

- Review the key insights and recommendations from the research on the use of AI in the Central Eastern Europe, and set it as a baseline
- Review key insights and lessons learned from the Business Innovation Synergizer (BIS) programme related to media who were supported to integrate AI-related solutions and procedures in their wok – programme call, design, mentoring reports, final reports
- Preparing the learning workshop agenda based on the insights – conversation with business mentors, and TF team
- Engaging 3 mentors to provide different segments of the workshop
- Hosting the workshop (online) together with Thomson Foundation and facilitation of the learning workshop
- Drafting key learning lessons – 5-page document max
- Drafting strategic recommendations for Thomson Foundation – 5-page document max

Expected deadline for delivery

3 months from the date of signing the contract, not later than end of January 2026.

Elements of the proposal

Interested applicants should send their proposal that include the following:
- Narrative proposal and indication of relevant experience
- Financial offer for above listed services
- Contact details

Proposal validity

We kindly expect that the proposal remains open for acceptance by the TF, for a minimum of fifteen days from the date when it is submitted.

Instructions for submitting

You are kindly asked to submit your proposal to Mr. Davor Marko via email: DavorM@thomsonfoundation.org by 8 October 2025 (by midnight).

Clarification Requests

Should you need any additional information or clarification, please write to Ms. Asya Metodieva via email: AsyaM@thomsonfoundation.org

Award Criteria

Proposals submitted within the indicated deadline will be evaluated in line with the following criteria:

- Comprehensiveness of proposal
- Relevant experience
- Quality of proposed methodology
- A proven experience in conducting research and drafting recommendations
- Value for money – price will not be a determining criteria, but the entire proposal and its quality will be also assessed against the indicated financial offer.

By issuing this RfP, the Thomson Foundation is not bound in any way to enter any contractual or other arrangement with any potential vendor.