Call for preparing case studies / papers on political party transparency in the Western Balkans

TERMS OF REFERENCE
February 2020
Introduction

Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) is a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). WFD is currently implementing a three-year CSSF funded programme in the Western Balkans titled Western Balkans Democracy Initiative [www.wfd.org/wbdji](http://www.wfd.org/wbdji).

After civil wars, civil unrests and unstable governance in the 90ties and early 2000s the larger part of Western Balkans countries, entered processes of relative democratisation, increased civic participation and improvement of some of the main governance issues in the mid 2000ns and early 2010s. The promise and prospect of European integration have pushed some of these processes. Although progress has been evident in several governance areas such as improving electoral frameworks, decentralization and local governance, dealing with corruption, government transparency, media freedoms and accountability remain major problem areas in all countries.

Transparency of political parties especially with regards to party financing and party decision making has been low and has contributed decrease of trust in political parties. Political parties have been experiencing low levels of trust and there has been an increasing perception that political parties are less open for the citizens. Viewed as distinctively undemocratic and patronage – clientelist, political parties are often seen as occupying the public sector once they win elections and using the state resources for party/personal interests. Levels of trust in political parties across the Western Balkans countries have been decreasing. Political parties are the least trusted institutions by citizens. In comparison to voter turnouts in the 90ties when the democratic transition has accrued, voter turnouts have been consistently decreasing, mainly being between 50 and 60% turnouts but based on voter lists which have not been fully updated. More transparency and accountability from political parties could positively influence citizen engagement and increase in trust political institutions and actors in the Western Balkans.

For improved representation to take place political parties should improve responsiveness, accountability, communications and transparency practices. Operating in a non-transparent and unaccountable manner has created a negative perception of political parties and contributed to higher levels of distrust in political parties. As a result, engagement and membership in political parties has continuously been decreasing and citizens have become sceptical and distrustful toward political parties. Political parties as institutions of representative democracy have not been able to represent citizens interests and demands in a responsive and accountable manner.

Most political parties in the Western Balkans rarely provide organisational, financial or operational information on their work to citizens. They are not easily accessible and open through their party websites and in their communications. Most party websites have very little information on party finances, they are not regularly updated with information on decision making and party representatives, they are not interactive, in many cases fail to communicate in all local languages, they are not accessible for disabled citizens (blind or deaf persons) and communicate only in one direction – party to public.
The non-transparent behaviour of political parties is driven by a culture of non-accountability in many political parties, an inadequate or inadequately enforced legal framework, and lack of pressure from society to improve transparency.

The call for submitting papers and case studies by representatives of political parties in the Western Balkan to present their views on political party transparency aims to raise the discourse on transparency by political parties and for political parties.

2. Objectives

In order to raise the discourse on political party transparency WFD is inviting eligible applicants who are members of political parties from the Western Balkans or affiliated to political party think tanks or political party research institutes to submit proposals for writing a case study on transparency practices within their political parties.

The objective of the case study is to answer questions and provide a specific party perspective on how their respective political party has been working on raising transparency in the area of communications, financial transparency and internal party functioning.

This call aims to:
1. To get a political party perspective on current transparency efforts of political parties in the areas of communication, financial transparency and internal party functioning.
2. To raise the regional discourse on political party transparency and ways to increase trust in political parties.

Applicants for this call can focus on presenting information in the case study on one of the following:
A) Best practices
B) Challenges
C) Effects of transparency/non transparency on public perceptions of the party

3. Definitions

For the purpose of this call:

Case study / paper is an analytical product prepared by the applicant, up to 6 pages which answers key questions set by WFD and discusses current transparency practices of the political party which the applicant represents.

4. Questions that can be covered in the case study
• How open and transparent is your political party in everyday operations and functioning?
• What are the main challenges for political parties to increase transparency and improve current communications, financial reporting and internal decision-making practices?
• How easy is for citizens to contact your political party and find out information about party decisions or contact party functions?
• How often and in which way does your party communicate with members (internally) and with the general public (externally)?
• Should political parties publish resumes biographies of all candidates on local/national elections?
• Should political parties be part or excluded from FOIA requests (Freedom of Informational Acts) and if so why?
• What do you think are the reasons for the global and regional decline in trust in political parties?
• How do you think trust in political parties can be strengthened, through which mechanisms and which measures?
• What are the best practices your political party is currently using which help it be more open, transparent and responsive to constituents?
• In which areas do you think your political party can improve transparency and how could that be done and what type of assistance do you think your party could benefit from in the efforts to increase transparent?
• Where do you see your political party in 10 years from now both in terms of organisational set up but also in terms of improved communications, policy development and responsiveness to citizens needs?
• What are examples of good transparency practices in your political party (eg. disclosure of funding, candidate selection, internal democracy, etc.)?
• Which challenges have you encountered in introducing transparency measures?
• How has your party responded to public calls for financial transparency?
• How have debates about transparency and openness of political parties influenced public perceptions of politics in your country?
• Which legal requirements for political party transparency practices would you support and why?

5. Timelines

Deadlines listed in the table below assume contracting is completed by February 21st 2020. Preparation of the case study/paper should commence on February 21st 2020 and be completed by March 13th 2020. If contracting with the applicant is concluded after February 21st, the deadlines will be adjusted accordingly but the final research product still needs to be delivered and presented by March 31st 2020.

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<th>Deliverable Description</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
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<th><strong>Case study / Draft paper</strong></th>
<th>The case study / draft paper draft with answers to relevant questions from the ToR prepared in English language between February 21\textsuperscript{st} and March 13\textsuperscript{th} and delivered to WFD.</th>
<th>March 13\textsuperscript{th} 2020 (English version of the case study/draft paper to be provided to <a href="mailto:emil.atanashovski@wfd.org">emil.atanashovski@wfd.org</a> by COB on March 13\textsuperscript{th} 2020)</th>
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<td><strong>WFD respond to comments and provides feedback on draft research</strong></td>
<td>WFD will respond and provide comments to the draft case studies/papers between March 13\textsuperscript{th} and March 20\textsuperscript{th}.</td>
<td>March 20\textsuperscript{th} 2020</td>
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<td><strong>Final case studies</strong></td>
<td>Final draft of the case study / paper with answers to relevant questions addressing comments and feedback from WFD prepared and delivered to WFD by March 25\textsuperscript{th} 2020.</td>
<td>March 25\textsuperscript{th} 2020</td>
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<td><strong>Presentation</strong></td>
<td>As part of the research assignment the selected applicants will prepare a presentation with key findings from the case study/paper.</td>
<td>March 25\textsuperscript{th} 2020</td>
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<td><strong>Participation and presentation at a regional conference in Belgrade or Budva on March 26-27\textsuperscript{th} 2020</strong></td>
<td>The selected participants/ will be asked to attend a regional Western Balkans conference taking place in Belgrade or Budva on March 26\textsuperscript{th}/27\textsuperscript{th} 2020. At the regional conference the participants will present their case studies and papers.</td>
<td>Arrival in Belgrade or Budva March 25\textsuperscript{th} Conference dates March 26-27 2020</td>
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### 6. Key Deliverables

- The applicant is expected to deliver a case study/paper (up 6 pages maximum) on transparency of political parties. The focus should be on the political party which the applicant represents and is a part of.
- The applicant is expected to prepare a PowerPoint presentation with key findings from his/her case study/paper.
- The applicant is expected to participate at a regional conference in Belgrade or Budva on March 26\textsuperscript{th} and 27\textsuperscript{th} 2020 and present its case study/paper.

### 7. Budget
• The budget for preparing the case study/paper is **750 GBP** (inclusive of taxes), per one case study/paper for one selected political party.
• In addition, the applicants travel expenses, accommodation, and meal allowance for attending the regional conference will be covered by WFD.

### 8. Application details

**Eligibility:**

Applicants should be active members of political parties or party bodies or affiliated to an official political party think tank or political party research institutes from:

Albania; BIH; North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo.

Applicants should have a track record of working for a political party and representing their political party in some sort of official capacity at any party level or be currently affiliated to a political party think tank or political party research institute.

Interested applicants should express their interest for this proposal by providing the following:

**CV of the applicant**

- Confirmation that they are an active member of political parties and which one and are part of political party bodies or they are affiliated to official political party think tank or a political party research institutes. (this can be provided in an email)
- Confirmation they could attend a regional political party transparency conference on March 26/27\(^{th}\) 2020.
- Applicants background and previous experience in political party work, party financing and political party operations are highly desirable from for this assignment.
- A brief proposal (half a page maximum outlining what the case study/paper will be about, what will be the focus of the case study and which questions it will aim to answer and in which way)
- An email with your expression of interest and relevant documents should be sent to the Western Balkans Regional office at emil.atanasovski@wfd.org by February 19\(^{th}\) 2020.

Only applicants which will be able to complete the research within the proposed timeline March 31\(^{st}\) 2020 will be considered for this assignment.

Only participants which will be able attend at the regional conference in Belgrade or Budva on March 26-27\(^{th}\) 2020 to present their case studies and papers will be considered for this assignment.