

# REGULATIONS OF THE INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM AWARD

## PREAMBLE

These Regulations of the Investigative Journalism Award (hereinafter – the Regulations) are the main document establishing the objectives, principles, decision-making logic, and limits of responsibility of the Award. The Regulations define how the selection process is organized, what principles guide decision-making, and how the independence, transparency, and continuity of the Award are ensured.

The Regulations establish the general evaluation architecture and decision limits. Detailed explanation of the evaluation criteria and their practical application is defined in the Experts' Work Regulations and the Selection Committee's Work Regulations.

## CHAPTER I

### General Provisions

1. The Investigative Journalism Award (hereinafter – the Award) is an annual independent award presented for investigative journalism works of the highest professional quality, having a significant public and democratic impact, and publicly published while addressing issues relevant to public life and democratic accountability in Lithuania.
2. The purpose of the Award is to strengthen democracy, transparency, public accountability, and civic trust by publicly recognizing the role of investigative journalism in a democratic society.
3. The Award is financed from the income of the "Pamatai" Foundation.
4. The founders, sponsors, or related persons of the Foundation shall not participate in the Award selection decisions and shall not have the possibility to directly or indirectly influence the final decision. The provisions on transparency and independence set out in Chapter VI shall apply to them.
5. The Award is not and cannot be considered an instrument of political, business, or editorial influence.

## CHAPTER II

### Object and Scope of the Award

1. The Award is granted for one investigative journalism work or a series of works publicly published during the relevant calendar year. For the first Award cycle, eligible works shall include those publicly published between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025. Each subsequent Award cycle shall cover works published between 1 January and 31 December of the respective year.
2. The Award may not be granted if the submitted works do not meet the quality threshold and principles established in these Regulations.
3. The object of the Award is investigative journalism works that examine the functioning of the public sector, political decisions, and government institutions and their impact on society.
4. Any investigation that reveals significant issues affecting political decision-making, public institutions, or the public interest falls within the scope of the Award, regardless of whether the actors involved are public or private.
5. When evaluating the submitted works, their public significance and importance for strengthening democracy, professional and methodological quality, adherence to ethics, as well as potential short-term and long-term impact on society, are taken into account.
6. The scope and duration of the investigation are evaluated only as context to help understand the complexity and systemic nature of the processes being examined, and are not considered independent or decisive evaluation criteria.
7. The Award may be given to an individual author, a group of authors, or an editorial office, depending on the nature of the investigation and the contribution of the author(s).
8. The amount of the Award is determined annually, with priority given to ensuring the long-term sustainability of the Award.

## CHAPTER III

### Finalists

1. No more than three official finalists are selected during the selection process.
2. The purpose of announcing the finalists is to ensure broader professional recognition and reduce the disproportionate symbolic burden on one final decision.
3. The status of a finalist is a prestigious professional recognition and is not associated with a monetary award.

# CHAPTER IV

## Eligibility Criteria

Works eligible for the Award must:

1. Constitute investigative journalism and be publicly published. The form of publication (print, digital, audio, video, or multimedia) shall not in itself limit eligibility.
2. Be carried out in accordance with recognized journalistic ethics standards, including the Lithuanian Code of Ethics for Public Information, and demonstrate professional methods of information gathering, verification, and presentation.
3. Have clear authorship and identifiable responsibility for the published content.
4. Demonstrate editorial independence and not be commissioned, sponsored, or otherwise influenced by political, commercial, or advocacy interests in a manner that compromises professional integrity.
5. Not consist solely of opinion pieces, commentary, or essays.
6. Unpublished investigations or works intended solely for internal use are not eligible.

# CHAPTER V

## V.1. Award Administration

1. The Award administrator is appointed by the Foundation's governing body (or another entity established by the Regulations) responsible for organizing the Award.
2. The Award administrator is responsible for:
  1. organizing and administering the call for submissions;
  2. receiving applications, formal eligibility checks, and compilation of documents;
  3. organizing the work of the experts and the Selection Committee (coordinating meetings, transferring information, recording decisions);
  4. ensuring the compliance of the process with the Regulations.
3. The Award administrator does not participate in the evaluation of submitted works and has no right to:
  1. act as an expert or a member of the Selection Committee;
  2. influence the decisions of the experts or the Selection Committee;

3. propose or recommend decisions regarding the granting of the Award.
4. The Award administrator acts as a subject ensuring the process, not a decision-maker, and must adhere to the principles of independence and prevention of conflicts of interest established in the Regulations.

## V.2. Selection and Structure of the Selection Process

1. The Award selection process is based on independent expert evaluation and the decision of the Selection Committee, clearly separating the functions and responsibilities of these two stages.
2. The Award selection process is guided by the following main evaluation principles, which define the general direction and priorities of the evaluation:
  1. **Public Interest and Impact on Society.** When evaluating this principle, the primary consideration is whether the investigation addresses problems significant to society and fulfills the public's right to know, regardless of the area under investigation. The actual or potential impact of the investigation on society is assessed separately, including both short-term and long-term perspectives.
  2. **Strengthening Democracy and Government Accountability.** The priority of the Award is investigative journalism works related to the functioning of the public sector, political decisions, and government institutions.
  3. **Professional and Ethical Quality.** The evaluation takes into account professional activity standards and journalistic ethics principles.
  4. **Importance of Expert Evaluation.** The selection process is based on independent expert evaluation as the main reference point for decisions.

## V.3. Expert Evaluation

1. Expert evaluation is the main and decisive stage of the Award selection process.
2. Expert evaluation is performed by independent experts, selected according to competence, reputation, and independence, in accordance with the Experts' Work Regulations.
3. Experts evaluate the submitted works according to the evaluation principles and priorities established in these Regulations, applying the explanation of criteria and evaluation procedure defined in the Experts' Work Regulations.
4. The result of the expert evaluation is a score-based rating of the submitted works and a list of finalists.

5. The rating compiled on the basis of expert evaluations is the main reference point for the final decision.

## V.4. Decision of the Selection Committee

1. The final decision on granting the Award is made by the Selection Committee.
2. The role of the Selection Committee is to take responsibility for the final decision, by evaluating the rating compiled on the basis of expert evaluations in a broader context of public interest and the application of democratic principles.
3. The Selection Committee does not re-evaluate the works and does not duplicate the expert evaluation. The Selection Committee applies the evaluation criteria defined in the Selection Committee's Work Regulations as a verification measure to assess whether the rating compiled by the experts is consistent with the Award principles set out in these regulations. When forming the final decision, the Selection Committee relies on the evaluations and arguments provided by the experts, and may also take into account whether additional circumstances emerge during the evaluation process that were not or could not be sufficiently reflected in the expert rating and are significant for the final decision, including circumstances related to:
  1. the protection of public interest and impact on society;
  2. the strengthening of democracy and government accountability;
  3. material professional and ethical violations;
  4. new significant circumstances that have emerged.
4. In cases where the Selection Committee deviates from the expert rating, the motives for the decision are recorded in the minutes of the Selection Committee meeting or the meeting transcript.

## CHAPTER VI

### Principles of Transparency and Independence

1. All persons participating in the selection process sign declarations of impartiality and confidentiality.
2. The founders, sponsors, and related persons of the Foundation:
  1. do not participate in the work of the experts or the Selection Committee;
  2. do not receive intermediate information about the evaluation;
  3. have no right to submit recommendations for the Award winners.
3. All evaluation documentation is stored and may be audited.

4. Persons who have, within the last 2 years before the formation of the experts or the Selection Committee, are ineligible to be appointed as experts or members of the Selection Committee if they:
  1. received financial support or a grant from the Foundation;
  2. provided financial or other material support to the Foundation (were sponsors of the Foundation);
  3. held the position of the Award administrator or otherwise performed administrative functions;
  4. were directly related to projects or programs funded by the Foundation.

## CHAPTER VII

### Appeals and Feedback

1. Applicants have the right to file an appeal only regarding procedural violations no later than 10 working days after the announcement of the decision.
2. Appeals regarding the content of the expert evaluation are not considered.
3. Applicants may be provided with summarized expert feedback.

## CHAPTER VIII

### Announcement and Presentation of the Award

1. The Award winner, finalists, and a summary of the decision motives are publicly announced.
2. The Award is presented at a public event.

## CHAPTER IX

### Final Provisions

1. The Regulations are approved by the decision of the Foundation's Board.
2. The Regulations may be amended only in compliance with the principles of transparency and independence.