

POLICY PLAN

ZEG Foundation 2026 - 2030

General information

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Contents

Mission and objective	2
Activities	2
Grants and financial support	4
Management and governance	5
Financial framework	6

Mission and objective

The ZEG Foundation (hereinafter referred to as ‘ZEG’) was established in 2025 to create a global platform for experiential journalism, which consists of immersive, multi-sensory experiences where diverse voices engage with urgent global issues. Rather than relying on traditional panel formats, ZEG brings together unexpected combinations of speakers to reveal new insights. The foundation addresses three critical gaps in the current media landscape: the gap between passive news consumption and active participation, the professional silos that prevent cross-sector dialogue, and the geographic isolation of important conversations. ZEG focuses on themes such as democracy under threat, independent journalism in hostile environments, the societal impact of AI, authoritarian manipulation tactics and cross-cultural collaboration.

This translates into the following statutory objective:

The foundation aims to promote the public interest, in particular by promoting culture, education and the democratic rule of law. To achieve this objective, the foundation strives to:

- promoting high-quality, independent journalism and information provision in the service of democratic society;
- facilitating public debate, social awareness and cultural development;
- developing and maintaining accessible platforms for the production and dissemination of journalistic and educational multimedia content, for the purpose of providing information and strengthening public opinion;
- creating and supporting communities, networks and partnerships that promote the exchange of knowledge, stories and perspectives, thereby contributing to social cohesion and democratic participation;
- strengthening civil society through education in journalism, media literacy and democratic skills;
- promoting innovation in journalism, media production and democratic communication, as well as supporting the provision of information in accordance with the rule of law;
- supporting other public benefit organisations pursuant to Section 5b of the General Tax Act that are engaged in one of the above objectives.

This mission and objective are pursued on a non-profit basis and with a view to the general welfare of society.

Activities

The foundation seeks to achieve its objectives through the following activities.

Event production

The foundation produces three principal events per year, each employing the ‘unlikely combinations’ methodology to pair diverse voices and reveal unexpected insights. The ZEG Tbilisi Festival is the annual flagship event, held over three days in June at a central Tbilisi venue. The festival attracts over 800 participants and features 100+ speakers from more than 20 countries across approximately

99 sessions, including panel discussions, masterclasses, workshops, performances and networking opportunities, culminating in traditional Georgian Supra dinners. Past speakers include Nobel laureate Maria Ressa, Armando Iannucci, Sean Penn and Christopher Wylie. ZEG Amsterdam is a one-day event held in late June at De Balie Cultural Center, featuring a live journalism show, town hall discussion and Georgian Supra dinner for 100+ participants and 8–12 speakers, addressing themes such as ‘Democracy in the Age of AI’. ZEG London is a one-day event held in October at Urdang Academy, featuring full-day parallel sessions and workshops for 150+ participants and 15–20 speakers, with a focus on engaging the UK creative and performing arts community. Each event is designed to create unexpected combinations of voices, for example, pairing a female bishop, a Silicon Valley technologist and an investigative journalist to discuss religion and artificial intelligence, revealing connections that none had articulated before.

Network development and partnerships

The foundation builds and maintains a global community of journalists, storytellers, media makers and changemakers through sustained engagement that extends beyond its events. The foundation facilitates ongoing connections between participants, enabling cross-sector collaborations, new journalism projects, professional mentorships and cross-border journalism initiatives.

To this end, the foundation enters into strategic alliances with cultural institutions, journalism organisations and creative communities. Existing partnerships include cultural institutions such as De Balie Cultural Center (Amsterdam) and Urdang Academy (London), journalism organisations such as The Continent and international newsrooms, and the UK creative and performing arts sector. For each partnership, clear co-production frameworks are established setting out specific objectives and mutual contributions. The exchange of knowledge and shared resources forms an integral part of these partnerships. To enable systematic expansion of the network, the foundation is developing a replicable ‘ZEG in a Box’ methodology that allows new cities to be reached through local partner organisations.

Content creation

Development of multimedia formats for storytelling and documentation that continue the conversations beyond live events. This includes the production of podcasts, video content and documentaries. In collaboration with editorial partners such as Coda Story, the foundation translates investigative journalism into live experiential formats: Coda’s ‘Playbook’ series investigating authoritarian tactics became festival sessions where Ukrainian journalists and Georgian activists shared firsthand accounts of media manipulation, and Coda’s ‘Captured’ podcast on AI inspired a panel combining perspectives from religion, technology and journalism. Content produced at events is documented and disseminated to reach a wider audience.

Format and editorial innovation

Developing and testing new approaches to journalism, narrative construction and audience engagement. The foundation tests ‘live journalism show’ formats that combine reporting, performance and audience interaction, and develops its ‘unlikely combinations’ methodology, pairing diverse voices from different disciplines (e.g. an architect, a lawyer and an educator) to reveal unexpected insights on shared themes. The foundation also experiments with the Georgian Supra tradition as a dialogue catalyst, using communal dining to foster deeper cross-cultural exchange. In collaboration with Coda Story, the foundation develops approaches for translating investigative editorial series and

podcasts into interactive festival sessions. These activities contribute to innovation in the field and provide space for experimentation with new storytelling formats.

Training programmes

Providing experiential training embedded in the festival programme for different target groups. The annual Student Volunteer Programme offers approximately 50 Georgian university students a three-day intensive experience during the Tbilisi Festival, combining event production support with professional exposure, networking and skill development. Outcomes include improved professional skills (reported by 85% of participants), establishment of professional mentorships (70%) and job or internship offers within six months (40%). During each festival, 4–6 masterclasses are offered as 90-minute sessions for 20–30 participants, led by international experts on topics such as press freedom protection, digital security, mobile journalism, investigative techniques and multimedia storytelling. For example, a masterclass on ‘Defying Silence: Press Freedom Protection’, led by Jon Williams (BBC) and Jodie Ginsberg (Committee to Protect Journalists), provided 25 Georgian and exiled journalists with practical tools on digital security, physical safety, legal protections and trauma support, with three participants connected to CPJ for ongoing assistance. Interactive workshops include story circles for small-group storytelling practice and collaborative journalism workshops in which journalists from different countries identify shared projects, resulting in cross-border journalism projects initiated annually.

Grants and financial support

The foundation intends to provide grants, scholarships and financial support to journalistic initiatives on a project basis once this activity commences. The foundation does not currently operate active grant-giving programmes; this section sets out the assessment framework that will apply when such programmes are initiated. ZEG will focus in particular on underrepresented voices and perspectives in order to promote diversity in the field.

If this (financial) support is provided to persons or institutions without ANBI status, it applies the following assessment framework:

Preliminary assessment

Based on a project proposal, the assesses ZEG board whether and how this project contributes to the realisation of ZEG’s objective. The project proposal is submitted by the intended recipient and contains at least the following information:

- 1 Name of entity, represented by
- 2 Date of project proposal
- 3 Contact details
- 4 General project description
- 5 Describe the objective
- 6 Describe the deliverable
- 7 Provide a timetable
- 8 Cost overview
- 9 Deadline

Monitoring

Throughout the project, the board will regularly assess whether the project continues to meet the conditions and contributes to the objective. If necessary, will be a report drawn up.

Ex-post control

After the project has been completed, a check will be carried out to determine whether the project actually has met expectations and thus made a measurable contribution to the objective. The results will be recorded in a report, which will answer at least the following questions:

- How are the objectives achieved?
- How is the grant spent?
- How was this measured?
- What are the conclusions?
- Any recommendations?

Management and governance

All board members are jointly authorised with another director, in accordance with the foundation's articles of association. The board of the ZEG foundation consists of the following persons.

Natalia Antelava	Director
Ketevan Ebanoidze	Director
Elene Jvania	Director
Sophiko Vasadze	Director

The board adheres to the Code of Good Governance.

Executive duties

The foundation operates a working board model in which board members perform both non-executive board duties and executive/operational tasks. The board holds at least four (4) quarterly meetings per year at which the board members perform their non-executive governance functions. In addition to their non-executive board duties, board members also perform executive/operational functions in the day-to-day management and operational implementation of the foundation's activities. All board members devote a considerable amount of time to these executive tasks outside of the quarterly meetings. The estimated time spent on operational activities is 20 to 40 hours per month per board member, depending on the event cycles and ongoing projects.

The executive duties and associated remuneration are clearly separated from the non-executive board duties. Separate management agreements are drawn up for the executive functions, setting out the specific duties, time commitment and remuneration. When decisions are made about remuneration for executive functions, the board members concerned do not participate in the decision-making process in order to avoid conflicts of interest. Decisions on remuneration are taken in accordance with Article 8 of the Articles of Association. The combination of non-executive and

executive duties is evaluated annually by the board to ensure that the governance structure remains appropriate to the size and nature of the foundation's activities.

The executive duties for board members include the following:

Ketevan Ebanoidze (Secretary)

Executive role: Head of Partnerships and Events

- Partnership development and relationship management
- Event production and logistics coordination
- Venue negotiations and vendor management
- Sponsorship development

Sophiko Vasadze (Treasurer)

Executive role: Creative Director

- Creative direction for all ZEG events
- Visual identity and brand development
- Content production oversight
- Video and multimedia production

Elene Jvania (Board Member)

Executive role: Head of Strategic Development

- Overall ZEG Network strategy implementation
- New market expansion planning
- Membership program development
- Operational coordination

Natalia Antelava (Chair)

Executive role: CEO & Editor-in-Chief (Coda Story/ZEG)

- Overall strategic leadership
- Editorial direction
- Major partnership negotiations
- Fundraising strategy

Financial framework

The foundation is a non-profit organisation. The foundation was established in October 2025, and accordingly only limited historical financial data is available. The expected income from fundraising cannot be estimated accurately at this stage.

Fundraising

The foundation strives for a healthy mix of income streams to ensure financial stability and independence. The foundation's assets will consist of subsidies and other contributions, donations, bequests and legacies, and all other acquisitions and income. Bequests may only be accepted by the foundation under the privilege of inventory.

Management costs

Zeg ensures that the management costs are in reasonable proportion to the expenditure for the foundation's objectives.

Remuneration of the board

The board members shall receive no for their work remuneration other than reimbursement of expenses incurred and a reasonable attendance fee.

Assets

The foundation does not hold more assets than is reasonably necessary for the continuity of the planned activities in pursuit of its objective. For the time being, the foundation expects to maintain the following reserves:

Continuity reserve for the working organisation

Amounting to a maximum of one and a half times the average cost level of its own work organisation.

Reserve for planned activities

When the foundation holds assets with a view to planned activities, this always be justified in the financial administration by means of a description of specific projects and amounts, will and the policy plan including a planned time frame.

Budget

Expected Annual Income and Expenditure: €200,000 – €300,000

Income will primarily be derived from grants and institutional support, for which applications are currently in progress. It should be noted that this budget range is an initial estimate based on the information currently available. Should more concrete figures become available in the future, the budget range can be revised accordingly.