

## JOINT CALL FOR GRANT PROPOSALS

### PONT – CEPF COOPERATION ON PRESPA

Joint call to Environmental Actors on Prespa

#### Overview

The Prespa Ohrid Nature Trust (PONT) and the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) have recently agreed to combine their efforts in the Wider Prespa Area by issuing a joint call for proposals. PONT and CEPF invite applications from eligible organizations to address conservation needs outlined in this Call.

PONT is a foundation established under German Law, supporting Protected Areas (PAs) and Environmental Actors (EAs) in the Wider Prespa Area in North Macedonia, Greece and Albania, with the mission to *“provide long term financing for the conservation and sustainable management of biological diversity, natural processes and ecosystem services in Prespa and its wider area for the benefit of nature and people in the region.”* PONT implements its mission through two main grant programmes: (1) co-financing operational costs of PAs, and (2) co-financing the work of EAs. The EAs include Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), municipalities, and scientific or academic institutions, but no private persons or businesses. The Wider Prespa Area includes the entire Prespa basin, including the entire territory of Galicica and Pelister national parks. For more information about PONT, its mission, approach and programme please visit: [www.pont.org](http://www.pont.org).

In 2017, in close cooperation with PAs, EAs and national authorities responsible for managing PAs, PONT has identified a set of 40 priority actions to be addressed by the EAs over the period from 2018 to 2027, that complement the actions included in the Management Plans for the PAs and together constitute the Strategic Framework that informs PONT’s financing decisions<sup>1</sup>. The priorities are grouped into five Focus Areas: 1) capacity development; 2) improved PA & forest management; 3) sustainable use of PAs (incl. tourism/recreation; traditional grazing; Non-Timber Forest Products); 4) conservation of species; and 5) conservation of habitats & landscapes. The actions under the last four Focus Areas are classified as related to either (1) applied research, studies and experimentation directly linked to real measures; or (2) real measures/implementation of conservation actions.

CEPF is a joint initiative of l’Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the European Union, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan, and the World Bank. A fundamental goal of CEPF is to ensure civil society is engaged in biodiversity conservation. For more information about CEPF, its mission, approach and programme please visit: [www.cepf.net](http://www.cepf.net).

The Mediterranean Basin Hotspot is the second largest hotspot in the world and the largest of the world’s five Mediterranean-climate regions. CEPF’s niche for investment in the Mediterranean was formulated through a participatory process that engaged civil society, donor and governmental stakeholders throughout the region. The resulting Investment Strategy (2017-2022) is documented

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<sup>1</sup> PONT Funding Priorities are available at: <http://pont.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/2017-PONT-Funding-Priorities.pdf>

within the Ecosystem Profile, [here](#). This investment strategy comprises of strategic directions, broken down into investment priorities outlining the types of activities that will be eligible for CEPF funding.<sup>2</sup>

The CEPF small grant programme in the Mediterranean is led by BirdLife International, serving as regional implementation team (RIT) for the hotspot. In the Balkans, BirdLife International works with the Bird Protection and Study Society of Serbia (BPSSS) to manage the small grants. Additional funding to the small grant programme in the Balkans is provided by the MAVA Foundation, which will be used to extend CEPF's reach and further empower the smaller grassroots organizations.

### Scope of cooperation between PONT and CEPF

With similarities in both their strategies, and the view to enabling longer-term interventions with greater impact, PONT and CEPF have come together to launch a combined Call for proposals. There is a potential to build synergies between a number of conservation actions in Prespa under objectives I, III and IV in PONT's Strategic Framework, and all investment priorities of CEPF under Strategic Direction 2 (Sustainable management of water catchments) and 4 (plant conservation) for the Mediterranean Basin Biodiversity Hotspot. PONT and CEPF, as well as BirdLife International and BPSSS as the RIT, have joined forces to provide capacity building and technical support to successful applicants, alongside grant funding.

### Eligible applicants

This Call is open to applicants that are based in Albania, North Macedonia or in both countries, which have been active in the Wider Prespa Area and have interest and experience in the relevant conservation actions eligible under this Call.

For the purpose of this Call the applicant applying must be a legally established and tax registered organization for at least the last 2 years in either Albania or North Macedonia. Applicants must be registered as either an NGO, a scientific institution or an academic institution.

Applicant organizations must be composed of basic staff, infrastructure, financial systems and a basic financial budget.

Applicants must have their own bank account and be authorized under relevant national laws to receive charitable contributions.

Individuals, community groups, municipalities or businesses must work with eligible applicants to develop applications.

Government-owned enterprises or institutions are eligible only if they can demonstrate that the enterprise or institution has:

- a legal personality independent of any government agency or actor;
- the authority to apply for and receive private funds; And
- may not assert a claim of sovereign immunity.

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<sup>2</sup> CEPF Funding Priorities in the Mediterranean are available at: [www.cepf.net/our-work/biodiversity-hotspots/mediterranean-basin](http://www.cepf.net/our-work/biodiversity-hotspots/mediterranean-basin)

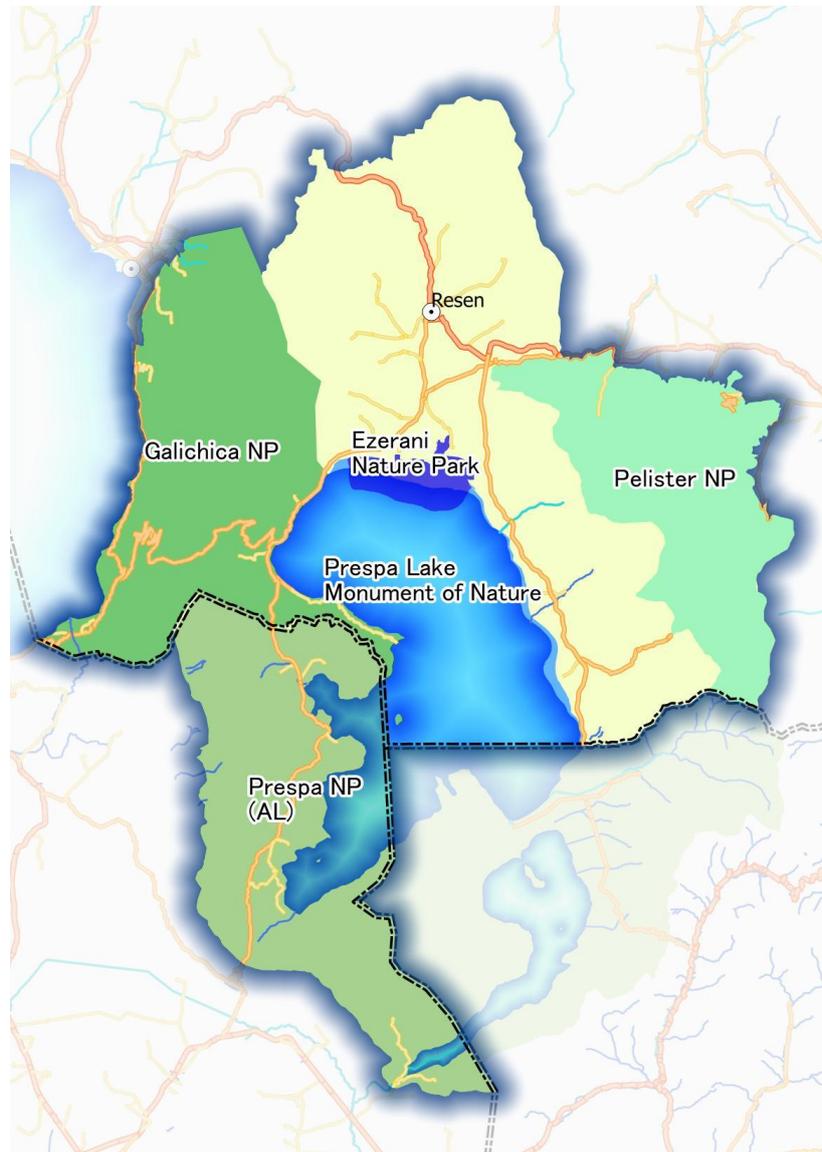
### Eligible activities

The scope of this call is limited to the types of activities described below:

- **Strategic Direction 2 (Sustainable management of water catchments)**
- **Strategic Direction 4 (Conservation of plants)**

Proposed interventions must support either Strategic Direction 2 or Strategic Direction 4. Applicants wishing to apply for both Strategic Directions must complete a separate concept note application for each Strategic Direction.

**The geographic scope of the activities for this joint Call is limited to the Wider Prespa Area covering not only the Prespa Basin, but also the entire territory of Galichica and Pelister national parks in North Macedonia that extend outside the watershed of the Prespa Lakes (see map below).**



Grant proposals should be built on biodiversity conservation as a fundamental component, and should demonstrate positive impacts on the conservation status of biodiversity.

Where relevant, applicants are encouraged to submit concept notes which harmonize with existing national or regional initiatives. Synergies with other organizations are also eligible, with one lead organization submitting the application, and project partners with clear roles stated in the concept note application.

CEPF is committed to integrating gender into its portfolio. Applicants should design and write grant proposals that consider gender issues in the achievement of their conservation impacts. CEPF has developed several resources that can help applicants to design, implement and evaluate gender-aware projects ([CEPF Gender Toolkit](#)) and understand what CEPF seeks in a proposal ([CEPF Gender Fact Sheet](#)). Visit the [CEPF and Gender webpage](#) to learn more about how CEPF addresses gender in the projects it supports.

Grants cannot be used for:

- the purchase of land, involuntary resettlement of people, or activities that negatively affect physical cultural resources, including those important to local communities.
- activities adversely affecting Indigenous Peoples or where these communities have not provided their broad support to the grant proposal.
- removal or alteration of any physical cultural property (includes sites having archaeological, paleontological, historical, religious, or unique natural values).

Proposed activities should observe all relevant safeguard and social policies, as explained on the [CEPF website](#).

### **I) Strategic Direction 2: Sustainable management of water catchments**

The Prespa Lakes are among the most ancient lakes in Europe; they are isolated and surrounded by mountains with different types of geological substrates. Humans have been present in the area from prehistoric times, playing an important role in the formation of the natural landscape and biodiversity. This unique combination of characteristics contributes to the very high diversity of habitats and species, the high endemism and the important populations of rare and threatened species.

PONT/CEPF funding will address the need to improve knowledge on freshwater biodiversity in the Lake Prespa watershed, using this as an opportunity to build capacity for research and conservation action on freshwater organisms. Beyond that, funding also focuses on action by working with local stakeholders and through engagement with government and private sector stakeholders to ensure connectivity within the watershed.

PONT/CEPF is looking for concept notes which address Strategic Direction 2 through one or more of the Investment Priorities (see table below) and which clearly demonstrate how proposed activities will benefit globally threatened species as per the [IUCN Red List](#), within the Wider Prespa Area.

**Table: Strategic Direction 2 and Investment Priorities**

Strategic direction	Investment priorities
2: Support the sustainable management of water catchments through integrated approaches for the conservation of threatened freshwater biodiversity.	2.1: Enhance the knowledge base on freshwater biodiversity and the importance of freshwater ecosystem services.
	2.2: Take action to reduce threats and improve management of selected sites in priority freshwater catchments with the participation of local stakeholders.
	2.3: Engage with government, private sector and other stakeholders to support integrated river basin management practices that reduce threats to biodiversity in priority Catchment Management Zones (CMZs).

**Details on Investment Priorities under Strategic Direction 2:**

**Investment Priority 2.1.**

Enhance the knowledge base on freshwater biodiversity and the importance of freshwater ecosystem services. The biological, social and economic values of ecosystem services from intact water catchments are often poorly understood and not widely appreciated by decision makers. In the Lake Prespa watershed a lot of work has already been done and therefore PONT/CEPF will only support grantees to collect missing information as a step towards taking conservation action.

**Investment Priority 2.2**

Take action to reduce threats and improve management of selected sites in priority freshwater catchments with the participation of local stakeholders. Applicants supported by the PONT/CEPF grants are most likely to be able to take direct conservation action at specific sites, where working with management agencies or local stakeholders can change behaviour and reduce the impact of specific threats.

**Investment Priority 2.3**

Engage with government, private sector and other stakeholders to support integrated river basin management practices that reduce threats to biodiversity in the Lake Prespa watershed. Although the most appropriate level for direct action by applicants is at clearly defined sites, the connectivity of freshwater systems makes it highly likely that action will also be needed at the watershed level to address problems with water quality, water volume and flow and disturbance to habitat. This will involve influencing those actors from government and/or the private sector who are involved with or have the authority to influence these issues.

The proposed activities may involve transboundary cooperation, where necessary.

**II) Strategic Direction 4: Conservation of Plants**

The Mediterranean Basin Biodiversity Hotspot is defined primarily on the basis of the presence of its unique botanical communities, with an exceptionally high number of endemic plants. This strategic

direction is focused on the conservation of threatened plants, including improving knowledge on the distribution and conservation status of the Mediterranean's endemic plants.

The limited range and very specific habitat requirements of some threatened plants means that their conservation can be tackled effectively by local Environmental Actors working on the ground with limited resources, often in partnership with protected areas managers or local land owners. Grants under this strategic direction will support direct conservation action, and aim to strengthen the botanical knowledge and skills of scientists, conservationists and land managers.

PONT/CEPF is looking for concept note applications which address Strategic Direction 4 through one or more of the Investment Priorities specified below, in the Wider Prespa Area (Albania and/or North Macedonia).

Activities must be focused on the sites or plant species matching one or more of these criteria:

- Sites with plant species in threat categories Critically Endangered (CR) in the IUCN Global Red List
- Sites with plant species that have not yet been assessed in the Global Red List, but that would qualify for CR according to the IUCN global Red List criteria and thresholds.
- Site restricted endemics (SRE), which include:
  - Taxa occurring in only one site (and nowhere else in the world)
  - Extent of occurrence less than 100 km<sup>2</sup>
  - Area of occupancy less than 10 km<sup>2</sup>

Priority will be given to grant proposals that:

- Demonstrate that they are focused on one or several priority species or are addressing a priority need for the conservation of plants.
- Demonstrate that they will lead directly to action for the conservation of threatened and endemic plant populations.
- Include, where possible, a significant component of capacity building for plant conservation, either for the grant implementers, or their local partners
- Address the conservation of sites where there is a demonstrable need for funding and opportunity for success.

Additional information about the site must be fully explained in the concept note application e.g. its ownership and management, if it is a Protected Area, if there are any local communities within or nearby it, and if there are any threats faced.

If a plant species is not currently assessed under the IUCN Global Red List, applicants must clearly state in the grant proposal rational why this plant species needs special conservation attention, using IUCN criteria and thresholds. If a site restricted endemic (SRE) species is proposed, the applicant must justify it against the criteria listed above. Justification may include references to previous work conducted for the species, detail on the habitat where it occurs and the threats faced.

**Table: Strategic Direction 4 and Investment Priorities**

Strategic direction	Investment priorities
4: Strengthen the engagement of civil society to support the conservation of plants that are critically endangered or have highly restricted ranges.	4.1: Increase knowledge and skills to support assessment and planning for the conservation of plants, and foster the emergence of a new generation of young professionals in plant conservation.
	4.2: Support integration of plant conservation into the management of protected areas.
	4.3: Support innovative actions for the conservation of important populations of plants, working with land owners and managers.

#### **Details on Investment Priorities under Strategic Direction 4:**

##### **Investment Priority 4.1**

Increase knowledge and skills to support assessment and planning for the conservation of plants, and foster the emergence of a new generation of young professionals in plant conservation. One of the challenges in continuing the process of identifying Plant Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs), assessing the conservation status of plants, and taking action for their conservation, is the limited number of people in the region with the necessary botanical skills. PONT/CEPF will support grant proposals that have a strong element of developing practical botanical skills, including survey, in situ protection and, in some cases, ex situ protection. This will involve working with traditional educational institutions (i.e., universities, research institutes, etc.), as well as working to improve the skills of other groups with the potential to contribute to plant conservation, including protected areas managers, members of voluntary societies and land managers.

##### **Investment Priority 4.2**

Support integration of plant conservation into the management of protected areas. Populations of threatened plants are often located within protected areas but are still threatened because management (or lack thereof) does not address their specific conservation need. PONT/CEPF grantees will work with protected area managers to identify threats and potential solutions, and include specific actions for the preservation of endangered plants in the management plans for protected areas.

##### **Investment Priority 4.3**

Support innovative actions for the conservation of important populations of plants, working with land owners and managers. Many threatened plant populations survive in managed landscapes, outside protected areas, and are potentially threatened by changes in land use practices. PONT/CEPF grantees will work with land users and landowners to identify threats and promote improved management practices to preserve rare plant populations.

The proposed activities may involve transboundary cooperation, where necessary.

#### **How it works**

The overall budget available under this Call is €200,000 (€100,000 from PONT and €100,000 from CEPF).

The total budget of each grant may be up to a maximum of €50,000.

The timeframe for implementation of the grants is maximum 18 months.

The concept notes can be submitted by an individual organization or a partnership/group of organizations with one acting as a lead partner/applicant; shortlisted applicants will then be invited to develop a full grant proposal.

### Application for a Grant

To apply for a grant under this Call please complete the English **application form** available [here](#).

Interested applicants are to direct any queries and questions regarding the content or process of this Call to the PONT Grants Coordinator, Oliver Avramoski at [oavramoski@pont.org](mailto:oavramoski@pont.org).

Proposers may submit their queries relating to this Call no later than 7 February 2020. Any queries should clearly reference any appropriate paragraph in this Call and, to the extent possible, should be aggregated rather than sent individually. As far as is reasonably possible, PONT will respond to all questions submitted before 14 February 2020.

### Deadline for Submission of Application

Interested applicants should submit their concept note proposals by no later than **21 February 2020** at 14:00 CET. Applications are to be sent to Oliver Avramoski by email ([oavramoski@pont.org](mailto:oavramoski@pont.org)).

### Review Process and Next Steps

The concept note review process will take approximately 3 weeks from the deadline date. The review committee will select the strongest concept notes which meet the eligibility criteria, as described above. All applicants will receive a response following the review of their grant proposal.

The applicants of the concept notes that have been accepted will proceed to the second stage and elaborate their full grant application with a more detailed budget and logframe. The full grant application would include a detailed budget form that can distinguish between the two sources of financing (PONT and CEPF); individual actions may be financed from each of the two sources, individually or by combining them. However, the costs of each item has to be financed by either PONT or CEPF and cannot be divided. The co-financing to be requested from PONT is 50% of the total grant amount and CEPF can match the other 50%. Overheads can be included (up to 13% of the total grant amount). Goods above 20,000 EUR/item cannot be financed.

Final approved grant applications will be awarded a grant upon signing two separate grant agreements, in English. An agreement with BirdLife International (on behalf of CEPF), as the regional implementation team (RIT) for the Mediterranean Basin Hotspot will cover the CEPF contribution and a separate agreement with PONT for the remaining contribution of 50%.

The grantee must establish two separate bank accounts to which the contributions from PONT and CEPF will be paid, independently. The grant will be paid in several instalments, with the last one an amount up to 10%, to be paid after the formal approval of the final report from the grantee.