

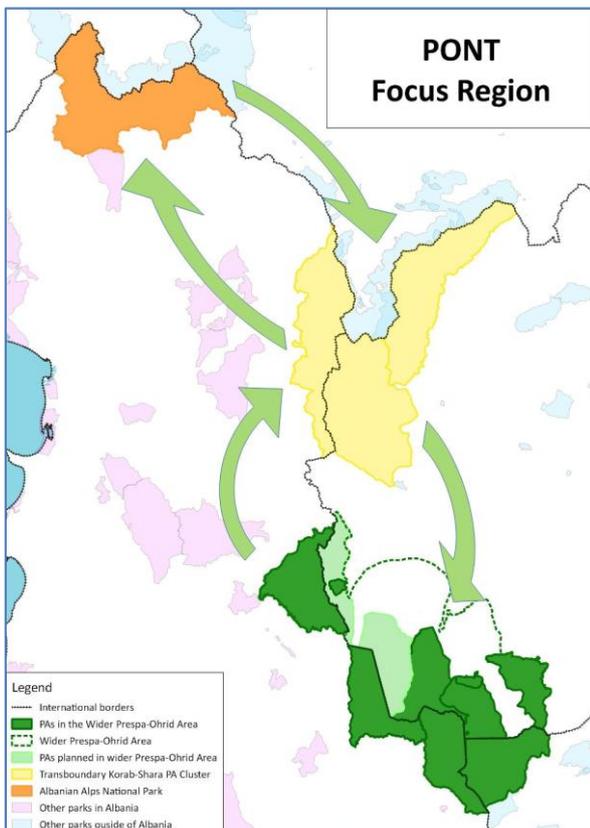
CALL FOR GRANT PROPOSALS

PONT Environmental Actors Programme

Submission of Concept Notes by Non-Governmental Organizations involved in conserving the Korab-Shara/Albanian Alps Area

Overview

The Prespa Ohrid Nature Trust (PONT) is a foundation established under the German Law, supporting Protected Areas and Environmental Actors in the PONT Focus Region in Albania, Greece, and North Macedonia, with the mission of “Conserving nature for a sustainable future through long-term partnerships and financing”. PONT pursues its mission through two main grant programmes: (1) co-financing operational costs of Protected Areas; and (2) co-financing the work of Environmental Actors. The latter include non-governmental organizations (NGOs), municipalities, scientific and academic institutions involved in nature conservation in the PONT Focus Region. The goals, objectives, and co-financing priorities for both Protected Areas and Environmental Actors are set out in the [PONT Strategic Framework](#). For more information, please visit us at: www.pont.org.



PONT focuses on financing conservation actions in eligible protected areas in the PONT Focus Region in Albania, Greece, and North Macedonia. Its role centres on financing, monitoring and verification of grants while entrusting the implementation to the grantees. This implies that grantees are capable organisations fulfilling a minimum criteria and standards that ensure effective and efficient implementation of conservation actions and management of funds.

To ensure synergies and complementarity of its two programmes, PONT continuously promotes and facilitates formal and informal partnerships between Protected Area Management Authorities and Environmental Actors. PONT also cooperates with governments, local authorities, as well as projects and other donors in the PONT Focus Region to identify opportunities for matching funds and coordinate actions.

PONT’s Environmental Actors programme aims at complementing and supporting the conservation

work carried out by the Protected Area Management Authorities, as well as at facilitating stakeholder and community involvement in protected area governance and management.

Grants to Environmental Actors are primarily intended for qualified NGOs with a local presence in the PONT Focus Region, as well as with a mission and strategy that concerns nature conservation, including such activities as promoting citizen participation in conservation, developing sustainable society and local communities.

Nationally based NGOs may be supported in implementing conservation actions and other nature-based sustainable development actions covering more protected areas and along the ecological corridors connecting the eligible protected areas in the PONT Focus Region. The priority actions in the wider landscape are related to the following crosscutting themes: monitoring and management of important habitats and species; good governance; building of partnerships; climate change resilience; and transboundary cooperation.

Environmental Actors are screened on their thematic expertise and eligibility for PONT co-financing. Eligible Environmental Actors are approached by PONT to apply through open or closed Calls for Grant Proposals. Open Calls are advertised on the PONT website and its social media channels. PONT uses its Strategic Framework (Crosscutting issues and pillar 2 of the PONT Strategic Framework) for Environmental Actors to design and select the topics for each Call including specific requirements and eligibility criteria. Topics are chosen where a need or gap is identified with the respective Protected Area Management Authorities or for topics covering more protected areas and along the ecological corridors.

PONT recognises that environmental and social sustainability are interconnected and need to be mainstreamed into all of PONT supported activities. PONT is currently developing an Environmental and Social Management System to ensure that all activities implemented by PONT grantees employ appropriate measures to avoid or minimise negative environmental and social impacts while enhancing positive impacts, in accordance with international good practice standards. PONT will support the grantees in developing capacity to align their operations and activities with relevant international Environmental and Social Standards and best practice.

Scope of the call

The grants under this Call for Grant Proposals are intended for eligible local NGOs with a strategy in conservation, developing society, improving communities, and promoting citizen participation in conservation. While PONT's mission is to provide sustainable long-term financial flows for conservation, grantees are expected to become less dependent from PONT over time. This Call aims at co-financing, organisational and capacity development of the Civil Society Organizations based in the PONT Focus Region while implementing specific conservation actions in the eligible Protected Areas. To that end PONT has been promoting and supporting the use of the Civil Society Tracking Tool (CSTT) to regularly identify organizational capacity issues and address them by including priority actions in their grant applications to PONT.

The thematic scope of the priority actions under this Call is defined by the PONT Strategic Framework, whereas its geographical scope is limited to the following protected areas currently

eligible for PONT co-financing: Korab-Koritnik Nature Park and Albanian Alps National Park in Albania, and Mavrovo National Park and Shar Mountain National Park in North Macedonia.

Eligible applicants

Concept Notes under this Call may be submitted by an individual organization or a partnership/group of organizations with the applicant (lead partner) being a locally based NGO. For the purposes of this Call the applicant must be a legally established and tax registered non-for-profit organization for at least the last 3 years in either Albania or North Macedonia. The applicant must have a legally registered address in one of the following municipalities:

Albania	North Macedonia
Shkodra	Bogovinje
Kukës	Gostivar
Tropoja	Jegunovce
Dibra	Mavrovo-Rostushe
Malësi e Madhe	Tearce
	Tetovo
	Vrapchishte

Applicant organizations must be composed of basic staff, infrastructure, financial systems, and a basic budget. Applicants must have their own bank account and be authorized under relevant national laws to receive charitable contributions. Individuals, community groups, municipalities, research institutes or businesses must work with eligible applicants to develop applications.

Eligible activities

The eligible activities to be supported by this Call will contribute to achieving the objectives of the PONT Strategic Framework concerning Environmental Actors, grouped under three broad themes:

- Protected area governance, management, and administration
- Understanding and conserving biodiversity of Protected Areas
- Sustainable development in and around Protected Areas

Pillar 2 of the PONT Strategic Framework identifies a comprehensive set of priority actions under each of the three themes, i.e., the PONT Strategic Objectives concerning the support to Environmental Actors. The following subset of priority actions will serve as a vehicle in strengthening the organizational capacity of the applicants as the focus of this call:

Strategic Objective 1: Promote the application of best practices and approaches to ensure equitable and ecologically sustainable use of natural resources in the PONT Focus Region:

- Strengthen organizational capacity and technical skills on nature protection issues.

- Build capacity for effective participation in Environmental and Social Impact Assessment procedures.
- Harness the skill and enthusiasm of volunteers through citizen science, and other programmes to carry out needed management activities.
- Help address communication gaps between local communities and stakeholders and protected area managers.
- Facilitate information sharing between Environmental Actors regarding protected area management at site and transboundary level.
- Facilitate meaningful and effective participation of stakeholders in participatory management effectiveness assessments of protected areas (using the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool).
- Promote the establishment of processes and mechanisms to get feedback and identify, hear, and resolve complaints and disputes related to the governance or management of the protected areas.
- Encourage feed-back from civil society groups and the media on protected area management performance.
- Assist local communities and stakeholders to organise themselves and provide information and technical support to participate in decision-making regarding protected areas.
- Support and facilitate the active participation of women, youth, vulnerable people (elderly, disabled etc.), and local communities in governance of protected areas at site and transboundary levels.

Strategic Objective 2: The major biodiversity values and associated ecosystem services in the PONT Focus Region are resilient, restored and maintained in the long-term

- Increase the awareness among social actors of values and benefits of protected area and the threats they face.
- Develop capacity and skills for citizen science data recording and reporting threats to major values of protected areas.
- Complement environmental education efforts by Protected Area Authorities.

Strategic Objective 3: Sustainable uses of natural resources in the PONT Focus Region are compatible with protected area management goals and objectives

- Contribute to better understanding of the social and economic benefits as well as restrictions associated with protected area management.
- Contribute to measuring the flow of benefits from protected areas to different stakeholders.

- Establish long-term partnerships with Protected Area Authorities to improve tourism and visitor management in the protected area.
- Complement the efforts of Protected Area Authorities on visitor impact monitoring.

Applications may address one or more of the priority actions under one or more of the three Strategic Objectives of PONT.

Where relevant, applicants are encouraged to submit concept notes which harmonize with existing national or regional initiatives.

Applied research, with the involvement of protected area staff, related to the priority actions listed above is also supported, but fundamental research is not.

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 local communities 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).

Application for a Grant

Eligible applicants can submit Concept Notes as an individual organization or in consortium with other Environmental Actors serving as implementing partners. Partnering of Environmental Actors is preferred, and the PONT evaluation panel will give additional points to applications submitted by two or more Environmental Actors. Implementing partners may be based locally or in any other part of Albania and North Macedonia. Both the applicant and implementing partner may be involved in one proposal only. The application should clearly state the role of the implementing partner(s).

The timeframe for implementation of the grant must be between 12 and 18 months, with 15 June 2022 being the earliest starting date.

The total budget of each grant may be from €20,000 up to a maximum of €49,000. **A minimum of 25% of co-financing/matching funds by the applicant and/or its implementing partners is required.** The budget of the proposal may not exceed 50% of the annual budget of the applicant in any year from 2019 to 2021. For applications submitted by a partnership, the combined annual budget of all partners in 2021 should be at least twice as much as that of the proposal.

For all interested applicants an online open session will be organized which will take place on the Zoom platform on 28 March 2022 in the period from 14:00-16:00. This open session is devoted to explaining the requirements under this Call and answering questions regarding the concept note preparation. The participants in the Open session need to register by 25 March 2022 by sending an email to the PONT Grants Coordinator, Ropi Miti at rmiti@pont.org, with information on the person(s) to participate (name and surname), position/title and the organization they represent.

In addition, applicants may submit their queries relating to this Call to the PONT Grants Coordinator, Ropi Miti at rmiti@pont.org, no later than 1 April 2022. 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 5 April 2022.

Deadline for Submission of Application

Interested applicants should submit their Concept Note proposals by no later than **8 April 2022** at 14:00 CET. Applications are to be sent to Ropi Miti at rmiti@pont.org.

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

Review Process and Next Steps

The concept note review process will take approximately 10 days 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, in English, with a more detailed budget and log-frame and submit a full proposal by **9 May 2022**. The full grant application would include a detailed budget form that include:

- staff time
- cost related to travel, meetings, training
- consultant fees
- purchase of small equipment (<20.000 per item)
- a maximum of 10% management fees/overheads of the overall budget

The approved full applications will be awarded a grant upon signing a Grant Agreement, in English. The grantee must then establish a separate bank account to which the contribution from PONT will be paid. The grant will be paid in several instalments, with the last one amounting to 10% of the PONT co-financing.

COVID 19

All applications should take into account epidemiological measures instituted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Please consider the potential spread of new virus strains, which could lead to new and stricter measures.