

## CALL FOR GRANT PROPOSALS

### **PONT Environmental Actors Programme**

#### **Submission of Concept Notes by Non-Governmental Organizations involved in conserving the Korab-Shara/Albanian Alps areas and the ecological corridors connecting protected areas**

##### **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](http://www.pont.org).

PONT focuses on financing conservation actions in eligible protected areas in the PONT Focus Region in Albania, Greece, and North Macedonia (see the figure on page 2). 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 minimum criteria and standards that ensure effective and efficient implementation of conservation actions and management of funds.

To ensure synergies and complementarity of its 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. 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.

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.

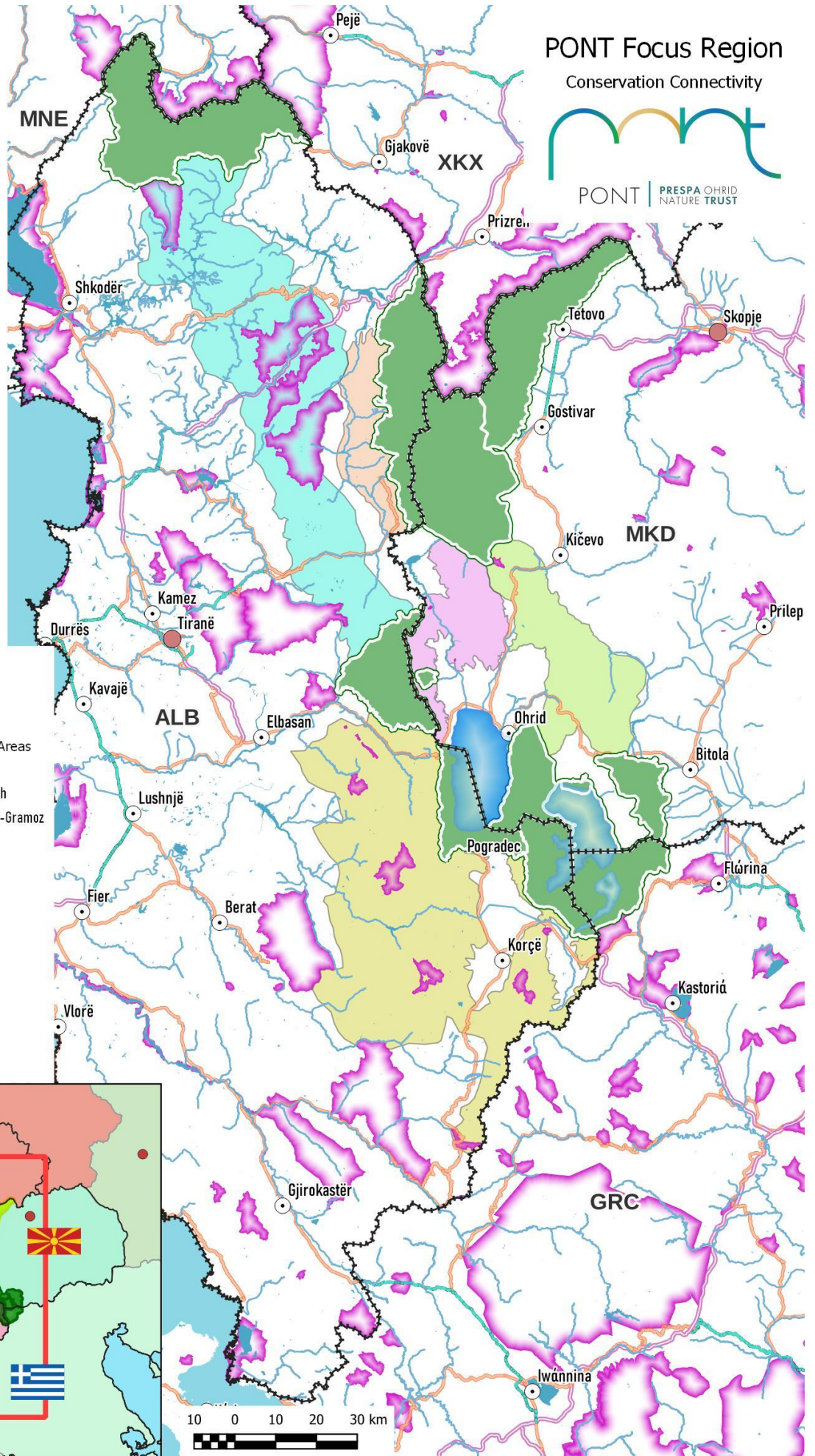
Grants to Environmental Actors are primarily intended for qualified NGOs with a local presence in the PONT Focus Region, as well as with a mission and strategy that concerns nature conservation, including such activities as promoting citizen participation in conservation, developing sustainable society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



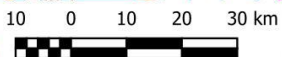
# PONT Focus Region

Conservation Connectivity



## Legend

- PONT Eligible Protected Areas
- Other Protected Areas
- Priority Connectivity Conservation Areas
- Black Drin
- Cukal-Munelle-Balgaj-Martanesh
- Polis-Valamare-Rungaje-Morave-Gramoz
- Stogovo-Karaorman-Jablanica
- Ilinska-Plakenska-Bigla
- International Borders
- Sea
- River
- City
- National Capital
- Trunk
- Motorway
- Primary



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 recently developed 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 national NGOs in Albania and North Macedonia with a strategy in conservation, developing society, improving communities, and promoting citizen participation in conservation. This Call aims at co-financing good governance and implementing conservation actions covering at least two or more protected areas eligible for PONT co-financing, and along the ecological corridors connecting protected areas in the PONT Focus Region.

The thematic scope of this Call is defined by the following three themes:

1. Protected area governance, management, and administration
2. Understanding and conserving biodiversity of protected areas
3. Connectivity Conservation in the PONT Focus Region

The geographical scope of this call is limited to the following protected areas and Priority Connectivity Conservation Areas within the PONT Focus Region:

1. For the first and second theme of this Call, the Protected Areas 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.
2. For the third theme of this Call, ecological corridors between the existing protected areas within one of the 5 Priority Connectivity Conservation Areas in the PONT Focus Region (see the map above):
  - Cukal-Munellë-Balgjaj-Martanesh
  - Polis-Valamare-Rungajë-Moravë-Gramoz
  - Black Drin
  - Ilinska-Plakenska-Bigla



– Stogovo -Karaorman- Jablanica

A description of the Priority Connectivity Conservation Areas, the ecological corridors therein and the priority areas of intervention to be supported by PONT are provided in this [scoping report](#) and this [report](#).

### 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 national 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.

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. Local NGOs, individuals, community groups, municipalities, research institutes or businesses must work with eligible applicants to develop applications.

### Eligible activities

**Applications may address one or a combination of the three themes of this Call.**

**Call Theme 1: Protected area governance, management, and administration.** The eligible actions focus on effective and equitable governance of protected areas to enhance the ecological, economic, and social benefits they provide, as well as on managing protected areas effectively to protect the values for which they were established:

- 1.1 Raise awareness among civil society and stakeholders of the role and purpose of the defined protected area governance structures and mechanisms (e.g., Management Committees, Stakeholder and Scientific Councils, Environment Fora, transboundary bodies, etc.).
- 1.2 Foster the active engagement of stakeholders to broaden social support for protected areas and thus improve protected area management.
- 1.3 Assist local communities and stakeholders to organise themselves and provide information and technical support to participate in decision-making regarding protected areas.
- 1.4 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.
- 1.5 Promote learning and cross-fertilization of experience and encourage innovative governance arrangement for protected areas at site and transboundary levels.
- 1.6 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.

- 1.7 Facilitate meaningful and effective participation of stakeholders in adaptive management of protected areas.
- 1.8 Facilitate meaningful and effective participation of stakeholders in participatory management effectiveness assessments of protected areas (e.g., using METT).
- 1.9 Promote the implementation of *Natura 2000* requirements for the sites within the PONT Focus Region.

**Call Theme 2: Understanding and conserving biodiversity of Protected Areas.** The eligible actions focus on ensuring that the major biodiversity values and associated ecosystem services in the protected areas in the PONT Focus Region are resilient, restored and maintained in the long-term:

- 2.1 Support long-term partnerships between protected area authorities and Environmental Actors in environmental monitoring.
- 2.2 Support Environmental actors' contribution in identifying, understanding, and documenting the location, extent, and severity of threats to major values of protected areas.
- 2.3 Support Environmental actors in complementing the monitoring efforts by protected area authorities and research institutes.
- 2.4 Support participatory monitoring by local volunteers and community groups to complement monitoring efforts by protected area authorities, research institutes and environmental actors.
- 2.5 Support the development of capacity and skills for citizen science data recording and reporting threats to major values of protected areas.
- 2.6 Support Environmental Actors' contribution in assessing, understanding, documenting, and mitigating impacts of climate change on the major values of protected areas.
- 2.7 Support Environmental Actors' contribution to complement species and habitat restoration efforts by protected area authorities.
- 2.8 Support the involvement of local communities and stakeholders in active management and habitat restoration in protected areas.

**Call Theme 3: Connectivity Conservation in the PONT Focus Region.** The eligible actions must focus on ecological corridors between the existing protected areas within one of the Priority Connectivity Conservation Areas (CCA) in the PONT Focus Region, including the protected areas eligible for PONT co-financing. The applications must aim at restoring or maintaining ecological connectivity for any one or a combination of the following purposes:

1. *Movement of individuals:* to allow for the movement of selected species between the existing protected areas, including those eligible for PONT financing.
2. *Genetic exchange:* To allow for the movement of selected flagship species between population segments that have been separated by a highway; dam and/or associated development.
3. *Migration:* To facilitate the annual passage of selected flagship species for breeding.

4. *Maintenance/restoration processes*: to restore ecological functions in identified connectivity bottlenecks within selected CCA.
5. *Climate change adaptation*: to facilitate range shifts of species to adjacent areas in the landscape through restoring riparian and/or other corridors in selected CCA.

The applications should aim at establishing effective, participatory governance structures for the selected ecological corridors(s) and include any of the following recommended actions:

- 3.1 Launch and manage a connectivity conservation initiative for a selected ecological corridor or a group of closely related ecological corridors based on a collaborative partnership.
- 3.2 Assist the connectivity partnership in adopting a vision and mission statements, in line with the connectivity (management) objective for the ecological corridor(s).
- 3.3 Assist the connectivity partnership in defining the boundaries of the ecological corridor(s), establish an effective, collaborative governance body, and develop a management plan for the selected corridor(s).
- 3.4 Raise awareness among civil society and stakeholders on the need and purpose of governance and management of ecological corridors.
- 3.5 Assist local communities and stakeholders to organise themselves and provide information and technical support to participate in decision-making regarding the selected ecological corridor(s).
- 3.6 Foster the active engagement of stakeholders to broaden social support for the selected ecological corridor(s) and thus improve their management.
- 3.7 Support and facilitate the active participation of women, youth, vulnerable people (elderly, disabled etc.), and local communities in governance and management of the selected ecological corridor(s).
- 3.8 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 ecological corridor(s).

**Applications submitted under this Call should consider the following:**

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 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 nationally or in any other part of Albania and North Macedonia. The involvement of locally based NGOs as implementing partners is highly encouraged. 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 18 and 36 months, with 15 January 2023 being the earliest starting date.

The total budget of each grant may be from €50,000 up to a maximum of €450,000. **A minimum of 25% of co-financing/matching funds by the applicant and/or its implementing partners is required.** Applicants must have stable and sufficient resources to successfully implement the projects and contribute their share. Organisations participating in several projects must have sufficient capacity to implement all these projects. Therefore, 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 Microsoft Teams platform on 26 September 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 22 September 2022 by sending an email to the PONT Grants Coordinator, Anni Kallfa at [akallfa@pont.org](mailto:akallfa@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, Anni Kallfa at [akallfa@pont.org](mailto:akallfa@pont.org), no later than 30 September 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 October 2022.

### Deadline for Submission of Application

Interested applicants should submit their Concept Note proposals by no later than **10 October 2022** at 14:00 CET. Applications are to be sent to Anni Kallfa at [akallfa@pont.org](mailto:akallfa@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 14 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 **16 November 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.