



Call for Letters of Inquiry Mediterranean Basin Biodiversity Hotspot

Small Grants in the Balkans

- Eligible Countries:** Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia
- Opening Date:** Monday 1 February 2021
- Closing Date:** Friday 26 February 2021 **23.59 CET**
- Project Budget:** Between USD 5,000 and USD 30,000 per grant
- Project Timeframe:** Projects can start from 1 May 2021 at the earliest, and must be completed by 30 April 2022

CEPF and BirdLife International, serving as [regional implementation team](#) (RIT) for the hotspot, are inviting proposals in the form of letters of inquiry (LOIs) for small grants from private enterprises. Applicants are advised to read this call for proposals document in full and submit LOIs under the scope of this call.

BACKGROUND

The [Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund \(CEPF\)](#) 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 is to ensure civil society is engaged in biodiversity conservation.

The Mediterranean Basin Biodiversity 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 within the ecosystem profile, available [here](#) (PDF – 31 MB). This investment strategy comprises of a series of strategic directions, broken down into investment priorities outlining the types of activities that will be eligible for CEPF funding.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Non-governmental organizations, community groups, universities and private enterprises may apply for funding. Individuals must work with civil society organizations to develop applications rather than apply directly.

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

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.

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 project activities.
- removal or alteration of any physical cultural property (includes sites having archaeological, paleontological, historical, religious or unique natural values).

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

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

The scope of this call is limited to the types of activities and locations described below.

LOIs will only be accepted for the following two strategic directions:

- **Strategic Direction 2** : “Support the sustainable management of water catchments through integrated approaches for the conservation of threatened freshwater biodiversity”

Eligible countries: Montenegro

Eligible Catchment Management Zone under this call for proposal: Catchment surrounding Niksic

- **Strategic Direction 3**: “Promote the maintenance of traditional land-use practices necessary for the conservation of Mediterranean biodiversity in priority corridors of high cultural and biodiversity value”

Eligible habitats and traditional practices: Pastures and pastoralism

Eligible countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Albania

Project should take place in the following eligible corridors: Eastern Adriatic and Southwest Balkans (**Figure 1**)

Projects should be located within or in the direct proximity of Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) of these corridors so as to maximize the impact on endangered biodiversity. The list of KBAs is provided in the [ecosystem profile](#) (pages 42-51) and a detailed map is also available on the [CEPF website](#).

Proposed projects must support either Strategic Direction 2 or Strategic Direction 3. If you wish to apply for both Strategic Directions you must complete a separate LOI for each one.

Project 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 LOIs 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 LOI.

Applicants based outside of eligible countries may submit an LOI as long as the project deliverables are focused on the conservation need within an eligible country. International organizations are encouraged to involve local organizations or communities as project partners and/or explain how local stakeholders will be engaged as part of project implementation.

Table 1. Eligible Strategic Directions and Investment Priorities [please see Annex 1 for further guidance and inspiration]

Strategic direction	Investment priority / focal areas
<p>Strategic Direction 2: Support the sustainable management of water catchments through integrated approaches for the conservation of threatened freshwater biodiversity.</p> <p><i>Eligible projects are from USD 5,000 to USD 30,000. Total available sum is USD 60,000.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment Priority 2.1: Enhance the knowledge base on freshwater biodiversity and the importance of freshwater ecosystem services. • 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. • 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 priority CMZs. <p><i>please see Annex 1 for further guidance and inspiration</i></p>
<p>Strategic Direction 3: Promote the maintenance of traditional land-use practices necessary for the conservation of Mediterranean biodiversity in priority corridors of high cultural and biodiversity value.</p> <p><i>Eligible projects are from USD 5,000 to USD 30,000. Total available sum is USD 90,000.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment Priority 3.1: Support local communities to increase the benefit they receive from maintaining and enhancing traditional, biodiversity-friendly land-use and agricultural practices. • Investment Priority 3.2: Promote awareness of the value of traditional, biodiversity-friendly land-use practices among local community and government decision makers, to secure their recognition and support. • Investment Priority 3.3: Encourage business actors in the trade chain to support and promote traditional, biodiversity-friendly land-use practices. <p><i>please see Annex 1 for further guidance and inspiration</i></p>

COVID-19

COVID-19 is having a serious impact on rural communities and the need to revitalize and support them at this time is even greater. CEPF welcomes project interventions to tackle these issues as long as they remain in line with the criteria outlined below.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications (LOIs) can be written in **English, Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, Montenegrin, Macedonian and Albanian**.

Please **download the LOI form** in the language of your choice*:

- [English](#)
- [Serbo-Croatian](#)
- [Albanian](#)

* For project proposals written in Macedonian language, please use any of the three forms above.

Applicants must submit their letter of inquiry by the deadline to CEPF-MED-RIT@birdlife.org.

You will receive an acknowledgement from the RIT confirming your submission.

The LOI review and contracting process will take approximately eight weeks from the deadline date. The review committee will select the strongest LOIs which meet the eligibility criteria in the sections above. All applicants will receive a response from the RIT following the review of their project.

Applications that have been accepted will be moved to the second stage and asked to elaborate their LOI with a more detailed budget and logframe. Final approved LOIs will be awarded a small grant, with an agreement made between BirdLife International, as the RIT for the Mediterranean Basin Hotspot, and the applicant's institution (the "grantee"). Grants will be denominated in United States dollars and grant agreements will be in English.

REFERENCE MATERIALS

All applicants are advised to review the CEPF Investment Strategy for the Mediterranean Basin within the ecosystem profile. This provides more detail on the types of activities CEPF will fund under each investment priority:

- Ecosystem Profile: [English](#) (PDF – 16 MB)
- Ecosystem Profile Technical Summary: [English](#) (PDF – 2.2 MB)

An interactive map of the Mediterranean Hotspot can be accessed [here](#); use the top right-hand "layer list" icon to select the layer you would like to view.

CEPF is committed to integrating gender into its portfolio. Applicants should design projects and write 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](#), PDF – 359 KB) and understand what CEPF seeks in a proposal ([CEPF Gender Fact Sheet](#), PDF – 352 KB). Visit the [CEPF and Gender webpage](#) to learn more about how CEPF addresses gender in the projects it supports. The integration of gender in your project will be a factor in evaluation.

Helpful resources:

- [Eligibility and How to Apply](#)
- [Safeguard Policies](#)
- [CEPF and Gender](#)
- [12 Tips for Getting Your Grant Idea Funded](#)
- [CEPF Project Database](#)

CONTACT

Before applying, applicants are encouraged to discuss project ideas and eligibility with RIT from your region:

- Small Grants Coordinator for the Balkans, Marijana Demajo at marijana.demajo@pticesrbije.rs.
- Small Grant Assistant for Albania, Mirjan Topi; mirjan.topi@pticesrbije.rs

For general queries about the CEPF Mediterranean Basin Hotspot Programme, please contact Small Grant Manager Salwa Elhalwani at Salwa.Elhalawani@birdlife.org, or visit www.birdlife.org/cepf-med.

Figure 1. CEPF corridor map for the Balkans



ANNEX 1

I) Guidance for Letters of Inquiry (LoIs) submitted under Strategic Direction 2

Nearly one-third of the Critically Endangered species found in the hotspot are freshwater animals and plants. The need for freshwater for agriculture and human consumption is one of the most persuasive reasons for the sustainable management of natural resources. Nevertheless, the hotspot's freshwater ecosystems are poorly represented in national protected areas networks, they are under pressure from over-use and pollution, and the species that live in them suffer from over-exploitation and disturbance. Climate change is likely to make these problems worse.

CEPF funding will address the need to improve knowledge on important sites for freshwater biodiversity, using this as an opportunity to build capacity for research and conservation action on freshwater organisms. Beyond that, funding will also focus on site-based action, working with local stakeholders and through engagement with government and private sector stakeholders to ensure connectivity within catchments.

Niksic karstic field and its surrounding is a globally important site, especially in terms of ecological values (rich in ornitofauna, fish fauna, plant species and underground biodiversity). This area is still not sufficiently researched. The site qualifies for Natura 2000 and preliminary research was done (for wild birds). Additional research on other taxa is necessary. The site is close to the Montenegrin second largest town, Niksic, therefore, it is under a whole array of direct threats (hydrological interventions, urbanization, habitat fragmentation, illegal bird hunting, poor waste management and pollution, etc). CEPF expects to support projects that will be beneficial for future protection of this area.

II) Guidance for Letters of Inquiry (LoIs) submitted under Strategic Direction 3

Mediterranean biodiversity has evolved with human land-use practices over several thousand years, to the extent that many of the most threatened terrestrial species in the hotspot are dependent on habitats that are maintained through continuing human interventions for agriculture, seasonal grazing or harvesting of wild products.

The species that depend on these anthropogenic systems can become threatened when an established management system is abandoned and vegetation succession occurs, when traditional sustainable practices change and cause degradation and erosion (e.g., over-grazing), or when modern agricultural and land-use practices, including the use of irrigation and agrochemicals, replace traditional practices and eliminate the opportunity for wild biodiversity to co-exist with agricultural systems. More information can be found in the [ecosystem profile](#).

The causes for these changes are multiple, complex and intertwined, with negative consequences on biodiversity, livelihoods and culture. Some key common factors in the eligible CEPF Mediterranean regions which have the greatest impact have been identified as:

- **Economical sustainability:** Traditionally managed systems are generally labor-intensive and can be less productive (at least for short-term production). Although products could have a good organoleptic quality, low level of pesticides residues etc., they are not recognized on the market, are low priced or have limited access to markets—hence, the revenues of farmers are limited.
- **National or sub-national land-use planning policies:** In many cases, incentives and regulations hinder the maintenance of traditional systems, and the importance of biodiversity is not taken into account (including a general lack of recognition of ecosystem services).

Under this strategic direction (Table 1), CEPF aims to support CSOs to work with local community land managers and local businesses to pioneer innovative ways to sustain the elements of traditional land-use practices that are important for biodiversity. **Particular interest for this call for proposals are pastures and pastoralism.**

CEPF uses corridors to focus its investment (Figure 1); these were identified based on the presence of highly threatened endemic species, provision of key ecosystem services, importance in maintaining ecosystem resilience, and ability to safeguard the health and biological integrity of the hotspot.

COVID-19 is having a serious impact on rural communities and the need to revitalize and support them at this time is even greater. CEPF welcomes project interventions to tackle these issues as long as they remain in line with the criteria outlined below.

Successful applicants will submit LOIs that should fulfil some of the following criteria:

- Demonstrate a clear benefit for biodiversity conservation, particularly on rare or threatened species (please include the Latin names of species).
- Are built with, and for the benefit of community/ies (not individuals).
- Engage with local governments (municipalities, districts) and generate interest and support the authorities, where relevant.
- Consider the younger generation and how the project could contribute to making the lifestyle in the countryside more appealing (e.g., through job creation, combining traditional practices, culture and arts, etc).
- Consider gender to help determine who participates in and benefits from the project ([CEPF and Gender webpage](#)).
- Consider the suggested interventions in the inspiration section below.
- Refer to previous projects on traditional practices in the region, supported by other donors.

Inspiration

CEPF expects project proposals which integrate actions from any of 3 core pillars:

- Policy Pillar: supporting the mainstreaming of activities into biodiversity-responsible development and land use planning.
- Economic Pillar: ensuring sustainability through an economical approach, increasing the revenues generated by products of traditional practices through sustainable and biodiversity-friendly practices.
- Practical Pillar: encouraging biodiversity-responsible practices.

Ideas for Policy Pillar:

- Ensuring integration of biodiversity needs and the maintenance of traditional practices, including management of common (shared) resources (e.g. pasturelands), in higher territorial planning policies or laws and bylaws.
- Enhance and develop stewardship or conservation agreements between key stakeholders and land-use practitioners engaging in sustainable practices.
- Support national, regional, local and sectoral policies and plans to improve traditional pasture maintenance and integrated resource use.
- Support the traditional governance systems for management of common (shared) resources such as water (for animals and human uses), pastureland (e.g. access to common lands, transhumance systems).
- Development of draft subsidies scheme for biodiversity-friendly traditional practices and work towards endorsement by the relevant institutions.
- Support capacities for rural development initiatives, specifically related to pastures and pastoralism.

Ideas for the Economic Pillar:

- Analyze value chains and markets of products originating from traditional practices, and communicate the findings to communities and land users so they can initiate changes.
- Prepare study with proposed activities that enable economic potential of products originating from traditional practices.
- Support local business ideas aiming to rise the value of pastureland products.
- Encourage cooperation of farmers to increase their competitiveness in the market.
- Promote the responsible use of locally sourced plant varieties or local breeds of animals in restaurants and the tourism market.
- Support the development of investments in agri-tourism and nature-based tourism.
- Support innovative approaches for environmentally responsible agricultural practices through the revival or reinvention of traditional practices.

Ideas for the Practical Pillar:

- Survey to demonstrate the link between biodiversity and cultural practices.
- Maintain and restore landscape features—such as hedgerows, stonewalls or ponds —to create refuges and microhabitats for biodiversity and support livestock.
- Educate and raise awareness on the impact of fire management practices on pasturelands.
- Support the traditional governance systems and best practices for management of common (shared) resources such as water, pastureland and wild plants (aromatic or medicinal).
- Develop education and awareness raising within the agricultural sector on the importance of biodiversity in pastoral landscape.
- Prepare a general guideline document for the management needs of pastoral cultural landscape.