

Call for Letters of Inquiry No. 2

Small Grants

Mediterranean Basin Biodiversity Hotspot

- Eligible Countries:** Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cabo Verde, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Montenegro, Morocco, North Macedonia, Palestine, Tunisia
- Opening Date:** Monday, 30 June 2025
- Closing Date:** Friday, 1 August 2025, 23.59 GMT
- Project Budget:** Minimum: USD 15,000 - Maximum USD 40,000 per grant
- Project Timeframe:** Projects can start from 1 November 2025 at the earliest, and must be completed by 31 August 2027. Minimum duration of project is 12 months.
- Total available budget:** USD 600,000 to be shared between grants

BirdLife International and DOPPS, serving as [Regional Implementation Team \(RIT\)](#) for the hotspot on behalf of CEPF, are inviting proposals in the form of letters of inquiry (LOIs) from civil society organizations in the Mediterranean biodiversity hotspot.

Eligible applicants are advised to read this call for proposals document carefully and in full.

BACKGROUND

The [Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund \(CEPF\)](#) is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the European Union, Fondation Hans Wilsdorf, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Canada, 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. 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 (2025-2030) is documented within the Ecosystem Profile, available [here](#) (PDF – 8 MB).** This investment strategy comprises of a series of strategic directions, broken down into investment priorities outlining the types of activities that are eligible for CEPF funding.

All applicants are advised to review the CEPF Investment Strategy for the Mediterranean Basin in the ecosystem profile, particularly Chapter 13 ([English](#) PDF – 8 MB) or the Technical Summary in [English](#) (PDF – 1.4 MB), [French](#) (PDF – 3 MB), [Arabic](#) (PDF – 4.9 MB) or [Portuguese](#) (PDF – 1.2 MB).

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.

If you are not sure if you are eligible, please contact Vedran Lucić, RIT Manager, at vedran.lucic@dopps.si before you start writing your application.

Please note we will prioritize local and national NGOs over those acting internationally.

INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

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).

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES, SITES AND SPECIES

LOIs will only be accepted for the one of following Strategic Directions:

- **Strategic Direction 1: Support local partnerships for conservation of globally important coastal biodiversity**
Eligible countries: Albania, Cabo Verde, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Montenegro, Morocco, Tunisia
- **Strategic Direction 4. Strengthen the engagement of civil society to support conservation of threatened plants and plant communities**
Eligible countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cabo Verde, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Montenegro, Morocco, North Macedonia, Palestine, Tunisia

Table 1. Eligible Strategic Directions and Investment Priorities

Strategic direction	Investment priority / focal areas
Strategic Direction 1: Support local partnerships for conservation of globally important coastal biodiversity	Investment Priority 1.1 Support involvement of civil society in the management of Marine Protected Areas and realize opportunities to establish new ones
	Investment Priority 1.2 Advance the protection, restoration and improved management of coastal wetlands, with the participation of local stakeholders
Strategic Direction 4. Strengthen the engagement of civil society to support conservation of threatened plants and plant communities	Investment Priority 4.1 Build the capacity of the botanical community to increase knowledge and skills and engage in applied conservation of threatened plants
	Investment Priority 4.2 Secure better implementation of plant conservation in the management of protected areas
	Investment Priority 4.3 Take innovative actions for conservation of threatened plants, working with landowners and land users

Please check Ecosystem Profile (or Technical Summary), Chapter 13, for the list of eligible activities under relevant Strategic Directions and Investment Priorities mentioned above. Please also take into account cross-cutting priorities listed in the same Chapter.

Strategic Direction 1: As stated in Ecosystem Profile on page 226, for Strategic Direction 1 eligible sites are KBAs with a marine portion, anywhere in the Mediterranean Hotspot, as well as sites that meet the KBA criteria but have not been officially recognized yet. Specific attention will be given to sites that are not yet supported by other international donors or initiatives, with the objective of extending the network of sites benefitting from local conservation action.

- Download the map with all KBAs [here](#) (PDF, 42.7 MB) or
- Use the ArcGIS KBA app for the Mediterranean hotspot [here](#) (no additional software required)
- For the latest KBA map we advise to use official map from KBA Partnership [here](#)

Investment Priority 1.1 addresses the significant threats to globally important coastal and marine ecosystems, which are facing immense pressure from human population growth, tourism, and urbanization. Activities should focus on improving management regimes through enhanced planning, increased awareness, and stronger enforcement of rules. This includes initiatives to establish new formal Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) or implement alternative protection mechanisms, such as community conservation areas or no-take zones. Sustainable use practices that benefit local stakeholders should also be promoted.

Investment Priority 1.2 targets coastal wetlands, which are among the most threatened habitats in the region, facing extensive loss due to infrastructure development, tourism, agriculture, and urbanization. Activities under this priority should aim to document the high biodiversity and ecosystem service values of these wetlands and communicate the impacts of threats to decision-makers. This may involve forming alliances to engage in government-led coastal zone planning and management initiatives, or directly supporting the restoration of degraded wetland ecosystems.

Strategic Direction 4 focus on sites comprising priority plant species, defined by Ecosystem Profile (page 236) as:

- Plant species in threat categories Critically Endangered (CR), Endangered (EN) or Vulnerable (VU) on the [IUCN Global Red List of Threatened Species](#).
- Plant species that have not yet been assessed on the Global Red List, but that are included on regional red lists or would qualify for global CR, EN or VU status according to the [IUCN Red List criteria](#).
- Site-restricted endemics (SRE), which include:
 - Taxa occurring in only one site (and nowhere else in the world) or
 - Extent of occurrence less than 100 km² or
 - Area of occupancy less than 10 km².

Under Strategic Direction 4 (SD4) priority will be given to projects 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 priority plant species as defined above.
- Include, where possible, a significant component on capacity building for plant conservation, for either the project implementers or their local partners (e.g., community resource users or protected areas managers).
- Complement other projects (funded by CEPF or not) working at site/landscape level, therefore creating synergies between plant conservation community and other conservation actors.
- Address the conservation of sites where there is a demonstrable need for funding and opportunity for success.

Within your SD4 proposal, please include a travel budget of \$1000 for participation in the Mediterranean Plant Conservation Week in Tunisia in 2027, if your project is scheduled to end in spring 2027 or later.

Details on eligible actions are provided in descriptions of Investment Priorities 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 in the Ecosystem Profile or Technical Summary. Note that Investment Priority 4.4 is not yet open under the present Call for proposal.

Project proposals should be built on biodiversity conservation as a fundamental component, and should demonstrate positive impacts on the conservation status of biodiversity. Please use [Conservation Evidence](#) website to scientifically back up your proposed activities, if applicable.

Where relevant, applicants are encouraged to submit LOIs which harmonize with existing national or regional plans, projects and policies. Synergies with other organizations are also eligible, with one lead organization submitting the application, and project partners with clear roles stated in the LOI.

Proposed activities should observe all relevant safeguard and social policies as set out on the [CEPF website](#). The full Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) is available [here](#).

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications (LOIs) must be written in **Arabic, English, French and Portuguese**. Please [download the LOI form in Arabic, English, French or Portuguese](#). If you need support in other languages, please feel free to contact CEPF-MED-RIT@birdlife.org.

Applicants must submit their letter of inquiry by the deadline to CEPF-MED-RIT@birdlife.org. You will receive an acknowledgement from the Regional Implementation Team (RIT) confirming your submission. Applications sent after the deadline, Friday, 1 August 2025, 23.59 GMT, will not be accepted.

The application review will take approximately four to eight weeks from the deadline date, depending on the number of received applications. 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 in the ecosystem profile, particularly Chapter 13 ([English](#) PDF – 8 MB) or the Technical Summary in [English](#) (PDF – 1.4 MB), [French](#) (PDF – 3 MB), [Arabic](#) (PDF – 4.9 MB) or [Portuguese](#) (PDF – 1.2 MB).

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.

Other helpful resources:

- [Safeguard Policies](#)
- [12 Tips for Getting Your Grant Idea Funded](#)
- [Fundraising training by RIT for CEPF grantees](#)
- [CEPF Project Database](#)

CONTACT

1. The Regional Implementation Team will organise **introductory webinars** on **10 July 2025** in English, French and Arabic. [You can register for these webinars using this link](#).
The recordings of this webinar will be made available afterwards.
2. Before applying, applicants are encouraged to discuss project ideas and eligibility with the Programme Officer for their region, as follows:
 - a. Balkan: Marijana Demajo at marijana.demajo@birdlife.org and/or for Albania: Mirjan Topi at mirjan.topi@dopps.si
 - b. Middle East: Ibrahim Al Hasani at ibrahim.alhasani@birdlife.org
 - c. North Africa: Awatef Abiadh at awatef.abiadh@birdlife.org
 - d. Cabo Verde: Aurélien Garreau at aurelien.garreau@proton.me

3. If you have any general questions about this call for proposals, please contact the Regional Implementation Team Manager Vedran Lucić at vedran.lucic@dopps.si. Questions will be accepted and responded to until **Tuesday, 22 July 2025**.