Open Call for Applications for Financial Support from the Emergency Rescue Fund - Life for the Bearded Vulture Project, LIFE22-NAT-BG-Bearded Vulture LIFE-101113869

The Bulgarian Environmental Partnership Foundation is pleased to invite eligible entities from Greece, the Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia, and Turkey, to participate in the open call for the Emergency Rescue Fund - Life for the Bearded Vulture Project, LIFE22-NAT-BG-Bearded Vulture LIFE-101113869.

Please find below the detailed information about the call.

The deadline for submission of proposals is 19 Dec, 2024, 12 pm EET.

The Emergency Rescue Fund (the Fund) is a financial instrument, aimed to provide financial support for third parties, for the implementation of necessary rescue operations for vulture birds, released in Bulgaria, in neighbouring countries.

The Emergency Rescue Fund is set up within the Life for the Bearded Vulture Project (the Project), LIFE22-NAT-BG-Bearded Vulture LIFE-101113869, co-funded by the EC - https://vultureslife.greenbalkans.org/en/.

Scope, geographic range, and timeframe of eligible activities

The Fund will specifically support rescue activities on the territory of Greece, Turkey, Republic of Serbia, and the Republic of North Macedonia. It will reimburse costs approved as per clauses of a signed grant agreement.

It will support rescue operations, recovery, care and transportation of injured or sick black or bearded vulture birds, which are found in distress on the territory of the countries above, as well as shipment costs for transmitters, found in these countries, which have been fixed to vulture birds, released and equipped by the Bulgarian project partners.

Rescue activities shall be implemented in coordination with the Bulgarian project partners (Green Balkans, Fund for Wild Flora and Fauna, and the Bulgarian Environmental Partnership

Foundation).

The total amount to be distributed under the Emergency Rescue Fund is 20 000 EUR.

The timeframe for implementing approved rescue activities is December 2024 till 31 March 2030.

In the longer run (not later than 2029) the Fund may extend its operations through another competitive procedure, also to other countries, as per project identified needs and available resources.

Eligible applicants. Partnerships.

The following types of legal entities are eligible to participate in the grant contest:

1. civil society organisations registered in accordance with the legal requirements of the respective country;

2. academic and/or research institutions with independent legal status;

3. state, regional and/or municipal bodies, with legally vested powers to perform the proposed activities.

At the application phase all applicants should provide proof of their legal status by means of a copy of the document of their incorporation and legal registration.

Prior to signing a grant agreement, applicants will be asked to provide a document proving their current legal status (i.e. official legal representative, ID number, address, etc.).

An application can be submitted either individually by an eligible applicant, or in partnership, i.e. by a lead applicant, partnering with other entities from the same country, that meet the requirements for an eligible applicant.

Partnerships are meant to more easily secure the needed cumulative capacity and expertise for the whole range of actions needed, and possibly - ensure greater geographic coverage. The objective of partnerships should be to ensure sufficiency of know-how and expertise, availability of (more) physical premises to provide needed care, as well as greater or maximal geographic coverage of the respective country.

Therefore, partnerships are strongly encouraged, as the Fund seeks to select through the contest procedure, one legal entity per country, which will be administratively responsible to organise and coordinate all potentially necessary rescue and recovery activities. Partnerships will have a competitive advantage which will be visible at the evaluation stage, through higher scores on the criteria for geographic scope and expertise, as relevant.

The Fund regulation allows for approval of more than 1 (one) entity to perform rescue activities in a country, e.g. if it there is a case of an applicant that has not joined a partnership, but demonstrates optimal functional coverage in a region, and this is obvious through the evaluation score and ranking.

In such cases, the approved entity will be invited to join a partnership with the selected national level lead entity for rescue activities, to optimise national level coordination and collaboration.

Eligible activities

Depending on the specific need and case of birds in distress, during the period of validity of the Agreements, the supported legal persons will be expected to carry out one or more of the following activities:

a. detecting, rescuing, providing necessary care for treatment and rehabilitation; preparation for and return to a Bulgarian project partner, individuals of the target vulture species (bearded or black vulture) from the territory of the respective country;

b. return of targeted species and/or equipment (transmitters) from birds marked and equipped with them, to Bulgaria.

In particular, the listed main activities may include all or some of the subactivities below:

1. visit to the territory of bird detection and search for a bird in distress and/or equipment (transmitter);

2. (medical) examination and identification of the condition of an individual in distress, provision of on-site emergency assistance (if possible), and transport as required, to a treatment and rehabilitation site;

3. providing a facility for the stay, care and treatment of a bird in distress until it is restored to a condition in which it is fit for transportation to Bulgaria. This activity includes also provision of all formal legal requirements and documents required for a stabilised/cured bird, for (a) its transportation to Bulgaria until it is handled over to a Bulgarian project partner, or for handing over to a project partner, or (b) its release in the country of rescue;

4. release of a rehabilitated bird on the territory of the country of rescue (subject to prior agreement with the Bulgarian project partners)

5. other activities, that are communicated by the applicant, and are approved by the Grant Project Committee.

Eligible costs

The Fund will operate on the basis of reimbursement of costs incurred by the financially supported legal persons (incl. through partnership projects) for rescue activities carried out, with a maximum amount per type of expenditure set out in the agreement (e.g. travel, subsistence, daily rate per employee for bird care, daily rate for food costs, permits and other documents for the transport of a bird, including certificates, etc.). The ceiling for expenditure per type of category will be specified in the financing agreement and will take into account

market prices and conditions in the country of operation of the supported legal person/s.

The eligible types of costs (the list below is non-exhaustive) are:

1. travel costs (fuel or external transport service) for visiting an area with a bird in distress, and per diem for the person (volunteer and/or staff employed), overnight stay, if the distance makes it necessary and is justified;

2. cost of food for a bird in distress (purchase of food if necessary;

3. costs for staff providing daily care, including treatment for the bird in distress, during its stay in the respective country;

4. cost of fees for certificates, permits, other documents, governing transport and border crossing with Bulgaria, to deliver a bird to project partners, in accordance with the legal requirements;

5. other costs proposed and justified by the applicant – subject to approval by the Grant Project Committee at the stage of project evaluation.

All costs should be incurred in the national currency of the country where the legal person/s is/are established and operating. The costs will be paid on a refundable (reimbursement) basis, following submission of a request to the Fund manager - Bulgarian Environmental Partnership Foundation. Copies of the documents as proof of payment shall be provided.

For countries using non-Euro currency, reimbursement of costs will be made in EUR, based on the exchange rate of the European Central Bank on the day on the transfer (applicable exchange rates can be found at:

https://www.ecb.europa.eu/stats/policy_and_exchange_rates/euro_reference_exchange_rates/html/index.en.html).

Proposal Evaluation.

The evaluation of all proposals will be carried out by the Grant Project Committee, which consists of experts from most Bulgarian project partners and from a representative of the Vulture Conservation Foundation.

On the basis of the project ranking, made using the criteria set out below, the Grant Committee shall provide to the Project Steering Committee a proposition for final approval. The Steering Committee shall approve the list of legal persons /incl. partnerships/ to be financially supported.

Evaluation criteria

The project evaluation matrix will include the following criteria:

Criterion 1 – Capacity of the legal entity// the legal entities in a partnership proposal

The criterion will assess:

1.1. expert capacity and physical premises

These will be based on the demonstrated experience and capacity in rescue and bird care operations, as identified necessary for the purpose of the project, by information provided on:

- period of operation in the respective region/s, and range of activities performed with necrophagous birds and/or other birds;

- available expertise for rescue and bird care of the applicant/its partners (institutional level);

- capacity to coordinate documents and permits for the repatriation of a vulture bird to another country and/or their release, etc.

- availability of facilities/premises for bird care and recovery.

Assessment will be based on brief description of participation in care and rescue activities at national or international level for the last 3 years.

1.2. participation in national and/or international vulture restoration networks (e.g. Detox, etc.).

1.3. project team expertise - e.g. competencies and experience of the team proposed to participate in rescue operations - staff or hired experts, and/or volunteers - locally or nationally (incl. veterinarians, local volunteers, etc.)

1.4. potential for improving capacity and cooperation in the field of vulture conservation, at national level, through participation in rescue activities under this project.

The evaluation will also include review of the adequacy and usefulness of proposed partnerships (where applicable).

Criterion 2 – Urgency of proposed activities

This criterion will assess the justification of the proposed list of potentially expected activities in the case of a bird that should be rescued.

Criterion 3 – Realistic expenditure projection

The criterion will assess the extent to which the proposed estimated ranges and maximum values for implementation of the individual activities, for which the applicant has declared capacity and readiness to implement, are realistic and optimal.

The minimal and maximum costs for carrying out an activity to be reimbursed, that will be approved in the process of evaluation, will be ceilings. Any upward change in the course of project implementation shall be negotiated with the Fund Manager (Bulgarian Environmental Partnership Foundation), based on a letter of justification from the funded organisation, and approval by the Grant Project Committee.

Submission of proposals:

Proposals shall be filled in the English language, in the Application Form for this call, by the deadline for submission.

They shall be submitted as a PDF file, which has been duly signed by the official representative of the legal person applying (in individual capacity, or as a partnership with other legal persons eligible under this call).

The signed PDF application will be considered the official final application document to be reviewed for evaluation.

The identical to the submitted signed application should also be submitted (without official signature, only through the google form) at:

https://shorturl.at/5wMDC

The signed PDF format application shall be received by the deadline for submission of proposals, at the following mailbox:

OFFICE@BEPF-BG.ORG

All applicants will receive by email confirmation of receipt of their proposals.

One legal entity can apply through only one proposal.

Deadline for submission of proposals:

19th December 2024, 12 pm EET

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Interested applicants are invited to address any questions with regard to their applications or to any technical issues related to the use of electronic form at https://shorturl.at/5wMDC, to:

office@bepf-bg.org, Lubomira Kolcheva

All questions and answers will be listed at the URL form - https://shorturl.at/5wMDC, to ensure transparency and equal treatment of all interested entities.

Questions will be responded if submitted not later than 17 Dec 2024.