

Kalevi Sorsa Foundation and Progres Institute for Social Democracy **THINK TANK GRANT PROGRAM**

1. About the Think Tank Grant Program

The Kalevi Sorsa Foundation (KSF) is a Finnish think tank dedicated to promoting public debate on just ecological transition and democracy. Since 2008, with the support of the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, KSF has been actively involved in promoting democratic values and practices through youth trainings in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia, as well as facilitating cooperation among civil society organizations in all the six Western Balkan countries.

Under the project “Progres and Bridges III”, KSF, and its Macedonian partner organization Progres Institute for Social Democracy, are pleased to announce the establishment of the Think Tank Grant Program.

The Think Tank Grant Program represents a new chapter in our commitment to support the regional cooperation and initiatives that address common challenges faced by think tanks in the Western Balkans. Through this program, think tanks from the region are invited to apply for small grants to support joint projects that promote democratic values and practices, protect, and promote human rights, and address environmental sustainability issues. Through cross-border cooperation think tanks can strengthen their capacity to influence policy-making processes and drive positive change in the region.

We believe that think tanks play a crucial role as intermediaries between politics and civil society. Through the Think Tank Grant Program, we seek to empower the think tanks to engage in impactful initiatives that address pressing social, political, and environmental issues facing the Western Balkans today.

Overall aim of the Think Tank Grant Program is to enable a low threshold platform through which local actors can jointly contribute to building resilient democracies, advancing human rights, and promoting environmental sustainability in the whole region.

Therefore, we invite think tanks from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia to participate in this program and contribute their ideas and expertise to the collective effort of building a more democratic and sustainable future for the region.

From 2024 to 2026 The Think Grant Program provides annually three different Grants worth of 5000 euros for three different projects. The call for proposals opens in the beginning of every year, and the selected projects should be finished within the end of that year. Projects are therefore one-off and should be planned accordingly.

2. Eligibility

To be eligible for a grant, the applying organizations should be:

- non-profit making
- registered (at least six months before the announcement of this call) in one of the following countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia
- civil society organizations which can show that their work focuses on at least one of the thematic areas named in this call (democracy, human rights and environment)
- have appropriate organisational and financial capacity and the ability to directly be responsible for the preparation, implementation, and reporting of the project.

Since the Grants are applied for joint projects (two organizations), they can be implemented in either one, or in both countries.

3. Thematic priorities of the Grant Program

1. Democracy: Increasing knowledge and understanding of democratic principles, institutions, and processes. Mapping current shortcomings and providing innovative solutions that aim to strengthen democratic governance, accountability, and transparency which will lead to more responsive and inclusive societies.

2. Human rights: Raising awareness on human rights issues and challenges, empowering individuals, and communities to defend and advocate for their rights. Mapping current shortcomings and providing innovative solutions.

3. Environment: Increasing awareness and understanding of environmental issues, such as climate change, pollution, deforestation, habitat loss, and how they affect different groups of people and different areas in various ways. Promoting sustainable development practices and encouraging adopting environmentally responsible behaviours and practices. Mapping current shortcomings and providing innovative solutions.

Projects proposed should focus on one or more of these thematic priorities and demonstrate how they contribute to promoting social dialogue and cooperation in tackling common issues in the Western Balkans.

Applicants are encouraged to develop innovative projects that address current challenges and opportunities within these thematic areas, with a particular emphasis on cross-border collaboration and the exchange of best practices.

Projects should aim to foster democratic culture, protect, and promote human rights, and contribute to sustainable environmental practices in the Western Balkans region.

Applicants should clearly outline how their proposed projects align with the thematic priorities and contribute to achieving the goals and objectives of the Think Tank Grant Program.

Furthermore, projects should demonstrate a clear understanding of the target groups and beneficiaries, as well as a commitment to inclusive and participatory approaches to project implementation.

4. Method for implementation and project activities

In implementing projects under the Think Tank Grant Program, various methods can be utilized to engage a wider audience and achieve the desired outcomes. While the following options offer some suggestions, it is essential to note that actual projects may also employ other innovative approaches tailored to specific contexts and target audiences. Ultimately, the success of projects will depend on their ability to engage and empower different stakeholders to drive meaningful and sustainable change.

- **Workshops:** Organizing interactive workshops (with participants recruited through an open call) that provide opportunities for learning, capacity building, and collaboration. Workshops can cover a range of topics related to democracy, human rights, and environmental sustainability, offering participants practical skills and knowledge to address mutual challenges.
- **Conferences and seminars:** Hosting public conferences, seminars, and symposiums that facilitate dialogue, networking, and knowledge sharing among diverse stakeholders. These events can feature expert speakers, panel discussions, and interactive sessions, providing platforms for exchanging ideas, best practices, and innovative solutions.
- **Research and policy studies:** Conducting in-depth research and policy analysis (including reports, policy briefs, and white papers) on joint issues that generate evidence-based insights and recommendations for informed decision-making and advocacy.
- **Podcasts and Media campaigns:** Leveraging digital media platforms such as podcasts, video documentaries, and online videos to reach broader audiences and amplify messages on democracy, human rights, and environmental sustainability.

- Public dialogues and debates: Facilitating open forums, town hall meetings and public debates which provide platforms for constructive dialogue, debate, and collaboration on pressing social, political and environmental issues.

5. Submission of the proposals

Proposals should be submitted in English.

Applicants should fill and submit the following documents:

Project description form (Annex 1)

Budget in Excel (Annex 2)

Proof of registration (including the date) from the competent national body

All materials and documents submitted by applicants will be retained. Information contained in the applications will not be used for purposes other than proposal review and will not be shared with other persons or institutions, except when required by law or requested by the donors.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Proposals: Proposals and required documents should be submitted via e-mail to Jelena Simić Jelena.simic@sorsafoundation.fi and Katerina Kasovska Katerina.kasovska@progres.org.mk

The deadline for submitting the applications is **15th of April**. Confirmation mail will be sent upon receipt of the application.

In need for additional information, please contact Jelena.simic@sorsafoundation.fi or Katerina.kasovska@progres.org.mk.

6. Implementation of the Grants

The maximum grant amount per supported project is 5000 EUR. KSF and PI may suggest budget modifications if needed.

The awarded organizations will receive further instructions related to the implementation, delivery, timeline, visibility, and reporting.

The selected organizations will sign a contract with Progres Institute. The contract will define the rights and obligations of each signing party.

7. Evaluation Criteria

The applications will be evaluated against the below listed criteria (postulating that applying organizations meet the formal institutional requirements and have completed the application

including annexes (Project description and budget) and submitted it before the April 15th. Priority is given to projects that are between think tanks from two different countries. (Two organizations from the same country are also eligible to apply, but those projects will be placed secondary).

The activities proposed are consisted with the goals, objectives, and envisaged results of the Think Tank Grant Program.

The project proposal and its activities clearly fall into the scope of at least one of the thematic priorities of the Grant Program.

Target groups and beneficiaries are analyzed, and aligned with the activities as well as the overall goal of the Grant Program.

The budget is aligned with the proposed activities. The proposed costs are realistic and correspond with the general price level. Activity costs are the main expense.

The applying organizations or the implementing team have some experience in implementing projects in chosen thematic priority.

The project is complementary to already existing objectives of the organizations applying and will increase their cooperation.

After undergoing the evaluation Kalevi Sorsa Foundation and Progres Institute will decide to grant the award and an agreement will be conducted.

8. Indicative timetable

Launch of the application period	13 March 2024
Deadline for applications	15 April 2024
Notification of award	24 April 2024
Contract signature	2 May 2024
Start of the implementation period	3 May 2024
End of the implementing period	15 November 2024
Reporting to Progres done	30 November 2024
Please note the dates are indicative and subject to change.	