

## CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

# Call for Expression of Interest from Think Tanks to take part in the Think Tank Young Professional Development Program for MA and PhD Graduates

## Think Tank Fund

### *What is the Think Tank Young Professional Development Program?*

Human capital is the biggest asset of each and every think tank. In securing reliable and high-quality researchers, think tanks compete with much more powerful competitors, i.e. governments, state agencies, private companies, banks, and consulting companies. The region's think tanks, therefore, have to devise special motivation strategies to retain existing staff and attract new talented individuals to opt for this career. Despite being present in the public life, think tanks constitute a small part of civil society and are often not the first choice to fresh graduates who are interested in embarking on research/policy careers.

With this initiative, the Think Tank Fund aims at supporting up to fifteen fresh graduates per year from high-quality universities in the OECD countries who want to return to their country and assume posts in think tanks interested in attracting young staff. With these activities, we hope to help young and talented people enter the region's think tanks, provide additional capacity building with talented returnees getting engaged in policy-relevant research, analysis and advocacy under the guidance of experienced staff, and assist think tanks in recruiting new talent into their ranks.

The Think Tank Young Professional Development Program intends to attract recent graduates of MA and PhD programs in the social sciences and humanities to selected think tanks in Central and Eastern Europe<sup>1</sup>, South Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, giving them an opportunity to gain first-hand policy research and advocacy experience at a renowned think tank in the region. The program is designed to benefit both young returning professionals and their host organizations. It enables participating think tanks to recruit young researchers originally from the region who recently graduated from universities in the OECD countries, including the Central European University in Hungary. Depending on a research topic, individual programs at hosting organizations will last up to 6 months and start from November 2015.

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<sup>1</sup> For the topic limitation for the EU new member states, please see the section on the requirements for applying think tanks.

### ***Who are potential Think Tank Young Professionals?***

Young professionals are graduates of MA and PhD programs in the social sciences and humanities who graduated from high-quality universities in the OECD countries in the last three years. We will particularly encourage applications from fellowship recipients of the Open Society Scholarship Programs and graduates of the Central European University. Eligible applicants must be citizens of the following countries: *Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia or Ukraine.*

#### *Eligibility Criteria for Young Professionals (once the call for graduates is open)*

Eligible candidates must fulfill ALL of the following four requirements:

- Have graduated in the past three years with a PhD, LLM or MA degree in the social sciences and humanities from universities in the OECD countries (including scholarship recipients of the Open Society Scholarship Programs and graduates of the Central European University).
- Be a citizen or permanent resident of the countries in Central and Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine (listed above).
- Applicants should be between 23 and 35 years of age at the time of application.
- Applicants must be fluent in written and spoken English.

### ***What is expected from the hosting think tank and the selected young professional?***

After the selection process, the Think Tank Fund expects accepted young professionals to assume a full-time position in one of the region's think tanks (preferably in their home country) for a period of up to six months. These individuals will reside in the hosting organization's country for the entire duration of the program, work full-time at the hosting think tank's offices, and will become a part of the organization (this commitment resembles a full-time paid internship). Throughout this period, the young professionals are expected to engage in ongoing policy research projects and develop concrete policy products in agreement with the hosting organization. The policy product(s) can be one or more of the following:

- A full research or baseline study (young researchers are expected to formulate clear tangible outcomes at the end of the study/survey);
- Policy papers, briefs, or newsletters;
- An organized event or conference (young researchers should contribute to thematic development of an event organized within the program term);
- Any other policy-related product or activity that benefits both the individual and the hosting organization (e.g. designing and hosting policy blogs).

Given that the young professionals would be part of the think tank for an extended period, we would expect them to be engaged in more than one project and, if feasible, in preparation of several policy products.

Their work will be guided by senior policy staff or the hosting think tank director who will be considered the mentor. Mentors should be ready to invest significant time and effort in the mentoring and communication process with the young professional. The Think Tank

Fund would encourage both the young professional and the hosting organization to use these six months to fundraise for other funds and, if possible, make the position permanent. All young professionals engaged in this program should produce the outputs stipulated in the position's description. A fully successful engagement of young returning professionals would ideally result in retaining the person on staff. Upon completion of the six months, the Think Tank Fund expects a final report from both the young professional and the hosting think tank.

### ***Award Terms for the Think Tank Young Professional Development Program***

With this initiative, the Think Tank Fund aims to support up to fifteen individuals per year to assume posts in think tanks that are interested in such a possibility. The award cannot exceed 7,000 USD per paid position. The Think Tank Fund will cover a gross compensation/salary for the paid position (at the level of the hosting organization's pay for junior research staff), and other reasonable expenses that are essential for carrying out the work engagement. The award will not cover any administrative and mentorship costs incurred by the hosting think tank as these costs will be the contribution of the hosting organization to the program.

### ***How can a think tank express interest in engaging a young professional through this initiative?***

To express interest the Think Tank Young Professional Development Program, a potential host organization should:

1. Fill out the attached **application form**.

- Interested think tanks should provide detailed information about their work and offer maximum three potential positions and corresponding areas of research for applying graduates. They should identify a contact person who will be responsible for managing the correspondence with candidates and a mentor who will later on mentor the selected young professional. Host organizations should also outline specific requirements that the right candidates need to possess, such as a field of education, specific methodological and language skills, etc. If the applying think tank is selected for the position of a host organization, this information will be distributed together with the call for individual candidates for the Think Tank Young Professional Development Program in mid June 2015.
- *Topic limitations for Think Tank Young Professional positions in the EU new member states of Central and Eastern Europe:* In Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia, interested think tanks should apply with internship positions for policy research and policy responses confronting state capture in their countries. We encourage think tanks in these countries to consult the call for countering state capture on <http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/grants/countering-state-capture> for further details on the topic limitations.
- Indicate what **policy product(s)** they would like the young professional to work on and finalize during the Program's period.
- Indicate the **monthly salary** that the interested organization usually pays to its junior research staff.

2. Submit a **tentative mentorship plan** for 6 months of the engagement with the paid returnee and the **CV of a potential mentor**. Based on the previous experience The Think Tank Fund tentatively expects that the hosting think tank will secure mentorship from a senior policy analyst for up to 30 hours per month. We also expect that the position is structured in such a way that *most of the returnee's work deals with substantial policy research and advocacy tasks* rather than administrative activities.

**The deadline for submitting an expression of interest from think tanks to host young professionals is May 28, 2015. The requested information should be sent by email to [tff.fellowships@opensocietyfoundations.org](mailto:tff.fellowships@opensocietyfoundations.org)**

***What are the next steps after the expression of interest from potential hosting organizations are received?***

**Step 1:** In mid June 2015, the Think Tank Fund will announce the Call for eligible individuals to apply for the Think Tank Young Professional Development Program for MA and PhD graduates. The call will incorporate the list of think tanks that are interested and have been selected to receive young returning professionals.

**Step 2:** In late June and July Interested graduates will contact the think tanks from the list directly and negotiate the topic area, policy product(s) and work plans for the engagement in this program.

**Step 3:** The potential host organizations will interview candidates, assess how their interests and skills correspond to the profile and needs of the potential host organization, and decide whether they are interested in working with the candidate by late July. This decision should be clearly communicated to the candidate well before the deadline for submitting individual applications to the Think Tank Fund.

**Step 4:** Having been selected by the host organization, the candidate will then apply to the Think Tank Fund and among other application documents also submit the **support letter from a hosting organization** in the name of the Executive Director or President:

- This letter should explain the interest and benefits of the Think Tank Young Professional Development Program to the host organization.
- The letter should be accompanied with a bio of an assigned mentor(s), a job description for the young professional, and a mentorship plan month by month.
- The letter should also include a committal statement that the host organization will secure supervision from a senior policy analyst (mentor) up to 30 hours/a month; and will render necessary support to the young professional in obtaining necessary legal documents for the internship engagement.

Deadline for submitting final applications from graduates to the Think Tank Fund is tentatively planned for **August 15, 2015**. The engagement with the returnee may begin from **November 2015** and last for up to 6 months.

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The **Open Society Foundations** work to build vibrant and tolerant democracies whose governments are accountable to their citizens. The Foundations seek to shape public policies that assure greater fairness in political, legal, and economic systems and safeguard fundamental rights. On a local level, the Open Society Foundations implement a range of initiatives to advance justice, education, public health, and independent media. At the same time, we build alliances across borders and continents on issues such as corruption and freedom of information. The Foundations place a high priority on protecting and improving the lives of people in marginalized communities.

The **Think Tank Fund** (TTF) supports independent policy research centers that strengthen democratic processes by identifying political, economic, and social problems, and researching them in nonpartisan and policy-relevant ways. TTF further supports the interaction of policy research centers with governments to advance better policy responses, to involve nongovernmental stakeholders in policy debates, and disseminate their research findings widely.

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