

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

Roma Policy Research Fellowship

Think Tank Fund and Roma Initiatives Office

What is the Roma Policy Research Fellowship for young Roma MA and PhD graduates?

The Open Society Foundations support the empowerment of young Roma graduates and professionals to demonstrate leadership in the civic and political spheres. The Roma Policy Research Fellowship combines the experience and commitment of young and highly educated Roma with on-the-job training in policy research and advocacy. In doing so, the program aims to equip young Roma researchers with the skills and knowledge to influence public policy processes. Our long-term vision is that these young Roma develop as effective public policy advocates contributing to positive changes in the lives ordinary citizens of Roma origin, among others.

The Roma Policy Research Fellowship Program is organized by the Think Tank Fund and the Roma Initiatives Office of the Open Society Foundations.¹ It supports young Roma MA and PhD graduates in social sciences and humanities to develop new skills under the guidance of experienced research staff at mainstream think tanks. The fellowship program gives an opportunity to young Roma researchers to gain first-hand research and advocacy experience over a period of 6-12 months in a leading think tank in their country. In doing so, the program intends to build new capacity among young Roma and help facilitate their entry into the policy world as think-tank professionals or contributors to policy research and advocacy in other capacities. At the same time, the program aims to assist the think tanks working on or aspiring to take on topics relevant for local minorities to recruit new talent into their ranks and reach out to new constituencies. Individual programs at host organizations can start from July 2014.

Eligibility Criteria

Candidates must fulfill the following requirements:

- Be of Roma origin.
- Have graduated in the past three years from MA or PhD studies in economics, international relations and European integration studies, legal studies, political science, public policy and administration or sociology.
- Demonstrate interest in social science research, without necessarily having previous experience with policy research and advocacy.
- Be a permanent resident or citizen of Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia.
- Applicants must be acceptably fluent in written and spoken English in addition to full proficiency in the local language.

¹ The Roma Policy Research Fellowship Program was first piloted in 2011-12.

What is expected from fellows?

After the selection of the fellows and their host organizations, the Think Tank Fund expects fellows to assume a full-time position in host organizations for an initial period of six months. Each fellow will work full-time at the hosting think tank's office and will become a part of the organization. (This commitment resembles a full-time paid internship.) Throughout this period, the hosting organization is expected to engage the fellow in ongoing policy research projects and offer a structured mentorship on mainstream policy development in the agreed thematic area. The fellow's work will be guided by the director or a senior policy staff member of the hosting think tank.

In the initial six months the fellow will also develop a proposal for a more independent policy research project guided by the mentor and have an opportunity to apply for a program extension in the host organization. In addition to general policy issues, this proposal may also focus on issues that particularly affect the Roma population. If the research proposal is approved by the fellowship organizers, then the host organization will continue to mentor the fellow in undertaking the agreed research activities and developing concrete analytical products for up to six more months. Depending on the final product, the host organization may choose to publicize the fellow's research results and further advocate for the recommended policy solutions. Both fellows and mentors will be requested to send structured progress reports after each three months of the fellowship program.

We expect the fellow to be engaged in more than one of the host organization's projects and, if feasible, in the development of several policy products of the following types:

- A full research or baseline study (fellows are expected to formulate clear tangible outcomes/recommendations at the end of the study);
- Policy papers, briefs, or newsletters;
- An organized event or conference, where fellows contribute to thematic development of the event;
- Any other policy-related product or activity that benefits both the fellow and the hosting organization (e.g. designing and hosting policy blogs).

How will hosting think tanks be selected?

After promising Roma candidates are pre-selected, the Think Tank Fund will contact potential host organizations that correspond to the thematic interests and level of expertise of the candidates. Candidates will be encouraged to discuss the available positions and mentoring opportunities with the pre-selected think tanks in their country. Successful candidates should fit the available positions in host organizations. The selection of fellows will be concluded only when an agreement between the candidate, host organization and the program organizer is concluded regarding the thematic area, mentorship plan and expected outputs.

Financial support for hosting and mentoring a Roma Policy Research Fellow

The host organization will receive a grant to cover a gross compensation/salary for the Roma fellow (at the level of the host organization's pay for junior research staff), and other reasonable expenses that are essential for carrying out the planned research activities of the fellow. The host organization will prepare a temporary contract with the fellow and be

responsible for disbursing financial support to the fellow according to the agreement with the program organizers.

How can young Roma graduates from Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia apply?

To be considered for the Roma Policy Research Fellowship, **applicants should submit the following documents in English by March 31, 2014 to tff.fellowships@opensocietyfoundations.org:**

- **Motivation/cover letter**

This letter should describe the applicant's interest in this program, specific expectations in relation to the applicant's career aspirations, the applicant's skills and qualifications, and the added value the applicant aspires to contribute both to the hosting and sponsoring organizations.
- **Fellowship application form**

The fellowship application form should indicate policy research topics the applicant would like to work on, and describe the motivation for suggesting these topics. It should also allow the selection committee to gain a good understanding of the applicant's current research capacities and career development goals, and how research on the proposed topics could advance the situation of Roma in the applicant's country.
- **Curriculum Vitae (CV)**

The CV should include the applicant's academic and professional background, a detailed description of the applicant's previous employment, a list of academic and policy projects in which the applicant has been involved, a list of scholarships, fellowships or internships the applicant has been awarded, and a list of two people who are familiar with the applicant's professional engagements.

How will the selection process be organized?

The selection process will have two major stages:

I. Pre-selection:

Pre-selected candidates will be invited for a phone interview in April 2014.

II. Final selection:

Pre-selected candidates who pass the phone interview stage will be consulted in the process of finding the most suitable position in an available think tank working on topics closest to interest of the candidate. The selection will be considered final *only* after the arrangement with the host organization is finalized and a clear work plan and a mentorship plan are agreed between the candidate, the potential host organization and the program organizers. The candidates can expect to receive a response regarding whether they have been awarded a fellowship by early June 2014.

The starting dates of the fellows' six-month residential periods in their host organizations will be agreed upon during the final stage of selection—the earliest possible starting time being July 2014, after all contract procedures are finalized.

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. TTF pursues this mission through grantmaking programs: 1) Organizational Development Grants; 2) Open Society New Response Projects; and, 3) a nascent operational program, Innovation, Evaluation and Capacity Building of Think Tanks.

The **Roma Initiatives Office** (RIO) is dedicated to promoting the rights and integration of Europe's largest ethnic minority. RIO builds upon the Open Society Foundations' many years of support for Roma communities, and facilitates dialogue and exchange to enhance the grantmaking and knowledge of Open Society programs that work with Roma communities. In addition to coordinating the Foundations' wider Roma-related efforts, RIO supports the empowerment of Roma by providing a structured set of learning opportunities for Roma youth and through grantmaking to Roma-led NGOs. Empowerment is intended to result in the ability of Roma to change the way governments make decisions about public services, rights and freedoms, democratic practices, and the spending of national and EU funds on Roma integration.

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