

Order of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of 3 May 2024, Min-BuZa.2024.20806-20, laying down administrative rules and a ceiling for grants awarded under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grant Regulations 2006 (Matra government-to-government grant programme, 2025-2029)

The Minister of Foreign Affairs,

Having regard to articles 6 and 7 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grants Decree;

Having regard to articles 2.2 (a), (c) and (d), article 2.3 (b) to (e), and article 2.4 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grant Regulations 2006;

Orders as follows:

Article 1

The administrative rules appended as an annexe to this Order apply to grants awarded under article 2.2 (a), (c) and (d), article 2.3 (b) to (e), and article 2.4 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grant Regulations 2006 with a view to subsidising activities aimed at strengthening the capacity of public and semi-public institutions in Matra target countries and at strengthening bilateral relations with these countries.

Article 2

1. Grant applications under the Matra government-to-government grant programme 2025-2029 may be submitted from 9.00 CEST on 30 July 2024 until 12.00 CET on 29 October 2024.
2. Grant applications under the Matra government-to-government grant programme 2025-2029 must be submitted using the model application form approved and made available by the Minister and must be accompanied by the documents stipulated in that form.¹

Article 3

An overall ceiling of €7.5 million applies to grants awarded under the Matra government-to-government grant programme 2025-2029 from the date on which this Order enters into force up to and including 31 December 2029.

Article 4

The available funds referred to in article 3 will be allocated in accordance with an assessment based on the criteria set out in the annexe to this Order, on the understanding that, of the applications that meet the criteria, those that meet them best will be given priority, with due regard for the need for an even distribution of the available funds as referred to in article 8, paragraph 3 (d) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grants Decree.

Article 5

This Order enters into force on the day after the date of the Government Gazette in which it appears and lapses with effect from 1 January 2030, with the proviso that it continues to apply to grants awarded prior to that date.

¹ www.rvo.nl/matra.

This Order and its accompanying annexe will be published in the Government Gazette.

Marcel de Vink

Director-General for Political Affairs,

Anita van den Ende

Director-General for European Cooperation,

For the Minister of Foreign Affairs

Annexe

1. Background

The Matra programme (Maatschappelijke Transformatie; 'social transformation') is part of the government's overarching policy on security and stability. The government's aim is to promote security and stability in the Netherlands and worldwide through effective bilateral and multilateral cooperation and by fostering the transition towards democracy in priority regions. The Matra programme also contributes to realising objective 2 of the policy document 'Human Rights - Democracy - the International Legal Order': opposing democratic backsliding around the world and strengthening the rule of law.

The Matra programme, together with the Shiraka programme, is part of the Dutch Fund for Regional Partnerships (NFRP) which focuses on the 'arc of instability' surrounding the European Union. The Matra programme is aimed at countries with a prospect of joining the EU (pre-accession countries)² and countries in the Eastern Partnership (EP countries).³

Key concepts of the NFRP are democratisation, developing the rule of law, good governance, social engagement and a healthy relationship between governments and their citizens. The Matra programme focuses primarily on capacity building and institutional strengthening with regard to the judiciary, public institutions, civil society organisations and political parties. The Matra programme has been running continuously since 1993, making it one of the longest-running programmes with these focus areas.

The government attaches particular importance to the Matra programme, since it is about reinforcing and promoting shared European values – values that connect European countries, bridging their cultural diversity. A strong and pluralist democracy under the rule of law, stable democratic processes and good governance – all of which are dealt with in this grant policy framework – are part of these values and of the agenda for the regions bordering on the European Union.

This Matra government-to-government grant programme, as part of the overall Matra programme, builds on the two grant programmes in force from 2017-2020 and 2020-2024, respectively.⁴

This programme will be used to transfer knowledge and skills relating to pluralism, the rule of law and democratic and good governance from Dutch public institutions to their counterparts in the Matra region. That means that it is primarily aimed at strengthening the capacity of public and semi-public institutions in pre-accession countries and in the EP country that has signed a Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with the European Union (CEPA country).⁵

The grant programme is also aimed at strengthening bilateral relations with the target countries mentioned above.

2. Implementing organisation

The Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO), an agency of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy, will implement this grant programme on behalf of the Minister on the basis of a mandate issued to it by the Minister.

² Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Türkiye and Ukraine.

³ Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine are both pre-accession countries and EP countries.

⁴ Parliamentary Paper 2015/2016, 34 300 V, no. 51.

⁵ Armenia. Note: This grant programme does not therefore apply to the Matra countries Azerbaijan and Belarus.

3. Definitions

The following definitions are used in the grant programme:

- *Target country*: a country for which grant funding can be sought under the programme.
- *Knowledge institution*: an educational or research institution that has its registered office in the Netherlands and that contributes to knowledge exchange. To qualify as a knowledge institution, an organisation's core tasks must be independent research and knowledge transfer, regardless of whether it also carries out economic activities or is a public body.
- *Civil society organisation*: a non-profit organisation that has its registered office in the Netherlands and is not connected to a government organisation either de facto or under its constitution, which serves a public interest and possesses legal personality, and is registered as such. It must not have been established by a government organisation or it must have become fully autonomous from the government organisation that established it.
- *Local civil society organisation*: a civil society organisation that has its registered office in one of the target countries.
- *Minister*: the Minister of Foreign Affairs.
- *Dutch public and semi-public institutions*: central government ministries, High Councils of State, autonomous administrative authorities, legal persons with statutory tasks, industrial regulatory and professional bodies under public law, legal persons constituted under private law and natural persons invested with any public authority.
- *Public and semi-public institutions in the target countries*: institutions comparable to Dutch public and semi-public institutions in the local context of a target country.
- *Lead party*: member of a partnership that has its registered office in the Netherlands and applies for the grant on the partnership's behalf.
- *Partnership*: a contractual partnership without legal personality, whose partners themselves each have legal personality, which is aimed at achieving common objectives by carrying out activities, such that each partner delivers part of the necessary input and bears part of the accompanying risks. Each partnership is made up of a lead party and one or more partners.

4. Matra government-to-government grant programme 2025-2029

4.1. Objective and target group

The objective of the grant programme is primarily to strengthen the capacity of public or semi-public institutions in the target countries and, secondly, to strengthen bilateral ties between the Netherlands and the target countries, by means of financial support to projects with these aims.

The target group consists of public and semi-public institutions in the following target countries:

- the pre-accession countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Türkiye and Ukraine; and
- the EP country that has signed a Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with the European Union: Armenia.

The grant programme aims to link public and semi-public institutions in the target countries to one or more comparable public or semi-public institutions in the Netherlands. The expertise of Dutch public or semi-public institutions must therefore be deployed in projects under the programme.

Capacity strengthening

This refers to strengthening the capacity of one or more public or semi-public institutions in one or more target countries by drawing on the capacity of one or more appropriate public or semi-public institutions in the Netherlands.

Capacity strengthening in the pre-accession countries must contribute to the implementation of the agreements that the European Union has made with these countries with regard to strengthening the rule of law and good governance, in line with the criteria for EU accession.

Capacity strengthening in the CEPA country (Armenia) must contribute to the implementation of the agreements that the European Union has made with this country with regard to strengthening

the rule of law and good governance, as agreed in the partnership agreement with the EU.

Strengthening bilateral relations

Strengthening bilateral relations between the Netherlands and the target countries means that ties between the countries will be enhanced through:

- (1) collaboration between Dutch public and semi-public institutions and their counterparts in the target countries;
- (2) using the project and communication about the project to make the Netherlands' commitment visible to the target country government and general public.

Feminist foreign policy

The Netherlands has had a feminist foreign policy since 2022.⁶ This policy is aimed at reducing inequality and working worldwide towards equal status for women, men and non-binary people. It also focuses particular attention on the status of LGBTIQ+ people. Accordingly, gender equality is a cross-cutting theme in policy formulation and implementation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Although gender equality and improving the status of LGBTIQ+ people are not objectives of the Matra government-to-government grant programme, projects funded by the programme need to do a gender analysis and take account of their possible effects on gender equality or inequality. Negative effects on gender equality must be avoided, and positive effects are of course welcome.

4.2. Parties that may be eligible for a grant

Grants under this grant programme are intended solely for the following types of organisations:

- civil society organisations;
- knowledge institutions;
- civil society organisations or knowledge institutions acting as the lead party of a partnership made up of civil society organisations and/or knowledge institutions. These may be (see the definitions in section 3) civil society organisations and knowledge institutions that have their registered office in the Netherlands, or local civil society organisations and/or knowledge institutions that have their registered office outside the Netherlands.

If an application submitted by a lead party on behalf of a partnership is approved, the lead party is the grant recipient and, as such, bears full responsibility towards the Minister for implementation of the grant-funded activities and compliance with the obligations in respect of the grant.

In the text below, 'applicant' can also be read as 'lead party'.

An applicant must:

- have at least two years' experience, gained within the last 10 years, with activities in the target country where the project for which grant funding is sought will be carried out;
- have at least two years' experience, gained within the last 10 years, with the implementation of activities focused on the theme or sub-theme on which the project for which grant funding is sought focuses; and
- must be capable of proper financial management and have the necessary experience-based expertise to ensure effective and efficient implementation of the activities for which grant funding is sought.

When an applicant, as an organisation, does not have at least two years' experience on these points then, in demonstrating and assessing this experience, it may also refer to experience gained by members of its staff in a previous job with another organisation.

If an organisation is involved in more than three applications, only the three applications that best meet the criteria will be eligible for a grant.

⁶ Parliamentary Papers, House of Representatives 2022/2023, 34 952, no. 182.

Dutch public and semi-public institutions are not eligible for a grant under this programme, either directly as lead party or indirectly as a co-applicant, but they must be consulted or involved in the projects with a view to achieving the programme's objectives. (The applicant can claim any expenses incurred by these institutions as 'third-party costs' within the meaning of section 7.3.2; these are costs incurred by the applicant by paying an invoice submitted by the institution.)

Integrity policy

The applicant must demonstrate that it and, in the case of a partnership, each of the other partners have adopted an integrity policy and introduced procedures to apply that policy within their organisation. This integrity policy and these procedures should serve to prevent as far as possible any serious forms of inappropriate behaviour, including sexual misconduct, towards employees or other individuals during the implementation of the proposed activities, by the applicant, partners and other parties they involve in the activities, and in the event of such incidents ensure that they are investigated and appropriate measures are taken to put an end as promptly as possible to the misconduct or inappropriate behaviour and mitigate the consequences. These procedures must be structured in a way that guarantees prompt reporting of any such incidents to RVO.

4.3. Request for a recommendation

If an applicant is considering submitting a grant application, it is required to request a recommendation from RVO based on a 'quick scan' submitted for that purpose.⁷

The recommendation is issued by an RVO adviser and is non-binding; it is up to the applicant to decide whether or not to submit an application. If the applicant decides to submit an application, it is responsible for demonstrating that the partnership satisfies the criteria to be eligible for a grant.

A 'quick scan' must be submitted using the form supplied by RVO for this purpose, and must be received by RVO no later than 12.00 CEST on Tuesday 2 July 2024.

5. Eligible activities

To be eligible for a grant under this programme, an application must describe a coherent set of activities (a project) aimed at contributing to the objectives set out in section 4.1.

With regard to the primary objective (contributing to strengthening the capacity of public or semi-public institutions in target countries), the project must concern:

- a. the transfer of relevant expertise and skills to public or semi-public institutions; and
- b. institutional strengthening.

The project must also relate to at least one of the themes set out in section 6, and at least one of the sub-themes under each of the themes it addresses.

With regard to the secondary objective (strengthening bilateral relations between the Netherlands and the target countries), the project must also help increase of the visibility of the Netherlands' commitment to the target country. It is therefore possible as well to receive a grant for activities that use strategic communication enhance the project's visibility and thus the visibility of the Netherlands' commitment to the target country.

To be eligible for a grant, the activities should draw on the relevant subject-specific expertise of one or more Dutch public or semi-public institutions through, for example:

- training courses, seminars or workshops;
- institutional or legislative analyses;
- study visits and research missions;
- the provision of advice on and support with the development of, for instance,

⁷ www.rvo.nl/matra.

legislation, strategies, policy, methods and strategies for implementation, and pilot projects.

The project must focus on at least one target country. The grant programme provides scope for projects with a regional cooperation component, in which a single project includes cooperation with and between public or semi-public institutions in more than one target country. The application should set out clearly the added value of a project that focuses on more than one country.

In addition to the required cooperation with one or more Dutch public or semi-public institutions at national level, the Matra government-to-government grant programme also provides scope for cooperation with subnational Dutch authorities if this helps achieve the objective of the proposed project. However, cooperation with subnational bodies cannot replace the required cooperation with one or more Dutch public or semi-public institutions at national level.

Local civil society organisations whose activities relate to the themes and sub-themes described in section 6.1 in the target countries can play a major role in attaining the objectives listed in section 4.1 and in ensuring that the results have a lasting impact, for example when a substantial part of the civil service is replaced following elections. A strong and involved civil society sector can also contribute indirectly to advancing the rule of law, pluralism and effective government. Involving these organisations in projects where appropriate may also increase public support for reforms. The projects can therefore include cooperation with local civil society partners, either in the role of co-applicant within a partnership or in some other role. However, this is not a requirement.

The following activities are in any event not eligible for a grant:

- initiatives aimed wholly or partly at proselytism;
- the funding of commercial services, investments or commercial activities;
- activities which already receive grant funding or a contribution directly from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs budget;
- activities of a local civil society organisation which already receive a contribution indirectly from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs budget;
- activities of organisations already receiving core funding from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs budget during the Matra government-to-government programme grant period.

6. Themes

The Dutch Fund for Regional Partnerships (NFRP) Matra programme focuses on strengthening democracy and the rule of law in the target countries. These are the programme's main themes. Neither concept is clear-cut, however, and both include various themes that are sometimes formulated in other ways. To provide more clarity and direction, a number of priority themes and sub-themes have been identified.

As indicated in section 5, to be eligible for a grant, an application must concern at least one of the main themes and at least one qualifying theme and sub-theme (section 6.1). Priority themes or sub-themes are identified for each target country or region (section 6.2), and applications addressing one or more of these can be awarded bonus points (see section 9.3). Selecting more than one theme or sub-theme is only advisable if it offers substantive added value for the project.

6.1. Main themes

The main themes for this grant programme are *the rule of law* – that is, a pluralist democracy governed by the rule of law, an independent judiciary and enforcement of the law – and *democracy* in the sense of good governance.

These themes are elucidated below with a number of sub-themes.

6.1.1. *The rule of law: a pluralist democracy governed by the rule of law, an independent judiciary and enforcement of the law*

This theme consists of the following three sub-themes:

1. Greater professionalism and modernisation of the judiciary by means of:
 - a. strengthening the organisation and management of the judiciary
 - b. efficient cooperation within the justice system
 - c. strengthening judicial training institutions
 - d. increasing the independence, integrity, transparency, impartiality and accessibility of the judiciary
 - e. building capacity to combat corruption and organised crime, and/or
 - f. incorporating and implementing international standards on criminal law. Exclusively in the Western Balkan pre-accession countries⁸ and Türkiye, specific attention can also be given to trying war criminals in their own country, cooperation with international tribunals, and transitional justice in the form of establishing the truth, reconciliation and compensation.
2. Incorporating and implementing international standards with regard to human rights.
3. Media freedom.

6.1.2. Democracy: good governance

This theme consists of the following sub-theme:

Reliable, inclusive and democratic government action through increased:

- a. transparency
- b. auditability
- c. integrity, and/or
- d. and democratisation.

6.2. Priority themes and sub-themes by target country

The table below identifies the themes and sub-themes to be addressed with priority for each target country (and for which bonus points can be awarded; see section 9.3).

Target country	Pluralist democracy governed by the rule of law, an independent judiciary and enforcement of the law	Good governance
Albania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater professionalism and modernisation of the judiciary by means of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strengthening the organisation and management of the judiciary; ○ Efficient cooperation within the justice system. • Media freedom 	Reliable, inclusive and democratic government action through increased: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • transparency; • integrity; • democratisation.
Armenia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater professionalism and modernisation of the judiciary by means of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Efficient cooperation within the justice system; ○ Strengthening judicial training institutions; ○ Increasing the independence, integrity, transparency, impartiality and accessibility of the judiciary. 	Reliable, inclusive and democratic government action through increased: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • transparency; • auditability; • integrity; • democratisation.
Bosnia and Herzegovina	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater professionalism and modernisation of the judiciary by means of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strengthening the organisation and management of the judiciary; 	Reliable, inclusive and democratic government action through increased: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • transparency; • integrity.

⁸ Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Efficient cooperation within the justice system; ○ Building capacity to combat corruption and organised crime; ○ Incorporating and implementing international standards on criminal law – which may involve specific attention to trying war criminals in their own country, cooperation with international tribunals, and transitional justice in the form of establishing the truth, reconciliation and compensation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Media freedom 	
Georgia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Greater professionalism and modernisation of the judiciary by means of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increasing the independence, integrity, transparency, impartiality and accessibility of the judiciary; ○ Building capacity to combat corruption and organised crime. ● Media freedom 	<p>Reliable, inclusive and democratic government action through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● transparency; ● democratisation.
Kosovo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Greater professionalism and modernisation of the judiciary by means of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strengthening the organisation and management of the judiciary; ○ Increasing the independence, integrity, transparency, impartiality and accessibility of the judiciary; ○ Building capacity to combat corruption and organised crime; ○ Incorporating and implementing international standards on criminal law – which may involve specific attention to trying war criminals in their own country, cooperation with international tribunals, and transitional justice in the form of establishing the truth, reconciliation and compensation. ● Media freedom 	<p>Reliable, inclusive and democratic government action through increased:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● transparency; ● integrity.
Moldova	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Greater professionalism and modernisation of the judiciary by means of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strengthening the organisation and management of the judiciary; ○ Increasing the independence, integrity, transparency, impartiality and accessibility of the judiciary; ○ Building capacity to combat corruption and organised crime. ● Media freedom 	<p>Reliable, inclusive and democratic government action through increased:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● integrity.

Montenegro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater professionalism and modernisation of the judiciary by means of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strengthening the organisation and management of the judiciary; ○ Increasing the independence, integrity, transparency, impartiality and accessibility of the judiciary; ○ Building capacity to combat corruption and organised crime; ○ Incorporating and implementing international standards on criminal law – which may involve specific attention to trying war criminals in their own country, cooperation with international tribunals, and transitional justice in the form of establishing the truth, reconciliation and compensation. • Media freedom 	No priority sub-themes identified.
North Macedonia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater professionalism and modernisation of the judiciary by means of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strengthening judicial training institutions; ○ Increasing the independence, integrity, transparency, impartiality and accessibility of the judiciary; ○ Building capacity to combat corruption and organised crime. • Media freedom 	Reliable, inclusive and democratic government action through increased: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • transparency; • integrity; • democratisation.
Serbia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater professionalism and modernisation of the judiciary by means of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increasing the independence, integrity, transparency, impartiality and accessibility of the judiciary; ○ Building capacity to combat corruption and organised crime; ○ Incorporating and implementing international standards on criminal law – which may involve specific attention to trying war criminals in their own country, cooperation with international tribunals, and transitional justice in the form of establishing the truth, reconciliation and compensation. • Media freedom 	No priority sub-themes identified.
Türkiye	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater professionalism and modernisation of the judiciary by means of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Efficient cooperation within the justice system; 	Reliable, inclusive and democratic government action through increased: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • transparency; • auditability; • integrity;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strengthening judicial training institutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● democratisation.
Ukraine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Greater professionalism and modernisation of the judiciary by means of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strengthening the organisation and management of the judiciary; ○ Increasing the independence, integrity, transparency, impartiality and accessibility of the judiciary; ○ Building capacity to combat corruption and organised crime. ● Media freedom 	<p>Reliable, inclusive and democratic government action through increased:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● transparency; ● auditability; ● integrity; ● democratisation.

7. Duration of activities, size of the grant and eligible costs

7.1. Duration of activities

The activities for which a grant is requested should have a minimum duration of two years and a maximum duration of four years. Activities must start within six months of the grant award.

7.2. Size of the grant

The minimum grant amount per application is €500,000 and the maximum is €2,000,000.

Part of the total eligible costs may be self-financed by the applicant/the members of the partnership. This own contribution may not come directly or indirectly from grants or contributions from the budget of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

7.3. Eligible costs

7.3.1. Guiding principles

In calculating the eligible costs for a grant, the following principles apply:

- costs must be proportionate, logical and necessary for carrying out the activities for which the grant is requested, and the activities must be suitable for the organisation incurring the costs;
- costs must be directly related to carrying out the activities;
- only costs incurred after the application is submitted are eligible for a grant;
- costs will be compared with local standards and assessed for reasonableness;⁹
- costs for strategic communication may not exceed 10% of the total eligible costs.

7.3.2. Eligible cost types

The following cost types are eligible for a grant:

- staff costs: the hourly rate is calculated on the basis of the direct wage costs, multiplied by the number of hours worked by people directly involved with the eligible activities, plus an additional 50% for indirect costs, but, with a view to the efficient expenditure of the grant, never exceeding the maximum rate in salary scale 18 as stated in the public sector hourly rates manual (*Handleiding Overheidstarieven*) for the year concerned.¹⁰ Direct wage costs are the gross wage costs plus employer contributions, the costs of fringe benefits, fees and redundancy payments. Notwithstanding the above, applicants that have their registered office in the Netherlands may opt for the number of hours worked by people directly involved with the eligible activities, multiplied by €87.50, which should include both direct wage costs and associated indirect costs;

⁹ The costs budgeted for hiring commercial experts must be in line with the motion submitted by MP Marleen de Pater-van der Meer ⁶ which states that a maximum hourly rate of €250 excluding VAT and a maximum daily rate of €1,800 excluding VAT apply to external expertise hired in the Netherlands. The Dutch embassies in the target countries will be called upon to help establish whether the rates for expertise procured there are reasonable.

¹⁰ <https://www.rijksfinancien.nl/hafir/extra-informatie>.

- costs of third parties: costs payable to third parties, supported by an invoice, for example if any eligible activities are outsourced, and costs of goods and services purchased for the eligible activities. Audit costs are subject to a ceiling of €5,000;
- travel costs: international travel costs and regional travel costs outside the Netherlands based on economy class fares;
- subsistence costs: the maximum reimbursement is the number of nights multiplied by the UN Daily Subsistence Allowance rates that apply on the project starting date.¹¹

7.3.3. Costs not eligible for a grant

The following costs are not eligible for a grant:

- costs associated with developing, preparing or submitting the application;
- value-added tax (VAT), in so far as this is not a cost item;
- costs resulting from inflation and exchange rate fluctuations;
- costs of registering and maintaining intellectual property rights.

8. Application

8.1. Requirements

Before a grant application for a project may be submitted, a recommendation from RVO must be obtained as described in section 4.3.

Applications must be submitted in Dutch or English, using the form supplied by RVO for this purpose, and be accompanied by the documents specified in the form in the format prescribed by RVO.¹²

The application must in any event include:

- the reference number of the recommendation issued by RVO;
- an application form completed in full;
- evidence that the applicant has the required experience, as set out in section 4.2;
- a project plan, including contextual, stakeholder and problem analyses (also of gender inequality), a theory of change and overview of results (input, activities, output, outcome, impact), a strategy for Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) in accordance with the guidelines,¹³ a project timetable and division of roles, a risk analysis and a strategy for external communication about the project and its intended/achieved results;
- the applicant's Organisational Risk and Integrity Assessment (ORIA);
- a budget showing total project costs (in the case of a partnership, for each partner);
- the two most recent annual accounts for which an unqualified audit report is available;
- in the case of a partnership: a signed agreement guaranteeing the participation of the partners in carrying out the activities and their compliance with the agreements reached, as well as their compliance with the obligations incurred under the grant decision;
- a declaration of intent signed by the Dutch public or semi-public institution(s) and by the public or semi-public institution(s) in the target country demonstrating their intention to jointly carry out the project for which grant funding is sought.

The parties involved in the project must also declare that they are familiar with and will comply with the OECD Guidelines,¹⁴ and that they are aware of the exclusion list of the Dutch development bank FMO and will not engage in any activities on that list.¹⁵ The grant recipient must immediately report to RVO any facts or circumstances that indicate breaches of these guidelines.

Questions for RVO, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Dutch embassies in the target countries can be sent to the email address matra@rvo.nl. Every three weeks (in so far as possible), the questions will be collated, anonymised and published, with answers, on the website of the NFRP

¹¹ <https://icsc.un.org/Home/DailySubsistence>.

¹² www.rvo.nl/matra.

¹³ www.rvo.nl/matra.

¹⁴ www.oecdguidelines.nl.

¹⁵ <https://www.fmo-im.nl/en/exclusion-list>.

Matra programme.¹⁶ Applicants may draw on the expertise of the Dutch embassies in the target countries by submitting their query to the email address mentioned above. Applicants should not contact the embassies directly. Embassies will forward any questions directed to them to the email address mentioned above.

8.2. Remedy period

With regard to the application procedure, particular attention is drawn to article 7, paragraph 3 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grants Decree. If an incomplete application is submitted, the Minister may request a supplement in accordance with section 4:5 of the General Administrative Law Act. In this case, the date and time of receipt of the application will be the date and time on which the supplement was received; a supplement may not be submitted after the deadline for the submission of applications. Moreover, incomplete or insufficiently substantiated applications (in whole or in part) may be rejected on the grounds of failure to adequately satisfy the requirements and criteria.

When filling in the form, it is not sufficient to refer for the sake of brevity to other parts of the application, websites or annexes, unless the application form states that this is wholly or partly acceptable. Incomplete applications may be rejected.

9. Assessment, allocation of available resources and criteria

9.1. Assessment and allocation

The provisions of the General Administrative Law Act, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grants Decree and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grant Regulations 2006 are fully applicable to the assessment of applications and the award of grants under this grant programme. Applications will be assessed in accordance with the above legislation and the requirements set out in this grant programme.

To be eligible for a grant, applications must satisfy the requirements above, especially those set out in sections 4 to 7. Only applications that meet these requirements will be substantively assessed on the basis of the criteria in section 9.2 below. Applications must achieve a sufficient score (70 points out of the maximum of 100 points)¹⁷ in order to be eligible for a grant. Three bonus points may be awarded (see section 9.3) if the project addresses one or more of the target country's priority themes (see section 6.2). Bonus points may also be awarded for collaboration with local civil society organisations (see section 9.3).

€7.5 million is available for grant awards under this programme. Applications that are received on time will be ranked according to the outcome of their assessment against the criteria in section 9.2. Grants will be awarded on the basis of this ranking. The Minister will strive for an even distribution of funds over the EP countries, on the one hand, and the pre-accession countries in the Western Balkans and Türkiye, on the other hand. In addition, within the grant programme a grant will be awarded to at least:

- one project focusing on Ukraine,
- one project focusing on Armenia, Georgia and/or Moldova, and
- one project focusing on Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and/or Türkiye,

provided that an eligible application is received for each of these countries or regions (that is, an application that meets the basic requirements and that attains the required number of points on the criteria below (see sections 9.2ff).

If two or more applications are given the same ranking, and this ranking corresponds to the remaining share of the grant ceiling, their definitive ranking will be determined by drawing lots.

¹⁶ <https://www.government.nl/topics/european-grants/dutch-fund-for-regional-partnerships-nfrp/nfrp-matra-grants-for-strengthening-democracy-and-the-rule-of-law-in-europe>.

¹⁷ 100 is the maximum number of points, not including bonus points. Bonus points cannot be used to offset a shortfall in the minimum number of points required (70); bonus points only affect the ranking.

9.2. Criteria

The following criteria will be used in the qualitative assessment of grant applications:

9.2.1. Contribution to policy goals (minimum 18 points, maximum 25 points)

- a. The extent to which the project's intended effects are expected to contribute to (i) the grant programme's primary objective and (ii) the grant programme's secondary objective.
- b. The extent to which the project ties in substantively with one or more of the themes and sub-themes listed in section 6.1. The number of themes or sub-themes addressed is not relevant.
- c. The extent to which the project has added value or complements existing activities in the target country/region, including activities undertaken or supported by other donors.

9.2.2. Intervention strategy/project plan (minimum 25 points, maximum 35 points)

- a. The extent to which
 - (i) the project plan is based on sound and accurate contextual, stakeholder and problem analyses, and
 - (ii) it pays special attention to gender/inclusion.
- b. The extent to which
 - (i) the project's theory of change makes a logical connection between objectives, and describes clear, realistic and quantifiable results, verifiable milestones and activities, and
 - (ii) this theory of change corresponds to the visualisation of the Matra government-to-government (G2G) theory of change.¹⁸
- c. The extent to which implementation of the project plan is likely to contribute to the achievement of the project's objectives and intended results.
- d. The extent to which the proposed Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) strategy, including the methodologies and allocation of roles presented, are suited to monitoring and evaluating the project's progress and results.
- e. The extent to which the proposal has a clear and realistic project timetable.
- f. The extent to which the proposal has a clear strategy for external communication vis-à-vis the target country, in view of the grant programme's objectives.
- g. The extent to which satisfactory risk management is in place, consisting of a satisfactory risk analysis and adequate measures to mitigate those risks.

9.2.3. Stakeholders / partnership (minimum 11 points, maximum 15 points)

- a. The extent to which the proposed collaboration between a Dutch public or semi-public institution and a public or semi-public institution in the target country/ies demonstrably contributes to achieving the intended project results.
- b. The extent to which the public or semi-public institution(s) in the target country/ies show sufficient commitment to the project, and the extent to which this is embedded in their organisation.

9.2.4. Budget and proportionality (minimum 10 points, maximum 15 points)

- a. The extent to which the project budget is logical and realistic.
- b. The extent to which the impact of the activities, in qualitative and quantitative terms, is proportional to the costs incurred.

9.2.5. Sustainability (minimum 6 points, maximum 10 points)

- a. The extent to which the project can reasonably be expected to have lasting effect in the target country and/or contribute sustainably to stronger institutions, without additional funding being required after the project's conclusion.

9.3. Bonus points

- a. If the project addresses one or more priority themes (see section 6.2), 3 bonus points will be awarded.

¹⁸ The visualisation of the Matra G2G theory of change can be found at <https://english.rvo.nl/subsidies-financing/nfrp-matra>.

- b. If one or more local civil society organisations are involved in project implementation, up to 3 bonus points will be awarded. The number of bonus points to be awarded reflects the extent to which this/these organisation(s) have added value for and effective influence on the launching, content and monitoring/direction of the activities.

10. Grounds for rejection

In addition to the grounds for rejection set out in section 4:35 of the General Administrative Law Act, a grant application will be rejected if it does not satisfy the provisions of this grant programme or if the available budget is insufficient.

11. Oversight

RVO will carry out random checks to assess the proper use of grant funds, checking regularity and efficiency under the terms of the grant decision.

12. Obligations

The grant decision will set out the obligations tied to the grant, including in any event an obligation to notify RVO if the grant recipient cannot (or cannot fully) comply with the conditions of the grant and/or cannot (or cannot fully) carry out the activities for which the grant has been awarded. The grant decision will include an obligation on the grant recipient to comply with monitoring and evaluation activities relating to the grant programme. For the purpose of monitoring progress, a baseline assessment will in any case have to be performed for each project. The grant recipient must also submit one or more reports each year, which will include information on progress made towards the envisaged results and objective(s) and an overview of the costs incurred in relation to the original project budget. After the project's conclusion the grant recipient will be asked to submit a final report and to cooperate in disseminating the project results.

13. Administrative burden

A test based on a standard cost model has been carried out in the interests of accountability for the administrative burden that the applicant will face, from drafting and submitting the application to the management phase, the determining of the definitive grant amount, and any objection and review procedures. The calculation shows that the administrative burden expressed as a percentage of the total available grant budget is 4.4%.