



Unofficial English Translation

Strategic Trade Fairs Subsidy Programme 2026–2030

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Order of the State Secretary for Foreign Affairs dated 10 February 2026, no. BZBZ2624947, establishing administrative rules and a subsidy ceiling under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grant Scheme 2006 (Strategic Trade Fairs Subsidy Programme 2026–2030)

The State Secretary for Foreign Affairs,

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

Having regard to Article 7.2 of the Foreign Affairs Grant Regulation 2006;

Orders as follows:

Article 1

The administrative rules appended as an ANNEX to this Order apply to subsidies awarded under Article 7.2 of the Foreign Affairs Grant Regulation 2006, for the purpose of financing activities aimed at expanding networks and international business opportunities for Dutch companies at strategic trade fairs, for the period from the date on which this Order enters into force up to and including **31 December 2030**.

Article 2

1. Applications for subsidies under the Strategic Trade Fairs Subsidy Programme 2026–2030 may be submitted during semi-annual application periods.
2. Applications for subsidies under the first application period of the Strategic Trade Fairs Subsidy Programme 2026–2030 may be submitted from **23 February 2026**, at 12:00 (Dutch time) until **20 March 2026**, at 17:00 (Dutch time).
3. Application periods for subsequent subsidy rounds under the Strategic Trade Fairs Subsidy Programme 2026–2030 will be announced at a later date.
4. Applications for subsidies under the Strategic Trade Fairs Subsidy Programme 2026–2030 must be submitted using the application form provided by the Minister and accompanied by the documents specified in that form.

Article 3

1. A total subsidy ceiling of €1.3 million applies, divided into the following subsidy ceilings:
 - a. €400,000 for Category 1: applications for Dutch lounges, Dutch pavilions, and/or collective networking activities;
 - b. €425,000 for Category 2: applications for Dutch pavilions and/or collective networking activities at a trade fair for a strategically designated sector;
 - c. €475,000 for Category 3: applications for Dutch pavilions and/or collective networking activities at strategically designated trade fairs.

2. If, after application of the first paragraph, part of the total subsidy ceiling remains, this amount will be added to the total subsidy ceiling for the subsequent application period.

3. Subsidy ceilings for later application periods under the Strategic Trade Fairs Subsidy Programme 2026–2030, as referred to in Article 2, third paragraph, will be announced at a later date.

Article 4

The allocation of the funds referred to in Article 3 shall take place on the basis of an assessment in accordance with the criteria set out in the ANNEX to this Order, on the understanding that, for efficiency reasons, no more than two subsidy applications per sector per calendar year will be eligible for subsidy, as referred to in Article 8, paragraph 3(c), of the Foreign Affairs Grants Decree.

Article 5

This Order enters into force on the day following its publication in the Government Gazette and expires with effect from **1 January 2031**, provided that this Order remains applicable to applications submitted before that date and subsidies awarded before that date.

Article 6

This Order is cited as: **Strategic Trade Fairs Subsidy Programme 2026–2030**.

This Order will be published in the Government Gazette together with the ANNEX.

The Director General of Foreign Economic Relations
for
the State Secretary for Foreign Affairs,

M. Smeets

ANNEX

1. Background

Through the Strategic Trade Fairs Subsidy Programme 2026–2030 (hereinafter: the subsidy programme), the Minister aims to support Dutch businesses in their international positioning at strategic trade fairs. By focusing on strategic fairs, the programme contributes to Dutch earning capacity and the resilience of the Dutch economy, as outlined in various policy letters.

The subsidy programme is intended for Dutch trade and membership organisations and Trade and Innovate NL partners that are able to realise collective fair participation at strategically designated international trade fairs in the Netherlands and abroad. The programme aims to expand the network and international business opportunities of the Dutch business community.

The subsidy programme application periods take place in spring and autumn to align with the trade fair calendar.

2. Implementing body

The Minister has entrusted the implementation of the subsidy programme to the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO), an agency of the Ministry of Economic Affairs. RVO implements the subsidy programme on behalf of the Minister under a mandate granted to it.

3. Definitions

In this subsidy programme, the following definitions apply:

- *Trade organisation*: a foundation or association which, according to its statutes, represents the interests of its members, consisting of companies belonging to the same sector;
- *Individual participant in a Dutch pavilion*: a company participating in the private section of a Dutch pavilion with its own stand for economic activities;
- *Individual participant in a Dutch lounge*: a company participating in a Dutch lounge;
- *Collective fair participation or fair entry*: participation in a trade fair with a group of companies;
- *Kingdom of the Netherlands*: the countries of the Netherlands (including the special municipalities of Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba), Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten;
- *Membership organisation*: an association which, according to its statutes, represents the interests of its members, consisting of companies pursuing a common objective;
- *Dutch company*: a company with legal personality under the law of one of the countries of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and having its registered office in that country;
- *Company*: a legal entity carrying out economic activities, not being a social organisation;
- *Social organisation*: a non-profit organisation not statutorily or factually affiliated with a government body, with a social purpose, possessing private legal personality in the country in which the organisation is statutorily established and registered as such. The organisation has not been established by a government body or has been fully privatised following establishment by a government body;
- *Minister*: the Minister of Foreign Affairs;

- *Strategically designated fair*: a trade fair classified as strategic on the basis of sectors mentioned in relevant policy letters, published on the RVO website;
- *Strategically designated sector*: a sector classified as strategic on the basis of relevant policy letters, published on the RVO website;
- *Trade and Innovate NL partners*: the regional development agencies and representatives of the three major cities – Amsterdam, Rotterdam and the Eindhoven region.

4. Strategic Trade Fairs Subsidy Programme 2026–2030

4.1 Objective and target group

The objective of this subsidy programme is to support Dutch companies in physical collective international trade fair participation at strategic fairs, in order to expand their network and international business opportunities.

4.2 Eligibility for subsidies

Subsidies are intended for trade and membership organisations and Trade and Innovate NL partners that have included international business in their multi-year strategy and that:

- are statutorily established in the Kingdom of the Netherlands;
- have an internationalisation strategy for the sector of the trade fair for which the subsidy is requested;
- have at least two years of experience with physical collective international trade fair participation prior to submitting the application;
- in the case of Category 2 or 3 applications: are active in one of the strategically designated sectors;
- endorse the OECD Guidelines for Responsible Business Conduct;
- for trade and membership organisations: demonstrably provide services to non-members under the same conditions as to their own members;
- for trade and membership organisations: have at least 10 paying members;
- for Trade and Innovate NL partners: demonstrably provide access to participants outside their own region.

4.3 Eligible activities

To qualify for a subsidy under this programme, activities must aim to achieve the objective set out in paragraph 4.1 and relate to Category 1, 2 or 3 (see below). For each category, the collective fair participation must form part of the applicant's multi-year strategy for the international positioning of the sector. Depending on the category for which the subsidy is requested, the participation must also fall within strategically designated sectors or relate to a strategically designated fair.

The following requirements apply per category:

Category 1: Dutch lounges, Dutch pavilions and/or collective networking activities

- There are no restrictions on the sectors for which a subsidy may be requested.

- At least 8 individual participants with their own stand must participate in the Dutch pavilion.
- At least 8 individual participants must participate in the Dutch lounge.
- At least 8 individual participants must participate in the collective networking activity.

Category 2: Dutch pavilions and/or collective networking activities at a trade fair for a strategically designated sector

- The trade fair must relate to a strategically designated sector determined by the Minister. The Minister determines the strategic sectors annually. For the first application period, the strategic sectors are: HTSM, ICT, defence-related applications, biotechnology, LSH, innovative chemistry, sustainable energy, agritech, water and maritime, and critical raw materials. For subsequent application periods, the strategic sectors will be published in the Government Gazette and on the RVO website.
- At least 10 participants with their own stand must participate in the Dutch pavilion.
- At least 10 participants must participate in the networking activity.

Category 3: Dutch pavilions and/or collective networking activities at strategically designated fairs

- The Minister annually determines for which trade fairs in this category a subsidy may be requested. These trade fairs are relevant both to the sector concerned and to the Minister's policy objectives.
- For the first application period, the strategically designated fairs are: BIO International Convention, DMEA, Greentech Amsterdam, Hannover Messe, HLTH, MEDICA, Photonics West, RSA Conference, Semicon Europe, Semicon West, SMM Hamburg and SXSW (USA). For subsequent application periods, the strategically designated fairs will be published in the Government Gazette and on the RVO website. The minimum number of individual participants per fair will also be announced, and additional requirements per fair may be added.

For all three categories, the application of Netherlands Branding (NL Branding) in stand construction and collective expressions is required. Detailed guidelines and templates are available in the NL Branding toolkit.

For all three categories, the following activities are eligible for subsidy:

Ground rent

This concerns the collective square metres of floor space rented from the trade fair organisation for placing a Dutch pavilion or Dutch lounge. Square metres used for individual company stands are excluded.

Stand construction

The physical realisation of the collective area on the rented space during the trade fair. Depending on the setup, a Dutch Lounge or Dutch Pavilion may be chosen. Activities related to the realisation of the private part of the pavilion are excluded from eligible activities.

A Dutch Lounge is a communal area with, for example, a bar for coffee, soft drinks, and small snacks, meeting tables, and an information desk. The lounge may also serve as a presentation space. Within this communal area, showcases may be placed in which companies can display their brochures. These companies do not have their own space in the lounge. Company names or logos may not be included in the design, except on a separate wall for collective logos. This means that companies can use the Dutch Lounge to visit the trade fair, receive and meet guests, and conduct business. They do not have an individual stand.

A Dutch Pavilion consists of two parts:

1. a communal area open to trade fair participants and visitors where companies can receive guests and conduct business. This area contains, for example, a bar for coffee, soft drinks, and small snacks, meeting tables, and an information desk. The pavilion may also serve as a presentation space;
2. an area where individual participants (companies) have their own stand for individual economic activities. This area is excluded from eligible activities.

Collective networking activities

Collective networking activities take place within or around the Dutch Pavilion or Dutch Lounge and the trade fair location and are aimed at strengthening international contacts, promoting cooperation, and increasing the visibility of the Dutch sector as a whole. These activities must contribute to the collective objective of trade fair participation and be accessible to all participants. Individual support to companies (such as individual matchmaking) is not eligible for subsidy.

These activities include joint networking events, receptions, or other business-oriented meeting moments that contribute to the collective objective of trade fair participation, as described in the plan of approach, as well as joint seminars and roundtable discussions held as part of the international trade fair and involving multiple organisations from the relevant sector.

Trade fair organisation

Activities carried out for organising the trade fair participation, including setting up a Dutch Lounge or Dutch Pavilion, organising networking activities, and marketing and communication related to the trade fair participation.

Promotional materials

The production of materials for the promotion of the trade fair, such as flyers and campaigns in advance, as well as an aftermovie after the trade fair.

In all cases, the subsidy must not benefit individual companies. Economic activities, meaning commercial promotion of goods and services of individual companies, are not eligible for subsidy.

4.4 Duration of activities

Activities carried out under the subsidy programme must be completed within 18 months following submission of the subsidy application.

4.5 Amount of the subsidy

The subsidy per application amounts to a maximum of 80% of the total eligible costs and is set as follows:

- Category 1: a minimum of €25,000 and a maximum of €49,999;
- Category 2: a minimum of €50,000 and a maximum of €124,999;
- Category 3: a minimum of €125,000 and a maximum of €200,000.

The portion of the total eligible costs not covered by the subsidy must be financed by the applicant themselves (the own contribution). This contribution may not be financed using funds obtained through a direct or indirect subsidy or contribution from the Dutch government budget.

An applicant may receive a maximum of four subsidies per application period, with a maximum of two subsidies under Category 3 (strategically designated fairs). For trade and membership organisations with more than 500 members, a maximum of six subsidies may be awarded per application period, with a maximum of two under Category 3.

5. Eligible costs

5.1 Principles

The following principles apply when determining the costs that may be taken into account in establishing the amount of the subsidy to be awarded:

- costs must be demonstrably reasonable, logical, and necessary;
- costs must be appropriate in nature;
- costs must be directly related to the execution of the activities and may not constitute unforeseen costs;
- costs included in the budget must be incurred by the subsidy applicant;
- organisation costs and promotional materials together may not exceed 20% of the total eligible costs;
- costs incurred after the trade fair are not eligible, with the exception of costs for the mandatory audit by an external, independent accountant for the purpose of the subsidy determination application (applies only to Category 3), and with the exception of an aftermovie or similar activity that will only be delivered after the trade fair (in that case, the subsidy period will also be extended accordingly).

5.2 Eligible costs

Eligible costs are the following costs to be incurred by the applicant themselves:

Ground rent

- The collective square metres of floor space rented from the trade fair organisation for placing a Dutch pavilion or Dutch lounge.
- Collective registration or participation on the trade fair platform

Stand construction

- Stand construction of the collective part of the pavilion or lounge;
- Design, construction, and furnishing costs;
- Technical facilities (electricity, lighting, audiovisual equipment, internet);
- Transport, assembly, disassembly, and storage of stand components;
- Graphic design (NL Branding).

Collective networking activities

- Rental of spaces or facilities for networking activities;
- Technical facilities (electricity, lighting, audiovisual equipment, internet);
- Catering costs solely for collective networking activities.

Organisation costs

- Costs for organising the activity (hours for project management), including hours for marketing and communication, with a maximum of €700 per person per day;
- For subsidies of €125,000 or more: costs for the audit statement from an independent accountant, in accordance with the audit protocol.

Promotional materials

- Costs for printed or digital products, such as flyers or an aftermovie.

5.3 Non-eligible costs

Non-eligible costs include, in any case, the following:

- costs for developing the application and applying for subsidy, and other costs incurred prior to submission of the application;
- VAT on invoices from third parties if the applicant is VAT-liable;
- financing costs and interest charges;
- costs caused by inflation and exchange rate fluctuations;
- product development costs;
- costs for naming, maintaining, and protecting intellectual property rights;
- catering costs not related to collective networking activities;
- costs incurred for the content of activities, including hiring speakers;
- ground rent costs for private square metres (floor space for individual participants' stands);
- stand construction costs for individual participants' stands;
- individual matchmaking costs;
- travel and accommodation costs of the applicant or participants;
- unforeseen costs;
- costs primarily aimed at promoting one organisation or product;
- costs of a social or tourist nature (parties, dinners, excursions);
- costs not directly related to trade fair participation;
- costs for activities for which a direct subsidy or contribution from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or other governments is already received;
- costs for company visits;
- costs for collective transport.

6. Application

6.1 Requirements

The application for subsidy must be submitted no earlier than one year and no later than one month prior to the start of the strategic trade fair, using the application form provided by the Minister and accompanied by the documents requested in that form. These will be made available via the RVO website.

The application must in any case include:

- A plan of approach substantiating the importance of the eligible activity and indicating the intended result. The plan must include at least:

- name and date of the trade fair;
- name of the project leader;
- requested subsidy amount;
- experience with organising collective trade fair participation;
- demonstrable openness to participants outside the applicant's own sector or region;
- a multi-year international strategy explaining why the trade fair or similar activity is considered strategic by the applicant and how it fits within the multi-year strategy;
- the specific opportunities that arise and the objectives and expected results;
- follow-up actions by the applicant to further support the sector targeted by the trade fair and trade fair participation;
- the expected number of participants and the stand area of the collective entry;
- (trade fair) programme with an overview of planned activities;

- budget of the total eligible activities.

The applicant declares to be aware of and to act in accordance with the OECD Guidelines for Responsible Business Conduct. This includes applying due diligence in accordance with these guidelines to identify and address (potential) negative impacts on people and the environment in

their own activities and value chain, and to communicate transparently about this. It is also declared that no activities on the FMO exclusion list are undertaken.

6.2 Correction period

Within the application procedure, explicit attention is drawn to Article 7, third paragraph, of the Foreign Affairs Grant Decree. If an application is submitted incomplete, the Minister may request a supplement (making use of Article 4:5 of the General Administrative Law Act). The date and time of receipt of the application will then be the date and time on which the supplement is received. In that case, the risk that the application will be rejected due to exhaustion of available subsidy funds increases.

It also applies that the shorter the time remaining before the submission deadline when an incomplete application is submitted, the greater the risk that the Minister will not exercise the authority to request a supplement. This is due to the time required to check all applications for completeness and the time needed to request and submit a supplement. In that case, the application will not be supplemented and will be assessed as initially submitted. This may lead to rejection of the subsidy application.

In general, failure to submit complete applications or insufficient substantiation of (parts of) the application may result in rejection of the subsidy application on the grounds of not, or not sufficiently, meeting the requirements and criteria set for applications.

Brief references to other parts of the application, websites, or attachments are not sufficient unless it is expressly stated in the application documents that this (in whole or in part) is acceptable. If parts of the application documents are not completed, the lead applicant risks rejection of the application.

7. Assessment and allocation of available funds

The provisions of the General Administrative Law Act, the Foreign Affairs Grant Decree, and the Foreign Affairs Grant Regulation 2006 apply in full to the assessment of applications and the eventual awarding of subsidies under this programme. Applications are assessed in compliance with this legislation and in accordance with the criteria laid down in this subsidy programme.

Applications are assessed in order of receipt, with the date on which the application is deemed complete, or the receipt of the latest possible supplement (see paragraph 6.2), being decisive.

From the moment it becomes likely that available funds will be exhausted based on the assessment of earlier submitted applications, the processing of later applications will be suspended. If earlier applications are rejected, later applications will be processed in order of receipt.

To be eligible for subsidy, the application must meet the requirements set out above, in particular those in Sections 4 through 6.

In addition, applications under Category 3 are also assessed on quality on the basis of the following criteria. The application must achieve the specified minimum number of points for each individual criterion, with a minimum total of 65 points out of the 100 points that can be obtained.

Criteria – Maximum points

1. Multi-year strategy and objectives (minimum 45 points)

1.1 The extent to which the trade fair contributes to the multi-year international strategy for the (intended) group of participants – 10

1.2 The extent to which planned trade fair participation and activities contribute to an improved position of the sector as a whole in the target market(s) – 15

1.3 The extent to which specific opportunities arise at the trade fair and contribute to the

objectives – 15

1.4 The extent to which expected results are clearly specified and measurable – 10

1.5 The extent to which follow-up actions by the applicant to further support the sector are concretely defined – 15

2. Plan of approach (minimum 15 points)

2.1 The extent to which activities are elaborated with an overview of planned activities – 10

2.2 The expected number of participants and the effort made to recruit participants – 10

2.3 The extent to which cooperation is sought with (government) partners (e.g. post network) – 5

3. Experience and organisational capacity (minimum 5 points)

3.1 The extent to which the applicant has relevant experience organising activities related to the subsidy application – 10

To support the assessment, RVO may carry out verification activities to check the assumptions and statements made in the application. Verification may also collect information necessary for a proper assessment of the quality of the application.

RVO may also seek advice from external experts during the substantive assessment.

8. Grounds for rejection

In addition to the provisions of Article 4:35 of the General Administrative Law Act, an application for subsidy will be rejected if it does not comply with the provisions of this subsidy programme or if the available subsidy funds are insufficient.

9. Supervision

RVO will carry out random checks on the correct use of the subsidy, verifying legality and efficiency on the basis of the issued decisions.

10. Obligations

The subsidy decision will include, at a minimum, the obligation for the subsidy recipient to notify RVO if they cannot (fully) comply with the subsidy obligations and/or cannot (fully) carry out the activities for which the subsidy was awarded.

It is also a subsidy obligation that the subsidy recipient and the first significant supplier must not use child labour and/or forced labour, either for the project to which the application relates or for other activities. The subsidy recipient must report any facts or circumstances indicating child or forced labour at these organisations to RVO without delay.

Subsidy recipients must immediately report signals or circumstances indicating involvement in violations of the OECD Guidelines to RVO, including human rights violations or significant environmental damage. If a notification is (or will be) submitted against a subsidy recipient to the Dutch National Contact Point (NCP) for the OECD Guidelines, subsidy recipients must report this to RVO and cooperate with the NCP.

11. Administrative burden

To account for the administrative burden faced by applicants, an assessment was conducted using a standard cost model. This took into account submission of the subsidy application, the management phase, determination of the subsidy, and any objection and appeal procedures. The calculation shows that the total administrative burden amounts to 2.7% of the total available subsidy budget.