



Call for applications

The Netherlands' Fund for Regional Partnerships – MATRA

Introduction

In the framework of the Dutch support for Serbia's and Montenegro's EU-accession process, the Embassy of the Netherlands is happy to announce this call for applications under the MATRA program. MATRA, short for '**MA**atschappelijke **TR**ansformatie' (Dutch for 'societal transformation') supports activities in the areas of democracy and the rule of law.

Sound and balanced relationship between government and citizens is the core of a democratic society. In this respect, a resilient civil society and a modern institutional environment with sufficient capacity are a necessary condition. An independent legal system to which both government and citizens are accountable is also indispensable to make that relationship legitimate and stable. Free and independent media that report in the public interest have an important role to play in creating the societal atmosphere where such relationship can develop.

By supporting projects in the areas of democratization and the development of the rule of law, the Netherlands continues to invest in partners for the future in both Serbia and in Montenegro and further strengthen the bilateral relations between our respective countries.

The projects that we support through MATRA, in Serbia and in Montenegro, are complementary to the EU policy.

Thematic scope

- Rule of law, including fighting corruption and organized crime
- Democratic processes, including electoral conditions
- Enabling environment for free and independent media

MATRA projects work towards removing the obstacles that diminish the democratic processes and erode the trust between government and citizens.

In 2026, the Embassy seeks to support projects of the civil society that primarily focus on rule of law, including combating corruption and organized crime; improving democratic processes, including electoral conditions; and strengthening the pluriformity and independence of the media. These are areas in which progress is required, as set out in the European Commission's annual reports, to which the respective governments of Serbia and of Montenegro have committed through their EU accession process. Accordingly, the projects should contribute to advancing the implementation of these obligations.

Funding criteria

- Applications for project financing must be relevant to the overall aim of the program and should exclusively concern the MATRA themes mentioned above.

- Project financing is available for local civil society organizations in Serbia and in Montenegro. A project can be implemented in one of the two countries or in both.
- Organizations with ongoing MATRA projects that carry through to 2027 are not eligible for financial support under this call.
- The minimum amount of MATRA contribution per project is € 50.000; the maximum is € 150.000.
- The project duration should be maximum two years.

The application procedure

- The application procedure is divided into two stages.
- In the first stage, applicants are asked to send a video presentation of their project idea, not longer than 3 minutes. This pitch needs to make clear what the problem/issue is, why the project is necessary, what makes it unique and what is the expected impact of the project. Start the video by stating the organization's name, project title and a rough budget estimate. The presentation should be given in English language.
- In order to submit the video presentation you first need to register by sending an email to matra.belgrado@gmail.com . You will then receive further instructions for uploading the video. All videos should be uploaded by March 06, 2026 at 16:00 hrs.
- Video applications will be assessed in due course, with the timeline depending on the number of videos received. Selected organizations will be contacted and asked to submit a fully developed project proposal within three weeks.
- Following careful assessment of the submitted project proposals, the embassy will make a final decision on the projects to be supported. The assessment process is expected to be finalized before the end of April 2026, at which point organizations will be informed of the final decision.
- Since the MATRA budget is limited, project proposals will not necessarily be approved even if all of the requirements are met.

The full project proposals will need to make clear:

- What the link is with specific recommendations from the annual EU report.
- How the problem, objective and envisaged results are presented and linked to the overall aim of the MATRA program and the EU enlargement policy.
- The 'societal transformation' potential of the proposed project, i.e. how the project intervention and the results are meant to contribute to the required transformations, as i.a. described in the EU progress reports.
- Who makes the target group and why.
- Who are the main stakeholders; to what extent have stakeholders been involved in formulating the proposal and how are they going to be engaged in the implementation.
- Communication strategy: the project needs to encompass a clear and effective communication strategy and campaign. Outreach to – and engagement with - the broader public in order to contribute to the 'societal transformation' is a precondition for financing (professional communication about the project can be financed under the project).
- Coherence between proposed activities and budget.
- Extent of the implementing organization's and partner's own contribution (financial or in kind).
- Management capacity of the implementing organization.
- Risk assessment and mitigation plan.

Not eligible for funding under the MATRA program:

- Humanitarian aid
- Commercial activities
- Projects with a predominantly academic focus, i.e. feasibility studies, research, etc.
- Projects that exclusively or largely include the delivery of goods or materials
- Infrastructural or construction projects
- Bursaries
- Projects with predominant focus on training courses for civil servants or members of the diplomatic corps

QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact the Embassy:

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