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Dutch bilateral policy instruments in the European neighbourhood countries and actors involved

Annex to IOB Evaluation Report ‘The Dutch contribution to the European Neighbourhood Policy 2011-2017’ (September 2019)

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Introduction

This document discusses the most important bilateral policy instruments that the Netherlands implemented in the European neighbourhood countries. These instruments include e.g. political visits, assistance programmes, and contributions to peace missions. It is an annex to IOB's report *The Dutch contribution to the European Neighbourhood Policy 2011-2017* (IOB Evaluation No. 425) of September 2019; more specifically to Chapter 4 of that report.

The bilateral policy instruments of the Netherlands were not evaluated as part of IOB's policy review, but are described here in order to shed light on the Dutch activities that complemented the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). However, section 6 of this annex document synthesises the findings and recommendations of two IOB evaluations of the Dutch Matra programme.

The document starts with a short discussion of the Dutch policy actors involved in the ENP.

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1 Dutch policy actors involved in the ENP

A wide array of policy actors from the Netherlands were involved in the European neighbourhood, both via bilateral policy interventions and via (co-)shaping the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The following paragraphs provide an overview of these actors and their relevant roles.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (BZ) coordinated the Dutch contribution to the ENP. The external policy division of the European Integration department (DIE-EX) coordinated the drafting of instructions for the regional Council working groups¹ and the correspondence with the Dutch House of Representatives. This was coordinated with the Political Affairs Bureau (BPZ), which monitored consistency with the broader foreign policy of the Netherlands. Country-specific knowledge was provided by two regional departments: the Europe department (DEU) and the North Africa and Middle East department (DAM). These regional departments gave instructions to the diplomatic posts in the neighbourhood countries.

The cooperation between DIE-EX and DEU was facilitated by the fact that the six Eastern partnership countries were divided across 2 to 3 country desk officers. DEU also had a 'Special Representative for EU-Russia relations and the Eastern Partnership' (SVOP) who created links between the Dutch bilateral policy and the Dutch input for the ENP's Eastern dimension.

At DAM there were country officers for each of the sixteen neighbouring countries and the input for the ENP was not clearly organised; partly because of this, DAM's input was less proactive and mainly demand-driven. Various respondents argued that DAM could be

¹ The Council Working Party on Eastern Europe and Central Asia (COEST) and the Mashreq/Mahreb Working Party (MAMA).

² Libya was then covered from Tunisia; in 2013 a special envoy for Syria was formed for contacts with the Syrian opposition. This was placed at the Netherlands Consulate General in Istanbul (see:

more closely involved in ENP matters. A senior DAM official represented the Netherlands at the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), was the National Contact Point (NCP) for Dutch participation in EU Twinning and TAIEX (for all ENP countries), and coordinated the Matra South/Shiraka programme.

Thematic departments, such as the International Trade Policy and Economic Governance department (IMH), or the Multilateral Organisations and Human Rights Department (DMM) were involved in a passive way; they contributed to instructions for Council working groups when requested by DIE-EX.

With the gradual shift of the ENP from a more technical towards a more political type of policy, overall responsibility within BZ was transferred from the Director-General for European Cooperation to the Director-General for Political Affairs in 2012 and 2013. Owing to short lines of (often informal) communication, cooperation within BZ was generally considered to be good.

Diplomatic posts

Obviously, the embassies in the ENP countries played an important role in shaping the bilateral policy of the Netherlands vis-à-vis the neighbouring countries and in representing the Netherlands in local EU coordination meetings. The Netherlands had embassies in most Southern ENP countries. Exceptions were the Palestinian Territories where there was a 'Representation Office' to the Palestinian Authority, and Libya and Syria, where the embassies were evacuated in 2011 and 2012 respectively due to the worsening security situation.² In the six Eastern neighbours the Netherlands had three embassies: Baku,³ Kyiv and Tbilisi. The latter was also accredited for Armenia. Belarus was served from the embassy in Warsaw; Moldova was served initially from Kyiv and as of 2014 from Bucharest.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2014) 'Nederlandse ambassade Damascus dicht', Nieuwsbericht *Rijksoverheid.nl*, 14 March.

³ Only formally became an embassy in 2013.

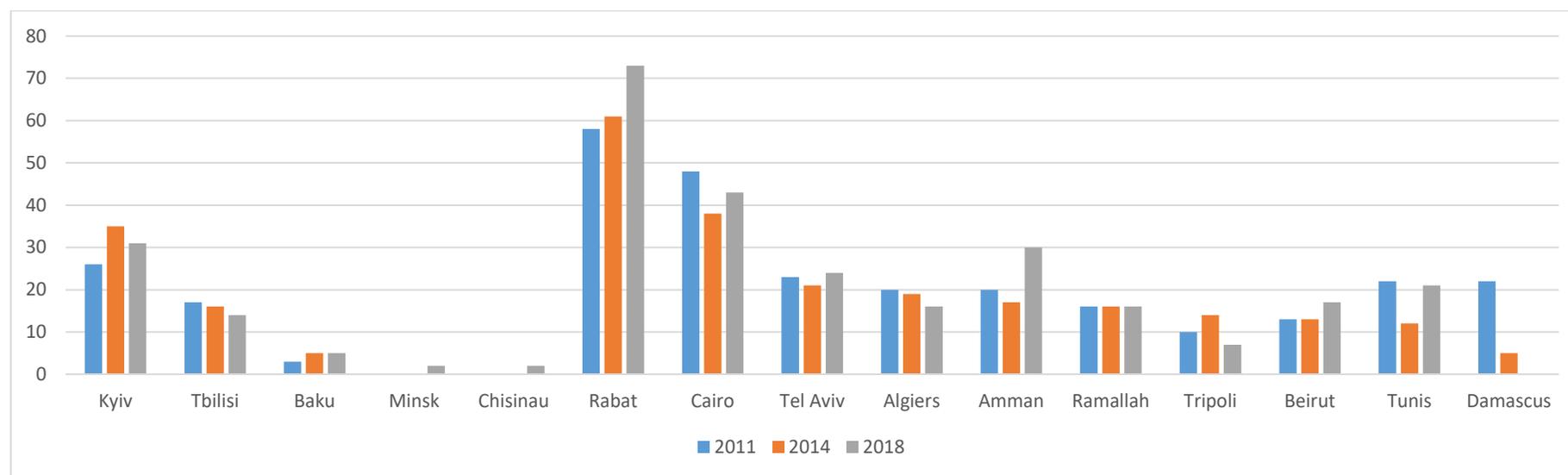
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As a result of a motion adopted by the Dutch House of Representatives in 2014, the embassy network in ‘the ring of instability’ was strengthened.⁴ Embassies in Algiers, Amman, Beirut, Rabat, Ramallah/Tel Aviv and the Syria team in Istanbul were granted extra staff. With regards to the Eastern countries, *Chargés d'affaires a.i.* were posted in Minsk and Chisinau, among other things, to enable the Netherlands to be more involved in the local coordination with other EU actors (see figure 1).

The ENP served more clearly as a guiding policy framework for the embassies in the East than for those in the South. In addition, several interviewees stated that embassies in the South could be more involved in the ENP.

The Permanent Representation of the Netherlands to the EU (PermRep) managed relations with the EU and coordinated ENP matters in Brussels. Staff of the PermRep represented the Netherlands in relevant Council working groups, in the Political and Security Committee (PSC), and in the Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER). In doing so, the PermRep worked under BZ instructions.

Figure 1 Development of staff numbers (seconded and local) per embassy



Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tableau system

⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2015), Letter by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 11 September 2015, KST 32734 no. 29.

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Other ministries

Various line ministries were indirectly involved in the ENP, e.g. the ministries of Security and Justice, of Economic Affairs, of Finance, and of Education, Culture and Science. The Ministry of General Affairs (the prime minister's cabinet) was mainly involved in preparing summits and dossiers with a national political dimension, such as flight MH17 and the referendum on the Association Agreement with Ukraine. The cooperation between BZ and other ministries was informal and good. Logically, line ministries saw their relations from a sectoral perspective, while BZ saw them from a broader political perspective. This sometimes led line departments to be a bit more hesitant to engage with the neighbours than BZ would have liked, due to factors such as different priorities or lack of capacity. This has, however, not influenced the consistency of the Dutch contribution to the ENP, since there were no real differences in policy perspective and BZ was clearly in the lead.

2 Bilateral policy framework

The implementation of bilateral policy instruments by the Netherlands was not guided by a country or regionally-focused policy framework. Insofar as bilateral policy was codified, this was done primarily in the annual plans of the embassies' and, for some countries (Egypt, Morocco and the Palestinian territories), in multi-annual plans.

It was not until 2016 that regional policy frameworks were introduced via a strategy paper on the Arab region, drafted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' North Africa and Middle East Department (DAM), and a policy memorandum on the EaP countries drafted by the Europe Department (DEU). These were bottom-up initiatives by the regional departments.

Eastern neighbours

In August 2016, DEU produced a memorandum outlining a strategy for the Dutch bilateral policy in the six Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries. Apart from a country-specific component, attention was devoted to the region as a whole. The strategy was to serve as a framework for a long-term vision on the bilateral political engagement and support to the region, and as such to provide input for policy making in The Hague as well as a potential guideline for the embassies.

Basic assumption was that stable, more prosperous eastern neighbours were (and would remain) a key interest for the Netherlands. It was therefore deemed important to remain involved in the EaP countries and to support them in reforms leading to democratic states where the rule of law was respected. In so doing, the Dutch bilateral policy was to be in line with the EU's efforts in the region – specifically the revised European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Additionally, the Netherlands would seek to link up to the broader context of the EU Global Strategy. Joint action via bilateral, EU and international channels would thus contribute to a greater resilience of the partner countries. Within this broader framework the Netherlands chose four specific niches for cooperation based on expertise and Dutch national interest:

- 1) security as a precondition for development;
- 2) the rule of law as a basis for a stable democracy and functioning economy;
- 3) economic development, to enable necessary reforms and to counter economic setbacks; and
- 4) smart networks to create broad support.

Southern neighbours

In 2016, DAM drafted a strategy note on the Arab region. Confronted with the complex challenges in the southern ENP countries it analysed the drivers and structural causes of the region's instability. Though this was a bottom-up initiative from DAM, the Directorate-general for International Cooperation (DGIS) was also involved in the drafting process. The main aim was to provide policy makers with input to formulate better informed policy decisions. The document outlined the most important trends in the region, ranging from population growth to improved access to internet, as well as various possible future 'game changers'. Key challenges were the interlinkages between the political and economic systems, the polarisation among religious and ethnic groups, poor education levels and the negative effects from climate change. Consequently, it identified various scenarios relating to the future of the region.

Based on this analysis the strategy presented many policy recommendations. The central point was the importance of inclusivity, diversity and human rights policies. The 'citizen's perspective' should be taken as a starting point instead of the human rights perspective, which was often seen as Eurocentric by local authorities. It was argued that by understanding the root causes and the regional dynamics, it would be possible for the Netherlands to contribute constructively to tackling some of the problems, perhaps focusing on certain niches such as developing the rule of law or the private sector, or – in countries with the most potential – water, the agriculture sector, or economic sustainability. Lastly, the note argued that for the Netherlands, political leverage could be found in the EU and it should therefore invest in the EU's foreign policy, by providing staff and policy input.

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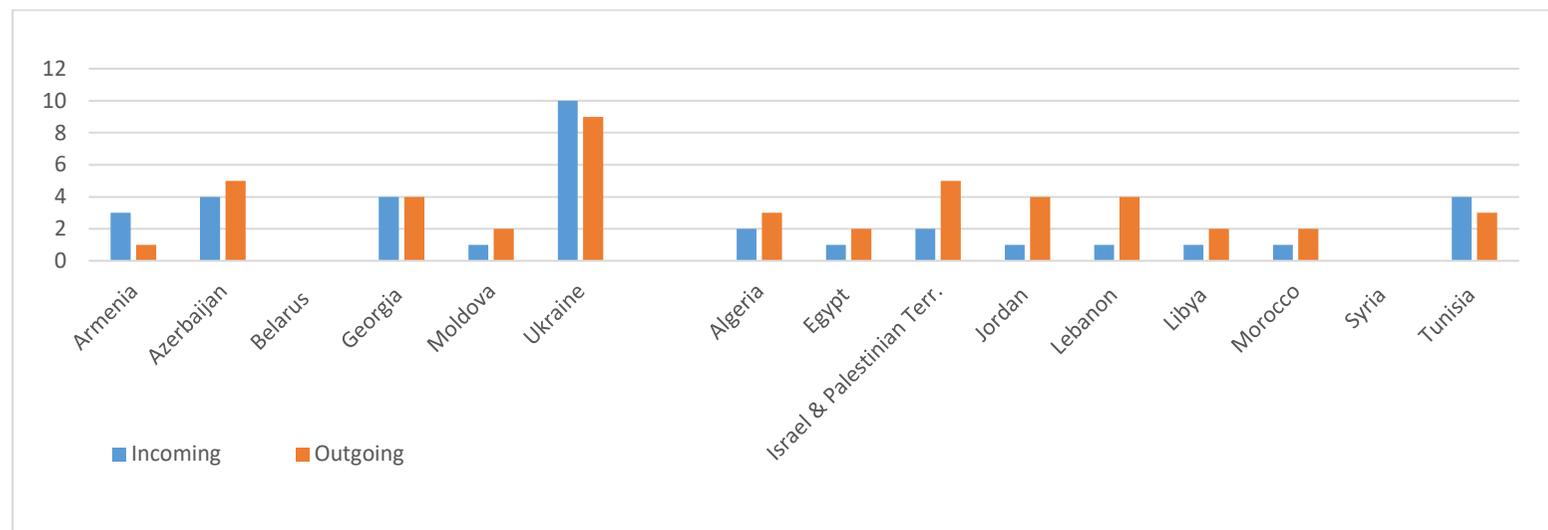
3 Political visits

During the period under review several political visits took place between the Netherlands and the ENP countries, undertaken by heads of state or government and (deputy) ministers (see figure 2). The visits do not seem to follow a clear pattern. Especially in the South, visits were rather evenly spread. Nonetheless, visits to and from crisis-affected countries (Ukraine, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine Territories and Israel) peaked in the 2013-2015 period.

Most visits took place in the period 2013-2015 and were carried out by either the Minister of Foreign Affairs or the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation. The lack of interaction with Syria and Libya is obviously explained by their fragile situations. The low number of visits to and from Morocco is harder to explain, although it has to be said that there was more interaction with the Moroccan authorities on other levels.

The nature of the ingoing and outgoing visits to and from the eastern ENP countries differed. The high number of visits to and from Ukraine can be largely attributed to the referendum on the Ukraine association agreement and the MH17 catastrophe. In the case of Azerbaijan, the visits mainly aimed at strengthening the economic ties between both countries, whilst the focus of the meetings with Georgia was on Justice and Defence issues, and with Moldova on general affairs and foreign affairs.

Figure 2 Number of political visits per ENP country



Sources: BZ World Map; websites of The Hague based embassies and other open sources.

NB. The presented information is likely to be incomplete, as there is no complete database of incoming and outgoing visits.

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4 Bilateral relations in the fields of trade, agriculture and IMF/World Bank

Trade and investment protection and promotion

Apart from promoting free trade within the framework of the ENP, the Netherlands has concluded Bilateral Investment Protection and Promotion Agreements (BIPAs)⁵ with many third countries, including neighbourhood countries. This concerned all EaP countries, with the exception of Azerbaijan, with which negotiations were ongoing. In the South, BIPAs have been concluded with Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco⁶ and Tunisia.⁷ In addition, the Netherlands supported WTO accession, based on conditions. Trade and investment relations were also promoted by private sector development programmes as described in section 5. The actual trade and investment relations, of course, depended on the interests of the business community.

Agricultural working groups

The Ministry of Economic Affairs held (bi-)annual meetings of so-called agricultural councils or working parties with some of the larger neighbourhood countries, such as Ukraine and Egypt, but also with the Russian Federation and Turkey. These are meant to facilitate bilateral dialogue, involving ministers or directors-general, discussing various relevant and/or current issues.⁸ During the period under review, several working plans and Memoranda of Understanding were signed to provide a framework for the bilateral cooperation.

⁵ These agreements provide certain guarantees to Dutch investors in third countries and investors of third countries in the Netherlands. There are also articles on free capital movements in connection with the investment. As investors run fewer risks, BIPAs are a means of encouraging investment and thus economic cooperation. The conclusion of BIPAs requires approval of the European Commission.

IMF/WB Electoral Board members

Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine are members of the Netherlands/Belgian-led IMF/World Bank Group electoral board. This relationship provides stronger ties between the Finance ministries (e.g. sharing information). In addition, the Dutch Ministry of Finance provides these countries with technical assistance on public finance management issues, financed under the 'Kiesgroep Fund'. Apart from this, the link adds to the bilateral relationship in a symbolic way and provides Dutch embassies with privileged access to ministers.

⁶ The agreement with Morocco is a so-called Economic Cooperation Agreement (ECA). With Egypt, the Netherlands has a BIPA as well as an ECA.

⁷ <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/internationaal-ondernemen/documenten/rapporten/2010/02/22/ibo-landenlijst>.

⁸ See for instance: <http://rei.mfa.gov.ua/en/news/council-news/56620-zasidannya-ukrajinsyko-niderlandskykoji-robochoji-grupi-z-pitany-silykykogo-gospodarstva>.

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5 Dutch bilateral assistance

The Netherlands implemented a large number of assistance programmes in the neighbourhood countries. Most of them had a thematic focus and were rolled out globally, applying different lists of eligible countries. The only programme that was specifically directed towards the EU's neighbours (including the pre-accession countries) was the Matra ('societal transformation') programme, which is discussed in section 6. In the period 2011–2016 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' assistance to the neighbourhood countries amounted to EUR 785 million, covering both ODA (official development assistance) and non-ODA. Please note that Dutch assistance provided through multilateral (e.g. World Bank, UN) and private channels is not included in this overview.

In November 2011, the state secretary for Foreign Affairs decided to phase out bilateral development cooperation with Georgia, Moldova and Egypt, whilst continuing it with the Palestinian Territories.⁹ With regard to the Palestinian Territories, the Netherlands aimed to contribute to a two-state solution in the framework of the Middle East peace process, mainly by supporting the development of a functioning Palestinian state and a viable Palestinian economy.¹⁰

As of 2011, support to Syria, Jordan and Lebanon rapidly increased, with a peak in 2014–2015, mainly in the form of emergency support and shelter for Syrian refugees.¹¹ This made these countries, together with the Palestinian Territories, the largest recipients of Dutch support in the neighbourhood region. This left 21% of Dutch expenditure for the other ENP countries, of which 12% was allocated to the six other Southern neighbours, and 9% to the six Eastern partners (see figure 3).

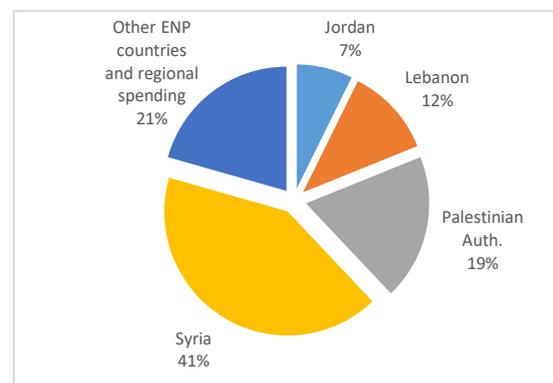


Figure 3 Distribution of spending

Spending in the Southern neighbours

Annual spending for the Southern neighbours (see figure 4, next page) illustrates the sharp increase in funding for Syria, as well as for Jordan and Lebanon, whereas funds for the Palestinian Territories declined in 2011 and 2012 and then stabilised. Funding for Egypt declined sharply from 2011 to 2014. What is also striking is that funds for Tunisia – a success story of the 'Arab Spring' – remained relatively low. Clearly, bilateral spending was not per se a reflection of the trends in the ENP.

⁹ State secretary for Foreign Affairs (2011) *Beleid ten aanzien van ontwikkelingsamenwerking*, KST 32605, no. 60, 14 November.

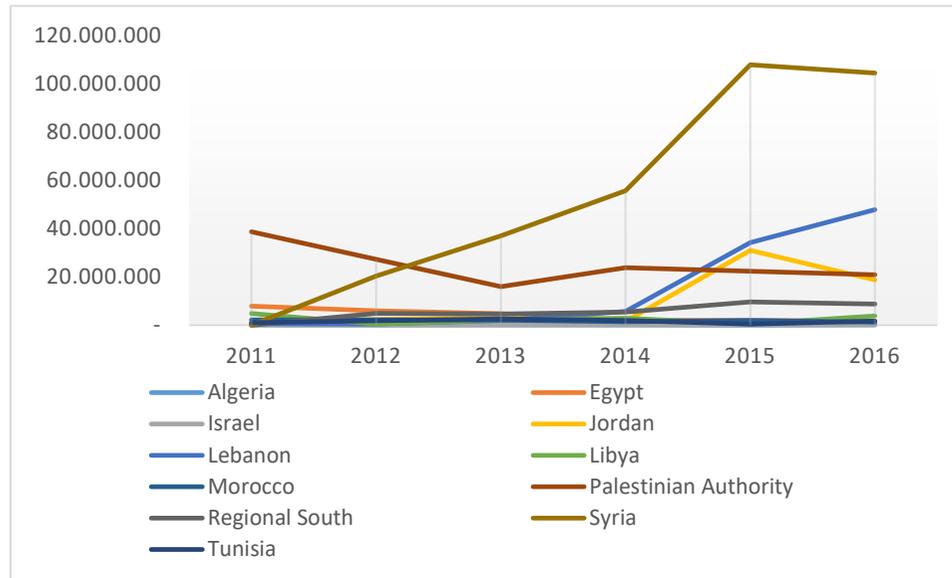
¹⁰ In the period 2008–2014 the Netherlands spent around EUR 415 million in the Palestinian territories through bilateral (49%), multilateral (40%) and private (11%) channels, IOB evaluated the Dutch development assistance in the Palestinian territories, see: IOB (2016) *How to Break the*

Vicious Cycle; Evaluation of Dutch Development Cooperation in the Palestinian Territories 2008–2014.

¹¹ IOB evaluated the Dutch humanitarian assistance related to the Syria crisis, see: IOB (2015) *Policy review of Dutch humanitarian assistance 2009–2014*; and Giesen & Leenders (2015) *Review of the Netherlands' contribution to the humanitarian response to the Syria Crisis: 2011–2014.*

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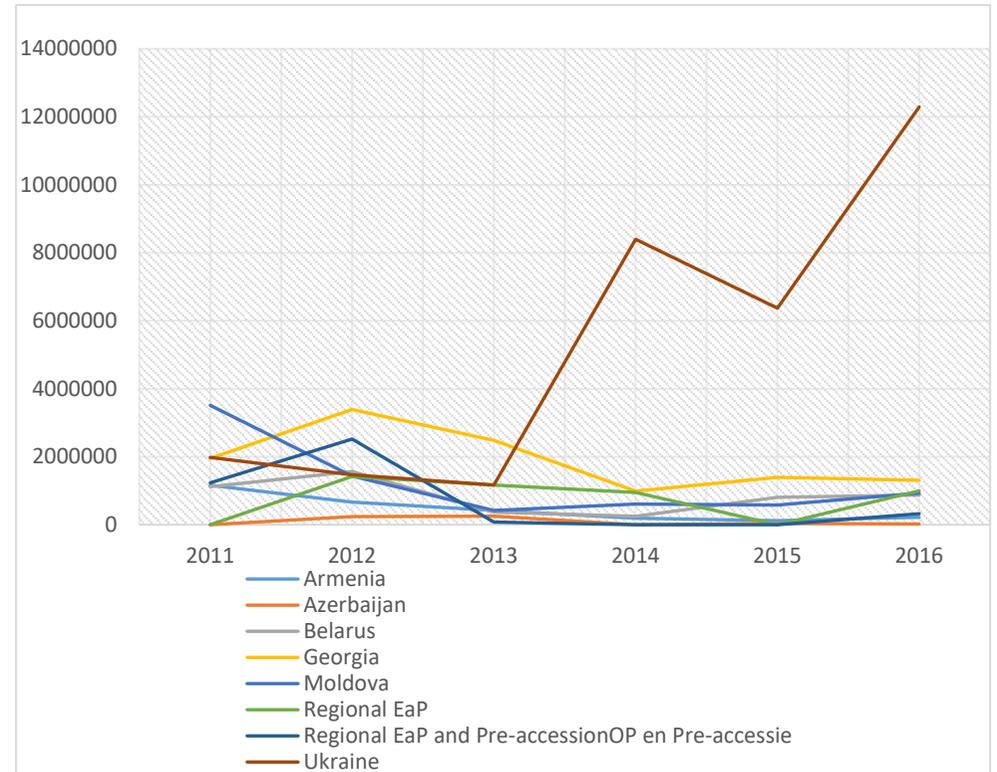
Figure 4 Spending per Southern neighbour per year



Spending in the Eastern neighbours

Among the Eastern neighbours, Ukraine stood out as the largest recipient of Dutch funds, receiving almost half of the expenditures. However, relative to its size (with a population of just 3.7 million) Georgia stands out as a largest recipient. As illustrated by figure 5, Ukraine only became the largest recipient in 2014, after Russia’s illegal annexation of Crimea and the start of the separatist conflict in the east. Yet more striking is the decrease in funding for Moldova from 2011 onwards and for Georgia from 2012 onwards, due to the phasing out of the development cooperation relationships. Expenditures for Belarus and regional funds fluctuate, while those for Armenia gradually fade, and those for Azerbaijan remained at a low level.

Figure 5 Spending per Eastern neighbours per year



As stated, most of the larger and smaller funds flow to emergency response aid, refugee shelter and stability. These themes are most important in the Southern neighbours due to developmental aid to the Palestinian Authority and aid in the Syria crisis, but also explain the increase in spending in Ukraine. When looking at other programmes (leaving aside emergency response aid, refugees, and development assistance) it shows that programmes focused on improving Rule of Law, CSOs and/or civil society are the largest, such as Matra programme, the Human Rights Fund.¹²

Private Sector Development programmes

A large number of programmes aimed at private sector development (PSD), managed by the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO), were implemented in the ENP countries. Table 1 contains an overview and a short description of each programme. The table shows that their implementation in the region was rather fragmented and does not seem to follow a clear pattern. Most programmes were implemented in Egypt (8), Moldova (6) and the Palestinian Territories (6). Strikingly, only one programme was implemented in Tunisia and none in Azerbaijan or Syria. IOB has evaluated the Dutch PSD policy in 2014¹³ and the Centre for the Promotion of Exports from Development Countries (CBI) in 2015,¹⁴ both covering the period 2005-2012.

¹² The Human Rights fund aims to enhance the capacity of local NGOs and human rights defenders. About two-thirds is spent via the embassies, the other third via regional programmes. IOB evaluated the Human Rights Fund and the wider Dutch human rights policy: IOB (2014) *Navigating a sea of interests, Policy evaluation of Dutch foreign human rights policy (2008-2013)*.

Table 1 Private Sector Development programmes managed by the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) implemented in ENP countries

Programme description	Implemented in
<p><i>Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries (CBI)</i></p> <p>The Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries (CBI) aims to boost the competitiveness of exporters in developing countries so that they have easier access to the European market. CBI supports producers and exporters in getting a foothold on the market in Europe, Business Support Organisations in improving their capabilities, as well as acting as a Matchmaker between suppliers and buyers.</p>	Armenia, Egypt, Georgia, Moldova
<p><i>Demonstration projects, Feasibility studies and Knowledge acquisition projects</i></p> <p>Provides support to Dutch companies which are willing to internationalise and to position themselves in new markets.</p>	Algeria, Egypt, Moldova, Morocco, Palestinian Territories
<p><i>Develop2Build</i></p> <p>Develop2Build offers direct support to government authorities in low-income and Dutch partner countries in transforming promising ideas for public infrastructure into viable high-impact projects. This support is provided in the form of grants for studies that need to be completed before an infrastructural project can be tendered. Additionally, technical support and capacity building may be offered in the tendering phase, where necessary.</p>	Jordan
<p><i>Dutch Surge Support (DSS water)</i></p> <p>The Dutch Surge Support (DSS water) responds to needs during water-related disasters around the globe by deploying excellent experts from the Dutch water sector. With this facility, the Netherlands aims to contribute to a better international response to water- and sanitation-</p>	Lebanon, Palestinian Territories

¹³ IOB (2014) *In search of focus and effectiveness, effectiveness policy review of Dutch support for private sector development 2005-2012 (extensive summary)*.

¹⁴ IOB (2015) *Aided Trade – An evaluation of the Centre for the Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries (2005-2012)*.

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related disasters, and assist in building up knowledge in dealing with these emergencies.	
<i>Dutch Risk Reduction Team (DRR)</i>	Lebanon
The Dutch Risk Reduction Team (DRR), with a swift response team of experts, advises governments on how to resolve urgent water issues related to flood risks, water pollution and water supply, to prevent disasters or to rebuild after water-related disasters. DRR advises governments on how to resolve urgent water issues related to flood risks, water pollution and water supply, to prevent disasters or to rebuild after water-related disasters.	
<i>Energy Transition Facility (ETF)</i>	Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon
The Energy Transition Facility (ETF) supports countries in the MENA region with their transition to a more sustainable energy supply. Projects are focused on collaboration at policy level. National governments can request the support of the ETF to acquire Dutch expertise, technical assistance or investments on energy transition.	
<i>Facility for Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Food Security (FDOV)</i>	Egypt, Moldova
The Facility for Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Food Security (FDOV) encourages public-private partnerships in the field of food security and private sector development in developing countries. The overall objective is to improve the food security situation and to strengthen the private sector in developing countries, in the best interests of the overall population.	
<i>Facility for Infrastructure Development (ORIO)</i>	Georgia, Palestinian Territories
The Facility for Infrastructure Development (ORIO) encourages public-infrastructure development in upcoming markets and developing countries. ORIO contributes to the development, construction, expansion, operation and maintenance of public infrastructure in these countries. In this way, ORIO aims to contribute to human development and private-sector development. It is untied aid.	

<i>Partners for Water</i>	Egypt, Ukraine
The Partners for Water 2016-2021 programme and its predecessor, Partners for Water 3, is implemented by the Netherlands Enterprise Agency in cooperation with the Netherlands Water Partnership. Partners for Water 2016-2021 contributes towards the International Water Ambition of the Netherlands government.	
<i>Product Development Partnerships III Fund (PDP III)</i>	Belarus, Georgia, Moldova
The Product Development Partnerships III Fund (PDP III) contributes to innovation in the areas of healthcare products and technologies specifically aimed at diseases and conditions related to poverty and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).	
<i>PSD Apps</i>	Armenia, Egypt, Georgia, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, Palestinian Territories
The various Apps in the toolbox can assist embassies in their efforts to create a business-enabling environment, remove trade barriers, and to match local and Dutch business partners, in order to shape the local implementation of the Dutch agenda for Aid, Trade and Investment.	
<i>Private Sector Investment Programme (PSI)</i>	Armenia, Egypt, Georgia, Jordan, Moldova, Morocco, Palestinian Territories, Tunisia
The Private Sector Investment Programme (PSI) was available for Dutch and foreign companies entering into long-term cooperation with local partners in developing countries.	
<i>Sustainable Water Fund (FDW)</i>	Egypt, Palestinian Territories
The Sustainable Water Fund (FDW) is a public-private partnership in the field of water and sanitation, which aims to contribute to water safety and water reliability in developing countries. A long-term contribution is made towards sustainable economic growth, self-reliance and the fight against poverty.	

Source: Summary descriptions derived from website of the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO): <https://aiddata.rvo.nl/programmes>

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Dutch participation in EU Twinning and TAIEX

Apart from implementing Dutch programmes, Dutch governmental agencies provided technical assistance by participating in EU Twinning and TAIEX (Technical Assistance and Information Exchange) projects. Twinning and TAIEX are EU instruments for institutional cooperation between member states and partner country governments. TAIEX consists of short-running activities (seminars, workshops), whilst Twinning is longer term; a member state civil servant is typically placed in a partner country's administration for about a year to one-and-a-half years. Both instruments are available for both ENP countries and pre-accession countries.

Based on RVO data, the following can be concluded on Dutch participation in EU Twinning: Between 2011-2017 Dutch organisations were involved in 20 Twinning projects in the ENP countries; 12 in southern neighbours, 8 in eastern ENP countries.¹⁵ Initial interest was however higher for the Eastern partners, as 23% of Dutch tenders concerned EaP countries and 17% Southern countries (the rest was pre-accession). In other words, tenders in the South were more successful.

Most implemented projects dealt with issues such as agriculture, public finance and environmental policies. Examples of implementing partners were: Statistics Netherlands (CBS), the Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (NVWA), and The Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM).

Between 2011 and 2017 the number of Dutch tenders gradually declined. In 2011 Dutch organisations registered for 21% of all fiches¹⁶; in 2017 this was only 10%. Additionally, the number of projects where the Netherlands enrolled as a senior partner saw a clear decline, from 65% of all projects where Dutch organisations participated in 2012, to 30% in 2016. The NCP attributed the decline in interest mostly to the decreasing capacity of Dutch organisations to make staff available for international projects. Additionally, the number of fiches published fell over time, which further reduced the chances of a match. The administrative burden of being a senior partner was mentioned as a reason not to tender as senior partner.

¹⁵ Most of them were implemented in Egypt (4), followed by Tunisia (3), Azerbaijan, Georgia, Israel, Moldova, Jordan (2) and Armenia, Ukraine and Morocco (1).

¹⁶ Fiches were distributed for pre-accession countries, the southern region and the Eastern region. On average, about 98.4 fiches were published yearly, the regional division between them remained roughly the same (55% for pre-accession, 25% for MENA, and 20% for EaP).

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6 The Matra programme evaluated¹⁷

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs launched the Matra¹⁸ programme in 1993 to support societal transformation in former communist countries by contributing to the development of democratic, pluriform states governed by the rule of law, where there is space for dialogue between the government and the people. The programme focused on capacity building and institutional strengthening of civil society organisations and government institutions, and on strengthening bilateral relations. Since 1993 the programme has broadened significantly in geographical scope to eventually include the countries of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP).

During the period under review, the Matra programme was implemented in three categories of countries, each category with its own policy framework and sub-programmes: 1) the pre-accession countries (Turkey and the Western Balkans); 2) the Eastern partnership countries, and 3) as of 2012, the countries in the Arab region ('Matra South'). Since the policy review focuses on the ENP, this report only deals with the programme as implemented in the EaP countries and the Arab region.¹⁹ The analysis in this section is based on the evaluations of Matra in the Eastern Partnership countries and of the Dutch contribution to transition in the Arab region, which included Matra South.²⁰

¹⁷ Please note that 'Matra South' (for the Arab region) was renamed 'Shiraka' in 2016. In the same year, Matra (for the European region) and Shiraka together were relabelled as the Netherlands' Fund for Regional Partnerships (NFRP). In this section, the term Matra is largely maintained as it was applicable for most of the 2011-2016 period.

¹⁸ Matra is an acronym for 'Maatschappelijke Transformatie' – societal transformation.

6.1 Background

Matra in the Eastern Partnership countries

During the period 2008-2014, all EaP countries were eligible for Matra support.²¹ The Matra programme was implemented there by means of four components or sub-programmes:

- The Matra Projects Programme (MPP), focused on building partnerships between organisations in the Netherlands and in the Matra countries. Projects had a maximum budget of EUR 700,000 and a maximum duration of 36 months. This sub-programme was phased out as of 2010, with the last projects being completed in 2013.
- Small projects delegated to Dutch embassies, which had a high degree of freedom in allocating funds. These relatively small-scale projects implemented by local CSOs were funded with a view to strengthening civil society and local governance. In 2010 the maximum project budget was raised from EUR 25,000 to EUR 300,000 and the maximum project duration from one to two years.
- The Matra Political Parties Programme (MPPP) focused on twinning between Dutch political parties and their sister parties in the EaP countries. Through this programme, Dutch parties could build their networks and help sister parties strengthen their leadership and networks.



¹⁹ Matra South was not confined to the Southern neighbours, as it also applied to e.g. Iraq and Yemen.

²⁰ IOB (2015) *Evaluation of the Matra programme in the Eastern Partnership countries 2008-2014*; IOB (2015) *The only constant is change; Evaluation of the Dutch contribution to transition in the Arab region (2009-2013)*.

²¹ Azerbaijan became eligible only in 2010.

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- Since 2012 the Netherlands contributed financially to the Eastern Partnership Programme of the International Visegrad Fund (V4EaP), which was established in 2000 by the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. The Fund used the transformation experience of four of the Visegrad countries to carry out small-scale projects promoting democracy and strengthening civil society in the EaP countries.

Between 2008-2014 EUR 22.7 million was disbursed via the MPP, EUR 13.1 million via delegated projects, EUR 5 million via the MPPP and EUR 3.5 million via the V4EaP. In 2011 the Minister of Foreign Affairs decided to phase out Matra in the EaP countries out as of 2012, but it was continued due to yearly amendments to the Ministry's budget by the House of Representatives. In 2015 the decision was overturned.

Matra South

In order to enable a rapid response to the Arab uprisings in 2011, EUR 7.7 million was made available by reprioritising funds of existing central programmes towards the Arab region.²² Two policy instruments were devised: the Matra South programme and the Private Sector Investment programme (PSI). These instruments were to address both the political and socioeconomic causes of the unrest in the Arab region and support the envisaged transition.²³

The Ministry would focus support under 'Matra South' on Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia as transition countries, due to their geographical proximity and Dutch interests. The Ministry asserted that investments in transition (and more particularly democratisation, the rule of law and human rights, and economic growth) would contribute to a democratic and stable Arab region. This would be in the Netherlands' best interests in the fields of security, trade, energy supplies and combating illegal migration. Lastly, it was assessed that these countries had the best prospects of a successful transition – including their ability to serve as an example to the region as a whole.²⁴ The

²² Existing centrally managed programmes included the fund for human rights, the stability fund, the fund for women's rights and the fund for development, pluralism and participation.

²³ Algeria, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria and Tunisia had already been eligible for Matra from 2004 to 2009.

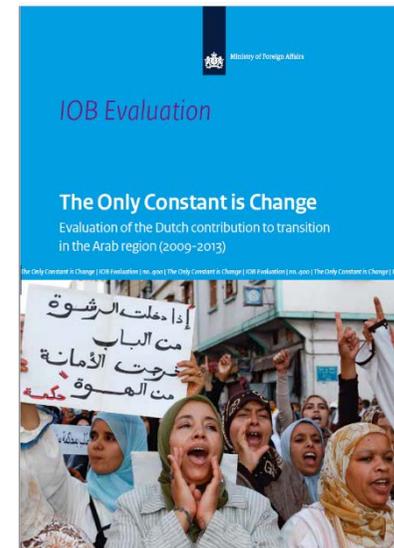
²⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2014) *Explanatory Memorandum*, p. 17.

Dutch budget for assistance to all these countries was increased after 2011 – except for Egypt as a result of the phasing out of development aid.²⁵

The Matra South programme was intended to support both state institutions and civil society. It aimed to contribute to the achievement of policy objectives of economic growth, rule of law and democratisation) through the following six programme components:

1. Support to local civil society initiatives (CSI);
2. Government-to-Government cooperation (G2G);
3. Capacity building of political parties (PP);
4. Training civil servants;
5. Training young diplomats; and
6. The MENA scholarship programme.

The PSI programme was established in 2009 and managed by the Sustainable Economic Development Department (DDE) to promote sustainable economic growth. It aimed to encourage entrepreneurs to establish investment projects in third countries in a joint venture company with local entrepreneurs. The idea was to encourage investment projects that would not otherwise have been carried out because of the high product and/or market risks. Yemen, the Palestinian Territories, Egypt, and Morocco, were already PSI-eligible; Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Syria and Tunisia were added to the list, and Libya was



²⁵ Following a stronger focus of Dutch development aid on least developed and low-income countries, whereas Egypt qualified as a lower middle-income country on the DAC list of ODA recipients: see www.oecd.org/dac/stats.

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added in 2014.²⁶ As of July 2014, PSI was closed to new applications because of the development of a new instrument called the Dutch Good Growth Fund (DGGF).

From 2012 until 2016, the term ‘Matra South programme’ was used to refer to both PSI and Matra and all programme components providing support to the process of transition in the Arab region. In the period 2012-2015 EUR 45 million was allocated to this new Matra South programme.

6.2 Findings on relevance

The Matra EaP evaluation concluded that all sub-programmes and the projects implemented addressed key challenges faced by the EaP countries in the areas of democratisation, strengthening the rule of law, and capacity development for civil society and local government. Furthermore, the high degree of freedom given to the embassies to adapt the programme to local circumstances was key to making the programme work in the very different contexts of the EaP countries.²⁷ The V4EaP programme was, more than the other Matra components, geared towards strengthening the European orientation of the EaP countries. All sub-programmes had a demand-driven setup and local ownership of the projects was high. Matra’s added value within the broader donor landscape was its easy accessibility and flexibility in adapting quickly to the changing local context. It did not show a clear overlap or synergy with other programmes. The Matra programme’s small scale, relatively broad eligibility criteria and lenient reporting requirements enabled the programme to reach small CSOs that were often unable to attract funds from larger, more traditional donors. There was some potential overlap between delegated projects and the Human Rights Fund. In practice, embassies took a pragmatic approach and tried to refer project proposals to the correct programme as best they could.

The Matra South evaluation concluded that the bilateral programme had offered timely and flexible funding in support of a range of projects by key actors in countries in transition, including youth, women, journalists and trade unions. However, the bilateral programme had provided little support to governments (G2G) in transition and had mainly supported non-state actors. The budget committed to promoting democratisation and rule of law in transition countries was small compared to the budgets for other

objectives. In addition, it was not sufficiently targeted to the priority countries which accounted for only EUR 14 million in projects (out of a total of about EUR 43 million). The lion’s share of the budget had been allocated to regional projects or to non-priority countries in support of the policy objective of economic growth. More than half of the bilateral resources had been used by means of the Private Sector Investment programme (PSI) in support of economic growth and employment.

Both evaluations looked into the Matra Political Parties Programme (MPPP). The Matra EaP evaluation concluded that whilst most activities undertaken within the framework of the MPPP (e.g. training on campaigning and negotiation skills, internal party organisation, etc.) addressed important challenges facing the sister parties, the key challenge of building a democratic political system/culture was not addressed directly. The Matra South evaluation concluded that the relevance of the MPPP was low. It found the emphasis on political ideology to be problematic and criticised the lack of local demand for the activities. Conversely, The Matra EaP evaluation found that trainings on political ideology were highly valued and were considered of added-value in the context of broader, international support to political parties.

6.3 Findings on effectiveness

Both IOB evaluations had similar findings on effectiveness, but different assessments. Most projects were found to have achieved sufficient results to an extent. However, it was not possible to establish whether the projects combined had an impact on the programme’s objectives of democratisation, establishing the rule of law and – in the case of Matra South – economic growth. The projects were too small, and because of fragmentation and the lack of a clear results framework, it was not possible to establish results beyond project level, e.g. at sectoral or country level.

The Matra South evaluation considered the fragmentation of support to be a reason for concern, both in terms of the programme as a whole (including its management), and within individual programme components. This made it harder to achieve significant results.

²⁶ ‘The Current Situation in North Africa and the Middle East, and More on the Netherlands’ Activities in the Arab Region’, Parliamentary Papers, House of Representatives 2011, 32 623-40.

²⁷ IOB (2015) *Evaluation of the Matra programme in the Eastern partnership countries*, p. 15.

The Matra EaP evaluation, however, concluded that the inability to detect higher-level results was not necessarily a weakness of the programme, but a logical consequence of its relatively small budget, the modest size of individual projects and the programme's demand-driven structure, which resulted in support for a wide variety of themes and types of activities. Moreover, the programme was implemented in a highly complex environment in which many other factors played a role.

Most projects in the EaP countries attained their goals in terms of planned outputs and short-term outcomes within the direct target group and could therefore be considered effective. Outcomes included increased capacity of supported CSOs; administrative reform and increased transparency of government agencies; increased journalism skills; and increased civic activism among target groups like young people or local communities. As such, these projects contributed positively, at least to some extent, to greater capacity of civil society, independence of the media, capacity of political parties, political monitoring by parliaments, and the functioning of the judiciary or government agencies. However, the extent to which the results of individual projects were sustained and had an impact beyond the immediate scope of the project depended largely on contextual factors or sustained donor support. By contrast, the effectiveness of MPPP activities could not be established, as these were very small in size and the summary reporting by political parties did not reveal sufficient information on the reach, contents and results of the activities.

Both evaluations concluded that delegated Matra support had enabled embassies to maintain and enlarge their networks at country level. In the EaP it contributed to expanding and deepening the embassies' relations with local civil society. Here, the embassies succeeded in generating good exposure with few resources. The way in which they implemented the programme, their open attitude and support for CSOs, and embassy staff's frequent attendance at project events were widely commended and contributed to a positive image of the Netherlands in the EaP countries. The larger twinning-like MPP projects often resulted in long-lasting relationships between project partners in the Netherlands and the (EaP) partner countries. The political parties programme showed mixed results in terms of strengthening political parties' international networks. The Dutch co-funding of the V4EaP programme did not result in the anticipated exposure and networking opportunities for embassies in the EaP countries.

6.4 Findings on efficiency

Programme management

As a result of decisions to outsource the management of some components and high staff turnover at the ministry's Europe Department (DEU), the ownership and central coordination of the Matra EaP at the ministry waned during the evaluation period. Overall, there was little – and flexible – steering by the ministry, which allowed the embassies to interpret the general guidelines broadly and tailor the programme to the local context. The embassies made up for the lack of formal instruments to monitor project implementation by intensive informal contacts with project implementers. Compared to large programmes, Matra was quite labour-intensive, but it was precisely this method of working – enabled by the involvement and expertise of local staff – which gave the programme its value by connecting to local society.

The Matra South evaluation found that a myriad of actors (various departments within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) were involved in the implementation of the bilateral programme. Programme steering and monitoring of programme implementation were hampered by staffing constraints, both at the ministry and at the embassies.

Donor coordination

Both evaluations resulted in similar findings on donor coordination and Matra. In the EaP countries, donor coordination by large organisations such as UNDP and the EU was not an immediate concern for Matra due to its limited size. Still, the embassies were generally well-connected to both formal and informal donor coordination networks. Through informal coordination, they were well-informed about ongoing processes and developments in the donor community, identified opportunities for co-funding and were able to avoid overlap.

In the Arab priority countries, the in-country donor coordination and leadership varied. Often, donors shared information and collaborated on one or more specific programmes or projects. At the same time, donor coordination was critically dependent on individual staff members from different donor agencies. Over time, individual staff members of the Dutch embassy in Cairo played key roles in the coordination of efforts to promote human rights and advance the status of women. Given the current limited size of in-country

bilateral assistance and the limited human resources available at that embassy, coordination was mostly informal and not necessarily organised around supporting transition and reform.

6.5 Lessons learned

Both Matra evaluations formulated a number of lessons learned. These are summarised below:

- Both evaluations stressed the need for sustained support over a longer period of time;
- While the Matra EaP evaluation asked for the development of a clear results framework, the Matra South evaluation advised making use of evidence from evaluations and state of the art knowledge in democracy assistance to further improve policy formulation;
- Both evaluations asked for a more country-specific approach. The Matra EaP evaluation invited a differentiated approach towards AA and non-AA countries – without creating new dividing lines;
- With a view to appropriate programme management, both evaluations pointed towards the need for sufficient staffing levels, both at the ministry and the embassies;
- Both evaluations called for more attention to coherence (complementarity and synergies) among bilateral instruments and between bilateral and multilateral aid.

6.6 Matra after the 2015 evaluations

The Government responded to both IOB evaluations by means of separate Letters to Parliament (in September 2015 and January 2016), detailing plans for the Matra programme in the years ahead.²⁸ Both letters reflected IOB's lessons that durable solutions required long-term engagement. Opting for a long-term commitment, the minister proposed to continue support to the Arab region for another ten years,²⁹ while

²⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2014), Letter of 2 September, KST 32623, no. 154); Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2016), Letter of 8 January, KST 34300, no. 51.

²⁹ Government of the Netherlands (2016) Annual report Foreign Affairs, p. 3.

Matra for the European region was established for five years (2016-2020). As proposed by the IOB evaluation, Matra South was renamed 'Shiraka', meaning 'Partnership' in the Arabic language. The Matra programmes for pre-accession countries and EaP countries were merged, thereby extending the Matra programme to the EaP countries in a structural way. In response to a Parliamentary motion and amendment,³⁰ the Government in 2016 established the Netherlands' Fund for Regional Partnerships (NFRP), as an umbrella covering the Matra programme for the European region and the Shiraka programme.

Shiraka

The aim of Shiraka remained supporting a durable transition leading to democratisation (including increased government accountability, building the rule of law, and protection of human rights and minority rights), and economic growth, partly through building an economic infrastructure, including the promotion of employment.

A changing relation between the citizens and government was seen as the essence of democratic transition. The new programme would focus on supporting both civil society organisations and governments. An economic component would be retained, but the emphasis would be on creating the enabling conditions, by supporting economic governance and relevant societal organisations. Staff capacity would be increased, both at the embassies and at the ministry. The new programme acknowledged that the transformation process was different in the various countries, and aimed to accommodate this by adopting a more country-specific approach in which the various instruments would be applied in a more integrated fashion. The embassies were given a more prominent role.

Matra for the European region

Matra's aim was formulated as 'contributing – based on the Dutch expertise in the area of democracy, rule of law and human rights – to the societal transformation, which should lead to a durable and stable relationship between citizens and government'. An additional

³⁰ House of Representatives (2015), *Motie en Amendement van de Leden Servaes en Ten Broeke*, KST 34300-V no. 26 and no. 16.

goal was 'to invest in the bilateral relationship with these countries and in the partners for the future'.

Six guidelines were formulated for Matra:

1. Matra support accompanies EU policy; efforts are complementary to broader EU and international efforts. Through Matra the Netherlands wants to strengthen EU policy.
2. A changing relation between the citizen and government is the essence of democratic transition.
3. The thematic focus (i.e. legislating and law, public government/public order/police, human rights/ minorities) is based on the Netherlands' specific knowledge in the area of democracy, rule of law and human rights.
4. Matra is demand-driven, small-scale and flexible.
5. Matra provides visibility to the embassies and supports the Dutch bilateral relations in these countries by strengthening their information- and networking position;
6. Matra's effectiveness is increased by working with a region and country-specific approach.

Within the group of EaP countries, a distinction was made between countries with and without an Association Agreement (AA). In the AA countries (Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine), Matra would focus on contributing to reforms in the area of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, the basis of which is formed by the AAs. It was deemed of prime importance that these countries would move closer towards the EU, without granting them an accession perspective. In the non-AA countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus) Matra would focus on investing in strengthening the civil society, with special attention on youth organisations and organisations working for minorities.

The new Matra programme (2016-2020) was to be implemented by means of five instruments:

1. Delegated projects;
2. Trainings for civil servants and young diplomats (for pre-accession and AA countries only);
3. Support to governments (centrally managed) (for pre-accession and AA countries only);
4. Visegrad Fund's EaP Programme (for EaP countries only);
5. Matra Political Parties Programme.

Budget

Following a parliamentary amendment in 2015, the 2016 NFRP budget was increased by EUR 3.2 m (EUR 1.4 m for Matra and EUR 1.8 m for Shiraka), raising the total 2016 budget for the European region to EUR 13.5 m. The Government endorsed the parliament's ambition to further increase the NFRP budget in the years to come.

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7 Contributions to conflict management and the fight against terrorism

In its 2013 International Security Strategy (IVS) the Dutch government stated that the developments in the neighbouring regions had a direct impact on the EU's and the Netherlands' security and prosperity. Two of the six priorities set out in this strategy were 'the unstable regions near Europe' and 'more responsibility for Europe'.³¹ Due to the continued destabilisation in both the Southern and Eastern neighbourhood, the government drafted a policy letter in follow-up to the IVS in 2014. In order to cope with the worsening security situation at the EU's borders, the government expressed its intention to increase security efforts regarding the neighbourhood. It advocated an integrated '3D' approach in which a balance was to be found between addressing acute symptoms and tackling the underlying causes of instability.³²

During the period under review, the Netherlands contributed to a large number of military and civilian missions in the neighbouring countries, either in EU, NATO, UN frameworks or ad hoc coalitions. These concerned mostly small-scale missions, such as the observation missions in Israel, Syria and Lebanon. Large-scale missions included the mission to Ukraine (in relation to the MH17 plane crash) and the patriot mission to Turkey which secured the Turkish airspace during the Syria war. In addition, in 2014 the Netherlands joined the anti-ISIS coalition (see table 2 below).

In addition to this, the Dutch government decided to step up its efforts in the field of combatting terrorism. In 2015 it decided to allocate EUR 127 million for counter terrorism activities.³³ Moreover it expressed the intention of participating in international counter

³¹ Government of the Netherlands (2013), *International Security Strategy – A Secure Netherlands in a Secure World*, 21 June, p. 1.

³² Government of the Netherlands (2014), *Turbulent Times in Unstable Surroundings*, Policy letter on international security, 14 November, p. 2.

³³ Kamerbrief Versterking Veiligheidsketen 'Terrorismebestrijding'.

³⁴ <http://www.euam-ukraine.eu/our-mission/about-us/>.

terrorism fora, which it did by joining and co-chairing – together with Morocco – the Global Counter Terrorism Forum (GCTF).

Table 2 Overview of Dutch Contributions to military and civilian missions in the ENP countries (2011-2016)

Ukraine

European Union Advisory Mission (EUAM)

Objective: Assisting the Ukrainian authorities in building up an efficient and sustainable security sector by providing strategic advice and hands on support. The proposed reforms are based on EU standards and international principles of good governance and human rights.³⁴

Dutch contribution: 8 persons³⁵

Year/ timeframe: 2014

Malaysia Airlines MH17³⁶

Objective: Storing the bodies of the crash victims and conducting research.

Dutch contribution: 839 soldiers

Year / timeframe: 18 July 2014 – 1 July 2015

F-16-mission Baltic states, operating from Poland³⁷

Objective: Securing the airspace of the Baltics in response to the increasing tensions in Ukraine.

Dutch contribution: 100 soldiers. One mine hunter and five F-16s

Year/ timeframe: 5 September 2014 – 16 December 2014

OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM)

Objective: Observing and reporting on the situation in Ukraine.

Dutch contribution: five observers and a financial contribution of EUR 950,000

Year/timeframe: 2014 - ?

³⁵ Foreign Affairs Council, 16 January 2017.

³⁶ <https://www.defensie.nl/onderwerpen/historische-missies/missie-overzicht/2014/malaysia-airlines-mh17>.

³⁷ <https://www.defensie.nl/onderwerpen/historische-missies/missie-overzicht/2014/f-16-missie-baltische-staten-vanuit-polen>.

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Georgia

EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM)

Objective: Mitigating tensions and ensuring tensions will not erupt and translate into violence, confidence-building and facilitating normal and secure living circumstances along the borders with Abkhazia and South-Ossetia.

Dutch contribution: 10 persons

Year/timeframe: (sept 2008 – started with 9 persons)^{38 39}

Tunisia/ Libya

European Union Liaison and Planning Cell (EULPC)

Objective: By means of diplomatic assistance and concrete action contributing to Libya's transformation to a stable and functioning state.

Dutch contribution: 1 person

Year/timeframe: 2014 - 2016

Libya

Evacuation mission

Objective: Evacuating Dutch citizens from Libya after the fall of Ghaddafi.

Dutch contribution: Frigate Hr. Ms. Tromp, a transport airplane and a Lynx-helicopter⁴⁰

Year/timeframe: 2 February 2011 – 11 March 2011

Operation Unified Protector (NATO mission)

Objective: Enforcing UN security resolution 1970 and 1973: a no-fly zone and a weapon embargo
NL contribution: one KDC-10-tankairplane, six F16s, a mine hunter, and personnel to the involved international staff and crew members for NATO's AWACS planes.⁴¹

Total troops: 198 at first, reduced to 167.⁴² Total soldiers involved: 532.⁴³

Year/ timeframe: 23 March 2011 – 31 October 2011

EU Integrated Border Assistance Mission Libya (EUBAM)

Objective: Supporting the Libyan authorities in strengthening the law enforcement chain and the border management and in combatting criminality and terrorism.¹ This mission was related to the *European Marine Mission (EUNAVFOR MED / Operation Sophia)* that supported the Libyan coastguard. EUBAM also cooperated with the political *UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL)*.

Dutch contribution: 1 military staff (royal military police, advisor human trafficking)

Year/timeframe: 2016

Turkey

Operation Active Fence (NATO patriot-mission Turkey)⁴⁴

Objective: Defending the Turkish airspace in relation to threat posed by the Syrian war

Dutch contribution: +- 250 forces and related material, six missile launch systems

Year/timeframe: 26 January 2013 - 26 January 2015

Egypt

Multinational Force and Observers (MFO)

Objective: Supervising the compliance of the Camp David agreements between Israel and Egypt

Dutch contribution: personnel over the course of two years. Since 2015 the Netherlands solely supports the mission financially.⁴⁵

Year/time frame: 2013 - 2014

³⁸ <https://www.defensie.nl/onderwerpen/historische-missies/missie-overzicht/2008/european-union-monitoring-mission-eumm-in-georgie/het-nederlandse-aandeel>

³⁹ See: Conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Council, 16 January 2017.

⁴⁰ <https://www.defensie.nl/onderwerpen/historische-missies/downloads/brochures/2014/10/16/evacuatiemissie-in-libie>

⁴¹ <https://www.defensie.nl/onderwerpen/historische-missies/downloads/brochures/2014/10/16/operatie-unified-protector-in-libie> Zie verslag, Pag. 2

⁴² <https://www.defensie.nl/onderwerpen/historische-missies/downloads/brochures/2014/10/16/operatie-unified-protector-in-libie> Zie verslag, Pag. 2

⁴³ <https://www.defensie.nl/onderwerpen/historische-missies/downloads/brochures/2014/10/16/operatie-unified-protector-in-libie> Zie verslag, Pag. 1

⁴⁴ <https://www.defensie.nl/onderwerpen/historische-missies/downloads/brochures/2017/07/06/operatie-active-fence-patriot-missie-turkije>

⁴⁵ See: Evaluation of the Dutch contribution to missions and operations in 2015, p. 17 (*Evaluatie Nederlandse bijdrage aan missies en operaties in 2015*).

Israel/Syria

United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF)

Objective: Supervising the ceasefire and disengagement agreement between Syria and Israel in the Golan

NL contribution: two military staff⁴⁶

Year/time frame: 2013 - 2016⁴⁷

Israel/Syria/Lebanon

United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO)

Objective: Observing and monitoring ceasefires, supervise armistice agreements and prevent isolated incidents from escalating and assist other UN peacekeeping operations on the borders between Lebanon, Syria and Israel.

NL contribution: 12 military servants

Year/time frame: since 1956, interrupted in 2014/2015

Palestinian Territories

European Union Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM)

Objective: Border control at Rafah in the Gaza strip

NL contribution: three military servants on *standby*.⁴⁸

Year/time frame: 2011-2016. Since Hamas came to power in the Gaza strip the mission has been in sleep mode.

United States Security Coordinator (USSC) Ramallah/Jerusalem:

Objective: Improving the functioning of the security forces and the presidential guard of the Palestinian Authority.⁴⁹ The USSC mission is complementary to the EUPOL COPPESEN mission, the bilateral development programme focused on Security and Rule of law.⁵⁰

Dutch contribution: five military staff and as of 2015 a civil expert who works as a Course Director at the Palestinian Officers Academy (POA).⁵¹

Year/ time frame: 2011 – 2016

⁴⁶ <https://www.defensie.nl/onderwerpen/missies/huidige-missies>.

⁴⁷ Mid-term evaluation of Dutch operations 2012, p. 13 (*Tussentijdse evaluatie Nederlandse overige operaties 2012*).

⁴⁸ Evaluation of the Dutch contribution to missions and operations in 2016, p. 10 (*Evaluatie Nederlandse bijdrage aan missies en operaties in 2016*).

⁴⁹ <https://www.defensie.nl/onderwerpen/missies/huidige-missies>.

Syria

Anti-ISIS coalition

Objective: Providing fuel to airplanes of the anti-ISIS coalition in Iraq and eastern Syria.

Dutch contribution: tank capacity airplanes (40-man strong detachment stationed in Kuwait)⁵²

Year/ time frame: 2016

Anti-ISIS coalition

Objective: Combatting trans-border ISIS supply chains.⁵³

Dutch contribution: In an article 100 letter of 29 January 2016 the cabinet announced it wanted to step up its efforts in combatting ISIS, also on the basis of French and American requests posed in 2015.⁵⁴ As from 10 February 2016 the mandate of the Dutch F-16s was extended in order to operate in eastern Syria as well. From 1 January 2016 until 1 July 2016 the Dutch F-16 efforts were coordinated by the Netherlands Air Task Force Middle East (ATFME). From then on, the Dutch Force Protection Unit (FPME) worked for the Belgian F-16 detachment. Previously, the Belgians had done the same for the Dutch.

Year/ time frame: 2016

⁵⁰ Evaluation of Dutch contribution to missions and operations in 2016, p. 14 (*Evaluatie Nederlandse bijdrage aan missies en operaties in 2016*).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.15.

⁵² <https://www.defensie.nl/onderwerpen/missies/huidige-missies>.

⁵³ See: Evaluation of Dutch contribution to missions and operations in 2016, p. 10.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

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8 Concluding remarks

Although it is hard to discern a clear pattern in bilateral policy interventions in the region, over time a trend towards more focus on stabilisation and coping with the effects of instability can be noticed. The expenditures on humanitarian assistance and refugee shelter sharply increased, concentrating on the Syria and Ukraine crises. The diplomatic posts network in the region was strengthened, mostly in conflict-affected countries, because of the region's recognised importance for the EU's and the Netherlands' security. In addition, the political visits to and from Ukraine, Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinian Territories and Israel peaked between 2013 and 2015. And lastly, the Netherlands contributed to many conflict management operations in the neighbourhood. The increased focus on stability and security was on par with the EU's increased focus on stabilisation of the region. This shift was not at the expense of Dutch support for democratisation, good governance, the rule of law and human rights, nor of private sector development and trade promotion. These remained important focal points of both assistance programmes and political dialogue.

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