

The Netherlands



Reported ODA: EUR 6957 million
0.62 % GNI (↓ from -2.80% in 2023)

Non-inflated ODA: EUR 5610 million
0.5 % GNI (↓ from -0.04% in 2023)

Total inflated ODA: EUR 1347 million
19.31 % of total

“International solidarity under pressure: development policy shifts toward self-interest”

Partos

Main trends

In 2024, the Netherlands underwent a radical shift in its ODA approach. **The radical-right minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation publicly favoured cutting all ODA, while the finance minister broke the Dutch 50-year commitment to the 0.7% of GDP pledge.** This will reduce ODA from 0.62% of GDP in 2024 to 0.44% from 2026 onward, abandoning the ambition to reach 0.7%. A target that was only achieved once in the last 20 years. However, **the government also implemented a positive change by capping In-Donor Refugee Costs at 10%.** Over the past 23 years, IDRC exceeded budget estimates in 21 years, causing significant cuts to international ODA allocations. With IDRC representing 18.9% of total ODA in 2024 and estimated to exceed 25% in 2025, this cap provides much-needed predictability.

Thematically, there has also been a shift in policy. Projects focused on gender equality and climate were defunded, with policy refocusing on food security, water and health. The underlying priorities have become peace and security, reducing migration, and increasing international trade. This is an ODA narrative that emphasises Dutch national interests.

Additionally, a result of this narrower focus excludes most fragile contexts. The government prioritises areas where aid and trade policies can work well together, despite critical evaluations showing this approach is inefficient and lacks long-term sustainable development impact. The current policy intends to intensify private sector involvement in development policies. **This represents a move away from sustainable development toward instrumentalising ODA for national interests.** The narrow thematic scope directly contradicts the department's stated ambitions to transition toward more locally led development approaches.

Government's relationship with civil society

CSOs have long been Dutch Government partners, but 2024 introduced significant strain to this relationship. The thematic shift challenged existing partnerships, while the minister publicly expressed mistrust in CSOs and persistently attempted to defund national and international advocacy. Her narrative consistently argued that CSOs should rely on societal rather than government support, despite advice from the Advisory Board on International Policy (AIV) that supporting these organisations is essential for democratic systems. **Limited civic space has become an increasing concern in the Netherlands.**

Political unrest delayed implementation of new CSO financing instruments, **likely creating a worrisome gap in funding of up to 6 months that could result in valuable knowledge and network losses by 2027.** There is also a stark contrast in CSO involvement in developing new instruments, which used to entail extensive consultation, as there has been markedly less space for dialogue this year.

In 2024 the government also announced a 50% threshold for government financing of CSOs requiring organisations to source half their funding from non-institutional sources. This policy creates significant uncertainty for Dutch organisations, as implementation details remain unclear.

Recommendations

- **Reinstate the commitment to 0.7% ODA/GNI.** As one of the 20 founding countries of the OECD DAC The Netherlands has been committed to the 0.7% target for over 50 years. The sudden break with this commitment is harmful to international solidarity and the strategic interests of the Netherlands in an ever-changing geopolitical context.
- **Ensure meaningful engagement of civil society in the development, implementation and evaluation of foreign policy.** Civil society organisations in the Netherlands and elsewhere in the world can voice the concerns of audiences affected by these policies and should be included in the decision-making process.
- **Pursue sustainable development targets with the ODA budget.** Policy review in the Netherlands shows limited long-term impact of ODA used to support development through businesses. It is not an effective use of budget resources, and often does not reach the communities who need it most. Instead, employ a trickle-up approach.
- **Commit to genuine PCD through policy review.** The instrumentalisation of ODA for national interests such as reducing migration and increasing trade undermines development effectiveness when these goals conflict with partner country needs. Additionally, the Netherlands has significant negative spillovers of policies across all ministries. It is key to take responsibility throughout all of Government policy to support rather than contradict SDGs everywhere.