



Guidelines

STEP UP Capacity Fund 2024-2025

Small-scale support for NGOs in Spain, Italy, Greece and Romania to step up
capacity for refugee protection and inclusion

Application deadline:	30 September 2024
Implementation period:	December 2024 – November 2025
Maximum budget:	12.000 EUR

In a nutshell

Through the Step Up Fund, the Dutch Council for Refugees (DCR) supports local and national NGOs who work on refugee protection and inclusion at the borders of Europe. As part of our strive for international solidarity, DCR set up this fund to support capacity development of NGOs and to build new partnerships.

This year, NGOs from Spain, Italy, Greece and Romania are invited to apply for a project grant (up to 12.000 EUR) for capacity-development. Through this fund, up to 6 projects will be selected to be supported between December 2024 and November 2025.

The selected NGOs will - if they like - be offered capacity-development support by the Dutch Council for Refugees in the form of knowledge exchange, trainings or twinning. The group of selected NGOs will regularly meet in online meetings to share experiences and will be invited to a work visit to the Netherlands

Applicants are invited to submit a short project proposal for capacity development and a budget via [this link](#) by the 30th of September.

1. Background

International solidarity for refugee protection is needed more than ever, as the number of refugees and displaced persons fleeing from war, violence and persecution is at an all-time high, protection is hard to get by and durable solutions are barely attained. Where Europe should be leading by example in sharing responsibility for welcoming and hosting refugees, instead the past years have seen a further externalization of refugee protection: preventing arrivals, outsourcing responsibility to countries outside the EU, downgrading refugee protection inside the union, and criminalizing people and NGOs who are providing assistance.

National and local NGOs in the countries at the borders of the EU are doing what they can to assist asylum seekers and refugees and are working to improve reception facilities, asylum procedures, human rights protection, or support for inclusion. Given the magnitude of the challenges, NGOs do not always have the resources, time or capacity to provide long term assistance and enhance the scale and quality of their work.

That is why, as a token of our international solidarity, the Dutch Council for Refugees (DCR)¹ has been investing in the capacity of national and local NGOs, mostly at the borders of Europe. We always start from the local need of a partner NGO and build on 45 years of experience working for refugees in the Netherlands. We support NGOs in their organizational development and provide tailor-made knowledge exchange on themes such as EU asylum law, asylum procedures and legal assistance, inclusion policies, lobbying, fundraising, volunteer policy, and more.

1 For more information about our international activities visit [our website](#)

2. Objectives Step Up Fund: capacity development of NGOs

Through this call for proposals DCR aims to support a maximum of 6 NGOs in Greece, Spain, Italy and Romania. The support is for projects that are aimed at **developing the NGOs capacity* to work for the protection and inclusion of asylum seekers and refugees.**

For DCR the objective is also to develop new partnerships and networks with NGOs across Europe.

*We understand **capacity development** to be an **investment in the effectiveness and sustainability of an NGO**, and will consider projects that are aimed at **organizational, knowledge and strategic development, development of new projects and programs and trying out new working methods.** Projects could for example be aimed at improving working with volunteers, legal aid to asylum seekers and refugees, social counseling of refugees, stepping up lobby and advocacy or fundraising strategies or building coalitions with other NGOs. Check [this link](#) to read about projects previously implemented through this fund.

3. Linking, learning, and capacity-building by the Dutch Council for Refugees

The selected NGOs will - if they like - be offered capacity-development support by the Dutch Council for Refugees in the form of knowledge exchange, training or twinning. With the selected NGOs who are interested in receiving this support, we will work out a modest tailor-made capacity-development plan, for example in areas such as advocacy, legal aid, working with volunteers or fundraising or psychosocial support or organizational development.

The group of selected NGOs will also regularly meet in online meetings to share experiences, and the group will be invited for a joint work visit to the Netherlands early 2025 to meet and inspire each other and visit one of our field operations.

4. Eligibility criteria

- Applicants must be registered non-profit organizations in one the four countries: **Spain, Italy, Greece, or Romania.**
- Non-profit organizations that work at national or local levels in these countries are eligible for the Step Up Fund.
- Applicants should already work on issues related to refugee protection and inclusion
- Applications must address the objectives outlined above: only projects that focus on capacity-development will be accepted.
- Only applications in English will be accepted.

5. Selection criteria

- **Impact on NGO-capacity:** The proposal must clearly identify the challenge (capacity-development need) of the organization and how the proposed project is expected to sustainably impact the organization's capacity to work for refugee protection and inclusion in the country after the project finishes.
- **Relevance:** The proposal should explain why it is relevant for the current situation for asylum seekers and refugees in the country.

- **Concrete results:** The proposal must set out concrete and realistic results it will aim for.

6. Duration of the project

Projects can have a maximum duration of one year – shorter is also possible - and should take place between December 2024 and November 2025.

7. Budget and eligible costs

- Proposals need to be accompanied by a budget proposal with a maximum of 12.000 EUR.
- Eligible costs include costs for staff, meetings, study visits, training, research, publications, and consultancies.
- Travel costs for the joint work visit(s) do **not** have to be included in this budget. These costs are covered directly by the Dutch Council for Refugees.
- The budget **cannot** be used to cover running costs of the organization (such as office costs) or ongoing projects.

8. Application and review process

- Applicants are invited to submit a project proposal and budget via [this link](#) by the 30th of September
- Eligibility check: All submitted applications will be reviewed by DCR for compliance with eligibility criteria.
- Selection: Each proposal that meets the eligibility criteria shall be reviewed by DCR's team. Following this review, shortlisted applicants will be invited to an online meeting in November 2024.
- All applicants will be informed about their selection by the end of November 2024.

If you would like to learn more about the Step Up Fund and the application process, you can join an online information session on Monday, September 9, 2024, at 11:00 CET. During the session, we will share tips and tricks for successful proposals, and NGOs will have the opportunity to ask questions about the call. **To attend the session, please register below:**

[Register for information session](#)

9. Reminders

When filling in the application form:

- Keep it as short as you can and stick to the word limit.
- Be as specific as you can be and try not to do too many things in one project.
- Make sure your project is really aimed at developing your capacity as an organization (you can read under point.2 what we understand by capacity development; the STEP UP Fund does not fund regular operational activities of organizations)

10. Reporting

Selected organizations shall compile a short narrative and financial report on the project results and the funding use. A reporting template will be provided for this.

11. Contact

Feel free to contact us if you have any questions. You can contact us at ip@dcr.nl