Evaluation Report Matra Programme
(in pre-accession countries: Western Balkan and Turkey)
2012 - 2014

FINAL REPORT

Ede, the Netherlands, April 2015

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Matra Evaluation
(in pre-accession countries: Western
Balkan and Turkey), 2012 - 2014

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands

Ede, the Netherlands, April 2015

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List of Abbreviations:

AC	Acquis Communautaire
APF	Animal Politics Foundations
BEMO	Beoordelings Memorandum
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
BUZA	*Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
BZK	*Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties*, Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations
CoPROL	Cooperation with Pre-accession Countries on Rule of Law
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
D-Test	*Drempel Toets*; "threshold test"
DAM	Directie Noord-Afrika en Midden-Oosten
DEU	Directie Europa
DZO	Directie Zuidoost en Oost Europa
EKN	Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
EU	European Union
FICDD	Foundation for International Christian Democratic Development
FMS	Foundation Max van der Stoel
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HALG	Hague Academy for Local Governance
HvS	VVD International / Haya van Someren Foundation
IDI	International Democratic Initiative
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
Matra	*Maatschappelijke Transformatie*, Societal Transformation
MPPP	Matra Political Parties Programme
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NL	Netherlands
O- Test	*Organisatie Toets*, "organisation test"
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PATROL	Pre-Accession Training programme on the Rule of Law
PR	EU Progress Report
P-Test	*Programma Toets*, "programme test"
RoL	Rule of Law
SAA	Stabilisation and Assocation Agreements
SIGMA	Support for Improvement in Governance and Management
SVO	Stichting Vormingsactiviteiten Oost-Europa SGP
ToR	Terms of Reference
WFPP	*Wet Financiering Politieke Partijen*, Political Parties (Financing) Act

Executive Summary

Since 2012, the Matra programme focuses on helping seven pre-accession countries in South East Europe[1] in meeting the preconditions for EU accession. More specifically the programme aims to contribute to the development of a plural democracy, grounded in the rule of law, with room for dialogue between government and civil society. This has been pursued through institutional capacity building interventions aimed at government, civil society and political parties in the target countries with particular attention for strengthening bilateral relations with the Netherlands. These interventions have been structured according to the following four programme components:
1. Matra Cooperation with Pre-accession Countries on the Rule of Law (CoPROL).
2. Training of civil servants (PATROL) and young diplomats from Matra countries
3. Supporting and strengthening civil society initiatives (Delegated projects) and
4. Matra Political Parties Programme (MPPP).

The Matra programme in its current shape has a budget of € 45 million for the period 2012 – 2015. In 2015 the minister will decide on the continuation and shaping of the Matra programme from 2016 onwards. This current evaluation, taking place in parallel to IOB's evaluation of similar programmes in the Arab region (Matra South) and the Eastern Partnership countries, is meant to inform decision making on the future of the Matra programme.

The dual objective of the evaluation has therefore been summarised as follows:
1. To account to parliament for the Matra programme as it has been implemented and
2. To draw lessons from the past to inform decision making about the future of the Matra programme.

The evaluation process started with the reconstruction of the programme intervention logic (i.e. generic Theory of Change) to establish a frame of reference for assessing the evaluation criteria to be addressed: relevance, effectiveness and management of the programme. The emphasis on evaluation criteria has been different between the various components taking into account the maturity of each component. Due to the different nature and stakeholders involved in each programme component, separate data collection processes took place for each. This included a desk-study of policy and programme related documents and the records of a sample of 40 delegated projects, a survey among training participants, missions to Albania, BiH, Serbia and Turkey and interviews with stakeholders and experts in the Netherlands and in the region. Findings from different countries have been put together to ascertain an overall programmatic evaluation rather than an evaluation of separate country portfolios or projects.

Assessment of relevance took place within the current context of EU enlargement, focusing on questions related to alignment to relevant Dutch policies in the Netherlands, RoL policies in target countries, prioritised target country needs as illustrated in EU progress reports in terms of thematic focus and coverage, Dutch interests in strengthening bilateral relations and coordination with other programmes. Effectiveness was assessed by looking at actual versus intended outputs and outcomes at (sampled) project and programme level, recognising different result-chains related to the RoL needs of the target countries and the need for strengthened bilateral relations of the Netherlands. The quality of programme management was assessed by reviewing the perceived adequacy by which the different phases of the programme cycle were organised, supported and controlled by the managing entity, which is different for each component (DEU (CoPROL), Clingendael and TMC Asser Institute (Diplomats and PATROL, resp.), Embassies (Delegated projects) and BZK (MPPP)).

As a result it was concluded that the relevance of the Matra programme in terms of addressing RoL needs and alignment with Dutch RoL policies is high, with the monitoring of continued relevance taking place primarily at programme component level. Alignment with government priorities in target countries is not always obvious, especially when it concerns sensitive issues like press freedom and LGTB rights, which are however invariably relevant in light of EU accession.

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[1] Albania, Bosnia i Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey.

Relevance in terms of *adding value to other on-going efforts* is more obvious in serving the interests of the Netherlands rather than in addressing RoL needs of target countries, as the latter is being pursued by many other, often much larger, interventions supported by the EU, OSCE, US and a range of bilateral actors.

At programme component level, relevance is secured by CoPROL interventions being designed in response to a clear RoL priority. In shaping their portfolio of delegated projects embassies can be seen to adapt the specific RoL requirements / niches in the country, taking into account the need to address sensitive issues and / or issues in which the Netherlands has comparative advantage by offering specific expertise. The curriculum of PATROL / Diplomat courses is regularly reviewed to ascertain that the relevant RoL topics are being addressed, though relevance is less convincing in terms of reaching the right participants. Given the many RoL related training opportunities supported by various multilateral and bilateral donors, relevance in complementing other on-going efforts remains a question.

During the period under evaluation the management responsibility of the MPPP has shifted from BUZA to BZK with explicit expectations in terms of regional and thematic focus. Till now it appears that this shift has resulted in a less transparent geographical distribution of funds but without causing a substantial change in the nature of MPPP activities being funded. At the same time the potential relevance of the MPPP is underexploited, as it is the only programme component directly dealing with political 'power-holders' who have significant influence over RoL reforms in the target countries.

The effectiveness at programme impact (meeting the preconditions for EU accession) and outcome (strengthened institutions adopting EU values and standards) level remains questionable. Meeting the Copenhagen criteria and the strengthening of institutions is progressing in some countries though stagnant in others. Given the complexity of the EU accession context combined with relatively small-scale and scattered Matra interventions, it is not possible to make a convincing contribution claim to outcome and impact level.

Nevertheless at project output and outcome level encouraging signs of effectiveness can be found, particularly amongst the delegated projects that have matured a bit further than the larger CoPROL projects. Among the sampled delegated projects not only intended deliverables are being produced, but also many examples of RoL effects beyond the scope of control of the projects could be found. Unfortunately not many examples were found where these project-level results were successfully brought to a higher level through replication, upscaling or policy advocacy based on project results. This Micro-Macro paradox in some countries (success at project level without clear effect at country level) can be explained by the deliberate choices of the different managing entities to support projects – complementary to larger programmes - addressing selected RoL niches in the target countries that also meet the interests of the managing entity.

Effectiveness in PATROL / Diplomat courses at output level is high in terms of the transfer of knowledge and skills though somewhat less at outcome level as a significant portion of participants claim not having had the opportunity to apply these new skills in implementing EU pre-accession and RoL reform processes. MPPP effectiveness remains unclear as reporting is largely activity and not result-based.

Effectiveness in strengthening bilateral relations is assessed somewhat more critical. The objectives in this second results-chain receive less deliberate attention in project design and rely on the assumption that, in general, Dutch governmental and judiciary entities are able and willing to pursue connections with their colleagues in pre-accession countries. This assumption does not hold true, especially in a period of budgetary cuts during which it is demanded to focus on core service in the Netherlands. As a result, the extent to which lasting relationships are being developed and maintained are reportedly limited. Interestingly, the MPPP component appears relatively effective in building and expanding the international networks of political parties, but it remains unclear how these relations are being used in pursuing RoL reforms in light of EU accession.

Concerning management, it is remarkable that the four Matra programme components are largely shaped and managed independently from each other, making that overall guidance and coherence of the programme remain limited. Another related concern is the limited apparent attention for higher

level (i.e. programme outcome) results that are mentioned in planning documents but not systematically monitored. At the same time assumptions at programme level are not made explicit and therefore not deliberately monitored (e.g. the interest and ability of Dutch RoL related government entities to establish and maintain bilateral relations in the region).

At the same time it is acknowledged that DEU has taken a range of remedial actions to optimise management of the different programme components. Nevertheless the management of CoPROL is assessed rather critically. Extensive efforts have gone into shaping the management arrangements and rather heavy application procedures for CoPROL. This however has not resulted in the expected number of eligible applications, while the expected Government-to-Government ambition of this programme remains to be fulfilled with the managing NGOs carrying responsibility but without having control over this.

The management of PATROL / Diplomats courses has been adequate with careful attention being paid to all phases of the training cycle. The main challenge here lies in mobilising the best possible participants and in linking training efforts more closely to on-going / upcoming EU pre-accession and RoL Reform processes so that the chance of training results being applied in practice is increased.

The management of delegated projects by the embassies can be characterised as pragmatic, accommodative and reactive with a deliberate eye for niches where RoL interests of target countries in the context of EU accession and Dutch interests come together. At the same time, delegated projects often appear as stand-alone interventions without much attention for higher level objectives to which they ought to contribute. This is illustrated by the limited attention for the replication and / or upscaling of project results and for using these results in wider policy influencing efforts.

The transfer of the MPPP to BZK has not changed much (yet) in the nature of MPPP activities. The management instruments used by BZK make it difficult to monitor the geographical distribution of funds, though till now overall expectations are met be it with less consistency among the political parties using MPPP funds. A managerial shortcoming in the MPPP is the activity oriented focus in planning and reporting and the apparent inability to capture longer term but also immediate results in terms of leadership or network development.

Overall the Matra has proved to be a relevant and organic programme, complementary to IPA that is developed far in advance without much flexibility, and relatively successful in delivering quick and concrete results with a potential added value for the EU accession process.

Following these assessments, the evaluation *supports the continuation of the Matra programme* taking into account the following recommendations;

Concerning *strategy and overall programme management*, a political decision is required that either recognises and accepts the current hybrid nature of the programme (i.e. simultaneously pursuing RoL interests in the target region and the Netherlands) or provides direction in terms of prioritisation of objectives. Based on this decision a comprehensive (re)construction of the programmatic Theory of Change (ToC) is to take place that will define the concept of RoL strengthening and makes assumptions more explicit and therefore manageable. This programmatic ToC can help in identifying cross-border challenges / niches to be addressed by regional interventions that allow for economies-of-scale by avoiding similar interventions in different countries and create natural opportunities for regional collaboration, exchange and learning.

This programmatic ToC is to be made specific at country level and updated annually based on the EU progress report. This will enable embassies to use their delegated powers in systematically monitoring thematic coverage and contribution to longer term results and be more pro-active in stimulating / prompting project ideas in the most relevant thematic niche areas.

In addition, it is recommended to be more explicit about the overall programme management responsibilities of DEU related to the monitoring of higher level results, balanced coverage of thematic priorities, risk management and securing relevance of the programme as a whole.

Concerning *individual programme components*;
Adopt a phased approach and simplified CoPROL application procedures with clear instructions concerning the involvement of embassies. Furthermore re-assess the interest and resources of Dutch RoL entities in realising Government-to-Government cooperation and consider the inclusion of a "broker" function with the clear role of process facilitator. At the same time, ensure that *strengthened bilateral ties* is explicitly included in the results framework of future CoPROL projects. In addition, distinguish a funding window for 'Civil Society to Civil Society' cooperation and exchange dedicated to the strengthening of Civil Society in target countries in adopting and playing their specific role in promoting EU values and standards.

With regard to PATROL/Diplomats courses a more deliberate linkage to on-going / upcoming EU pre-accession or RoL reform processes is recommended along with reinvigorated efforts to mobilise the most relevant participants. Besides, in particular PATROL courses could be complemented by a Training of Trainers course among selected participants to further the dissemination of course content among colleagues back home, in particular those not mastering English. Finally, continue complementing training sessions in The Hague with sessions in the region to be organised in cooperation with the regional network of RoL experts to optimise the network function of this programme component.

Leave the management of Delegated Projects to the embassies with a financial allocation of at least half of the Matra funds. At the same time enable embassies to incorporate attention for higher level results in their portfolio management, including capacity development in upscaling and creating connections to wider Lobby & Advocacy efforts. The regional network of RoL experts can be instrumental in cross-country learning concerning the identification, management and upscaling of RoL interventions in the region.

Intensify the connection between Matra programme management and the MPPP implementing agencies. Particularly to explore possibilities for the Matra programme to support democratisation efforts through political entities in the region focusing on issues that are not so much subject to political ideology but relate more to fundamental EU democratic standards, norms and values that are valid for all political parties. In addition, engage in a dialogue with MPPP implementing entities to plan, capture and report better on results beyond the successful completion of activities.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and objective of the Evaluation

The Matra (Societal Transformation) programme was launched in 1993 to support democratisation in Central and Eastern Europe. Since then the Matra programme has undergone several modifications / rationalisations and in 2012 it was decided that the Matra programme would focus on South-East European pre-accession countries[2].

Since 2012, the Matra programme focuses on helping pre-accession countries to meet the Copenhagen criteria and adopt the *acquis* of the EU as preconditions for EU accession. This means that the formal general objective of the Matra has been to contribute to the development of a plural democracy, grounded in the rule of law, with room for dialogue between government and civil society. This has been pursued through capacity building / institutional strengthening interventions aimed at government, civil society and political parties with particular attention for strengthening bilateral relations between the Netherlands and the target countries. These interventions have been structured according to the following four programme components:

1. Matra Cooperation with Pre-accession Countries on the Rule of Law (CoPROL).
2. Training of civil servants (PATROL) and young diplomats from Matra countries
3. Supporting and strengthening civil society initiatives (Delegated projects) and
4. Matra Political Parties Programme (MPPP).

The Matra programme in its current shape has been under way since the beginning of 2012 with funding for four years (2012 – 2015). The overall budget in the three years to be covered by the evaluation period (2012-2014) has been € 45 million. In 2015 the minister will decide on the continuation and shaping of the Matra programme from 2016 onwards. This current evaluation was announced in 2014 to inform this decision and has takes place in parallel to IOB's evaluation of Dutch policy on the democratic transition in the Arab region and of the Neighbourhood policy, which will inform decision making on the future of Matra-South and Matra in the Eastern Partnership countries respectively. This allows for a better coordination of decision making concerning the two different programmes.

The dual objective of the evaluation has therefore been summarised as follows:

1. To account to parliament for the Matra programme as it has been implemented and
2. To draw lessons from the past to inform decision making about the future of the Matra programme.

To meet these objectives this evaluation report has been produced with the intention to be submitted to parliament later in 2015. This report describes the methodology and process steps of the evaluation (Chapter 2), followed by a context description of the EU enlargement process in the region covered by the Matra programme (Chapter 3). Subsequently, a factual description is given of how implementation of the Matra programme has taken place in the period 2012 - 2014 followed by analytical findings concerning the relevance, effectiveness and management for each of the four programme components and the programme as a whole (Chapter 4). The report ends with conclusions / lessons learned and a set of recommendations for future decision making concerning the shaping of the programme (Chapter 5 and 6).

1.2 Delineation of the Evaluation

As indicated above the evaluation covers the period 2012 – 2014 and concentrates in principle on interventions that have been approved from 1st of January 2012 onwards, but also selected key projects within the thematic focus areas with an earlier approval date (but have been implemented in 2012 - 2014) have been taken into account.

It was furthermore recognised that in the past a broad scope of interventions have been financed under the Matra programme covering 12 thematic areas divided over the two clusters Rule of Law and Liberties (Rechtsstaat & Vrijheden) and Social Infrastructure and Livelihood (Sociale

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[2] Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia (until 1 July 2013), Kosovo, (Former Yugoslav Republic of) Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey.

Infrastructuur en Leefomgeving)[3]. In 2011, the Minister announced a further sharpening of focus on issues related to the Rule of Law with prominent attention for the thematic areas of Justice and Home Affairs. The evaluation concentrated on interventions that fit within these thematic areas, while leaving aside efforts in other thematic areas that may have continued as well in the 2012 -2014 period.

Overall the evaluation assessed the relevance, effectiveness and management of the Matra programme. However, given the time span and the different nature, size and 'history' of the four programme components, the specific application of these evaluation criteria differed per component.

The CoPROL component has been relatively new, initially represented 26% of the programme budget and has six approved projects that were all still on-going in 2015 (15 proposals have been rejected). The emphasis on the CoPROL component therefore primarily was on relevance and management (in particular submission and approval procedures), while effectiveness has at most been reviewed at output level.

The PATROL and Young Diplomats component dates from well before 2012 and represented 10% of the programme budget. In the period to be reviewed this component consisted mainly of two contracts issued to the consortium of T.M.C. Asser Institute /Ecorys / The Hague Academy for Local Governance (HALG) and Clingendael Institute for the training of respectively government officials and young diplomats. Given the difficulty, if not impossibility, to measure the contribution of training selected individuals to the institutional strengthening, the emphasis has been more on assessing relevance. This has been done through analysing the direct effect of the training on the professional performance of trainees and the effect in terms of strengthened alumni networks and bilateral relations among trainees and between trainees and the Netherlands.

The Delegated Projects, managed completely by the embassies in the target countries, represented 45% of the programme budget. This component consisted of over 300 projects, varying in value between €350 and €300,000, which have been identified and appraised by the individual embassies in line with perceived priorities in the target countries. Due to the delegation of the projects, the thematic coherence of the portfolio has been subject of the core focus of this evaluation. Therefore the evaluation included an assessment of the relevance of the portfolio as a whole and the quality of portfolio management at the embassies. The effectiveness of delegated projects has been assessed by in-depth reviewing the immediate and longer term results of a sample of 43 projects spread over the seven target countries. It has been acknowledged that it has not been possible to conduct a systematic contribution analysis towards national progress in the area of Rule of Law and in meeting the Copenhagen Criteria, given the size, fragmentation and contribution between individual projects and the overall programme objectives.

Since early 2013, the Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK) has taken over responsibility for the MPPP portfolio, which represented 12% of the t budget and has been implemented by the foundations linked to political parties represented in the Dutch parliament. In line with the Political Parties (Financing) Act no specific conditions are imposed in terms of where and how the funds should be spent. It is acknowledged that the MPPP takes place in a specific political context largely outside the view of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (BuZa). The emphasis in this component has primarily been on assessing the relevance of MPPP implementation in light of the broader Matra objectives and on the quality of programme management by the BZK and the implementing entities. In addition, effectiveness of MPPP interventions has been assessed in terms of contribution to internal leadership development and network-building between like-minded parties in target countries and the Netherlands.

The evaluation acknowledges the fact that Matra funds are partly used outside the seven target countries; primarily to fund civil society projects in Eastern Partnership countries that are not considered to have a prospect of EU membership (e.g. part of the MPPP funds is used for Matra South and the Eastern Partnership countries). These interventions are considered to fall outside the scope of this evaluation.

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[3] See *Notitie: Matra Gemoderniseerd, 16 oktober 2009, p.* 22

2 Methodology and Process steps

2.1 Programme Intervention Logic / results chain

Following the initial desk research and subsequent consultation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Figure 1 illustrates the reconstructed programme intervention logic that has been used as frame of reference during the evaluation.
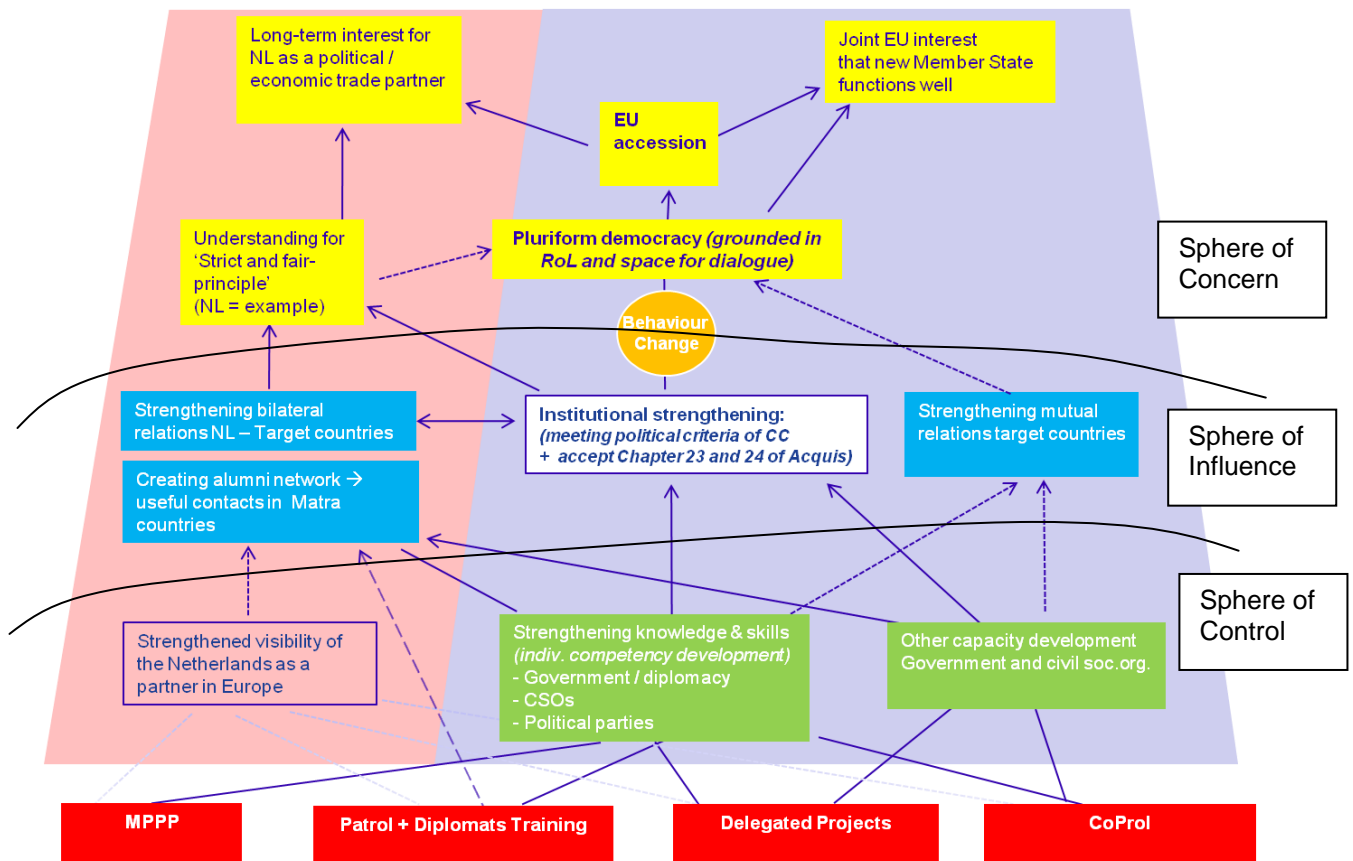
Figure 1 Illustration of Matra Programme Intervention Logic[4]

From bottom-up, starting point are the interventions (programme activities) that took place within the four programme components. These interventions feed into two parallel results chains, that both consist of a sphere of control, influence and concern. The left chain reflects results related to the Netherlands' own interests in the Matra programme, while the right chain relates to the results to be achieved in the target countries of the programme.

Starting from the results to be achieved in the seven Matra target countries, it can be observed that the MPPP and the PATROL / Diplomats components are primarily seen as training programmes, having a more or less exclusive focus on strengthening knowledge and skills of cadres of political parties and civil servants / diplomats respectively. The other two programme components (CoPROL and Delegated projects) have a broader and more diverse scope that includes training, but also other capacity development activities (e.g. technical advice for system development, provision of resources for scaling up / professionalise activities, etc.).

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[4] The left (pink) column reflects the intervention logic related to the direct interests of the Netherlands, while the purple part relates to the interests of the target countries. The yellow boxes refer to results at impact level (i.e. in the sphere of concern), the blue and white results boxes refer to results at outcome level (i.e. sphere of influence) respectively related to the creation of international relations / networks and the institutional strengthening within one of the target countries. The green boxes reflect results on output level (i.e. sphere of control) with the red boxes being the programme components feeding into this.

All these competency and capacity development of government, political parties and civil society are expected to contribute to stable and strong institutions and a sound legal framework that help guarantee a pluralist democracy grounded in the rule of law in which human rights are respected and minorities protected (i.e. the political criteria of the Copenhagen Criteria (CC) and chapters 23 (Judiciary and fundamental rights) and 24 (Justice, freedom and security) of the Acquis of the EU.

This result means that the institutional structures, capabilities and legislative frameworks needed for a pluralist democracy to function in line with EU requirements are in place. It is only when these structures, capabilities and frameworks are being used as intended that real progress towards Pluralist Democracy will be made. In other word a change in behaviour of government, political parties and civil society is needed that demonstrates adaptation of the spirit of EU values and standards.

Once sufficient progress in this democratisation process can be demonstrated on all three Copenhagen Criteria for accession countries, the prospect of EU accession becomes closer, provided the EU is able to absorb the new member states. Additionally, the Western Balkan countries have signed the declaration formulated at the EU-Western Balkans Summit in Thessaloniki, 21 June 2003, which encompasses additional criteria and agreements between these countries and the EU. Once a country has obtained EU membership it no longer qualifies for Matra support, making that EU accession conceptually marks the end of the Matra Programme. The overall objective of the Matra programme is, however, not EU accession, but to help ascertain that target countries are able to live up to the requirements of being an EU member state.

Looking at the other result chain related to the Netherlands' own interests, the immediate result of the four programme components is for the Netherlands to become an appreciated and visible partner to EU accession state. The interventions under the programme therefore have the explicit objective of network development at both individual (in particular joint training programmes) and institutional level (in particular twinning programmes). The strengthening of ties between target countries and the Netherlands at both individual and institutional level is expected to strengthen the understanding of Dutch norms and values and in particular the "strict and fair" policy that the Netherlands applies in EU accession negotiations. On one side this increased understanding of the Netherlands' strict and fair notion is expected to be an additional impetus for reforms towards a pluralist democracy, while in the longer run it is expected that this will benefit the political and economic interests of the Netherlands before and even more so after EU accession.

2.2   Link between Evaluation Criteria and Intervention Logic

As mentioned earlier, the evaluation is expected to assess **relevance, effectiveness and (quality of) programme management.** Linking these evaluation criteria to the programme intervention logic as illustrated above helps in clarifying the focus / emphasis that was adopted in the evaluation.

According to the TOR (Annex 1), relevance is to be regarded for the programme as a whole as well as for the four programme components, whereby three dimensions of relevance are to be questioned, being:
1. Responding to priority needs / challenges faced in the context of the target countries.
2. Consistent with Netherlands' policy priorities in the region.
3. Complementing other on-going donor-funded programmes.

Assessing relevance at programme level is understood as a *review of intended results in the scope of influence of the programme (i.e. Institutional Strengthening and the Strengthening of bilateral relations)* in light of country priority needs / Netherlands' policy priorities and other donor-funded programmes. Assessment of relevance at programme component level will focus on the *intended results in the scope of control (i.e. competency and capacity building and visibility of the Netherlands as partner).*

Similarly effectiveness is understood on two levels. At programme level, assessing effectiveness is understood as the *extent to which Matra interventions have contributed to the intended results in the scope of influence*, while at programme component level the *effects of interventions in terms of achieving intended results in the sphere of control* (competency / capacity building) will be reviewed.

Given that effectiveness requires insight in both intended and actual results, the assessment of effectiveness is only possible once the programme has sufficiently progressed and is able to demonstrate actual results. This is not (yet) the case for the CoPROL component, while the MPPP effectiveness highly depends on the availability of results oriented monitoring data. In addition the nature and scale of the PATROL/Diplomats component is considered too small to result in a measurable contribution to the institutional strengthening objective.

This means that in terms of effectiveness at programme level the evaluation set out to identify more specific institutional strengthening objectives at country level, concentrating the effectiveness assessment on the extent to which Delegated Projects achieved immediate project outputs and longer term outcomes but within and beyond the scope of the project (see Annex 3c and 3d for the list of samples projects and the list with all projects). In addition the evaluation set out to assess effectiveness in the creation of alumni networks and the strengthening of bilateral linkages that resulted respectively from the PATROL/Young Diplomats courses and the Delegated Projects. See also Figure 2 below.
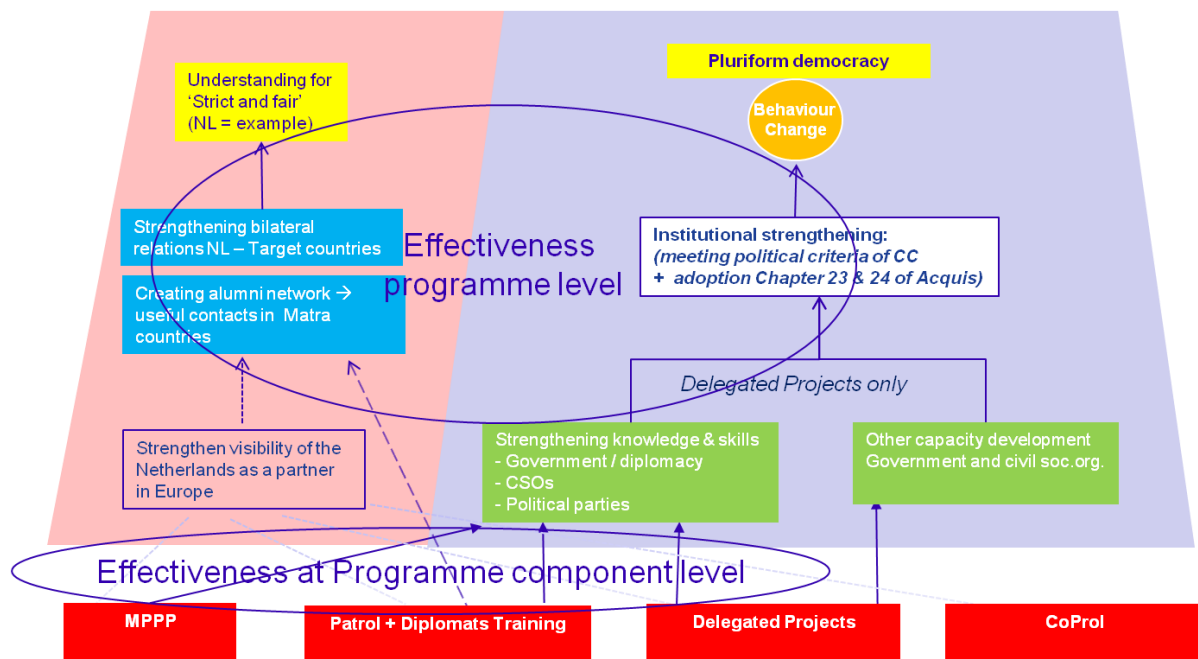
Figure 2 Focus in terms of assessing effectiveness

According to the TOR, the quality of programme management (in particular the capacity to ascertain sound portfolio management at embassy level) is regarded in terms of project cycle management related to the interventions that represent the four programme components. The assessment of the quality of Programme management therefore will concentrate primarily on the indicative programming (i.e. translation of the overall programme framework into a more specific framework, where applicable), identification, formulation, appraisal / approval, administration and monitoring of interventions by the respective responsible entities (see Table 1).

Table 1 Responsible entities per programme component

Programme Component	Responsible entities to be evaluated
CoPROL	DEU and Main Implementing Partners
PATROL	T.M.C. Asser Institute
Diplomat Courses	Clingendael Institute
Delegated Projects	Embassies in target countries
MPPP	BZK and Implementing Party Foundations.

2.3 Evaluation Framework

The specific methodological approach that has been adopted in this evaluation is described in detail in the evaluation framework (see Annex 2a). This framework covers the three evaluation criteria and the four programme components illustrating for each evaluation question, the means of verification / indicators and the sources of information that have been used. Within the same annex additional data collection tools are attached, including: survey questionnaire, interview guidelines and judgement criteria. The judgement criteria were meant to guide the team in data collection and help assure a consistent assessment of findings among the various team members. In this way it became possible to compare findings and conclusions across countries.

The evaluation framework also illustrates the mixture of data collection methods that have been used, including: desk study, survey (in particular among PATROL / Diplomat course participants), Skype and face-to-face interviews with stakeholders in the Netherlands and in the target countries. In addition, three countries (Albania, Serbia and Turkey) were visited for more in-depth data collection. By using different complementary data collection methods where possible, triangulation of data for most of the Evaluation Questions was done to strengthen the reliability of the evaluation findings.

During the inception process it was agreed that Contribution Analysis would only make sense if a coherent portfolio of Matra interventions, large enough to make a significant contribution to a higher level objective, would be encountered in one of the three visited countries. This has not been the case; hence the evaluation has focused on a results-chain analysis of a sample of projects, looking at subsequent results at project output, project outcome and wider outcome level (national RoL improvement relevant for EU accession).

2.4 Process steps

The evaluation has largely taken place as planned in the inception report (see Figure 3) with the exceptions that data collection through Skype / telephone interviews has continued till the end of January 2015 and the final report was delivered end of April.

Acitivity	October		November				December				January 2015				February				March					April
week	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Start up meeting		28 Oct.																						
Inceptie rapport	20 okt - 10 Nov																							
Comments / suggestions MinFA on the Inception report					17 Nov.																			
Completion data collection instruments (interviews guides / survey questionnaires)					18 - 26 Nov																			
Execute Survey							26 Nov - 10 Dec																	
Interviews (skype and face-to-face)							1 - 12 Dec					7 - 16 Jan												
Field visit Serbia - Sharon								14 - 18 Dec																
Field visit Albania - Mike												11 - 16 Jan												
Field visit Turkey (to be confirmed) - Sharon												11 - 16 Jan												
Data processing and analysis														20 - 30 Jan										
Report (1st draft)															2 - 20 Febr									
Comments Draft report																			23 feb - 13 March					
Final report																						16 - 27 March		

Figure 3 Gantt chart of evaluation process

3   The current context of EU enlargement

As noted in Chapter 1, the Matra programme focuses on helping pre-accession countries to meet the Copenhagen criteria and adopt the acquis of the EU as preconditions for EU accession. This means that the formal general objective of the Matra programme is to contribute to the development of a plural democracy, grounded in the rule of law, with room for dialogue between government and civil society. Thus, Matra projects are expected to work towards the strategic objectives espoused by the EU in the area of rule of law. Previous evaluations of Matra's implementation in the Western Balkans have exposed the broad scope of priorities entertained in the execution of the programme, as well as the risk that Balkan governments' resistance to the absorption of funds (e.g. due to different political visions and realities) may lead to a redirection of Dutch support towards other recipients (e.g. civil society), and thus imbalances in the attainment of envisaged strategic goals.

In the context of the current evaluation's predominantly empirical and inductive approach, and in view of the different policy accents placed by the Netherlands and the EU in approaching the countries of South-eastern Europe, it may at times be hard to see the wood for the trees. It is for this reason that a sketch of the mainframe of the EU's enlargement policy is useful, in particular to deconstruct the conditionality applied by the EU in the field of the rule of law. To do so will allow a better assessment of the measure with which the Matra programme has contributed to helping pre-accession countries meet the Copenhagen criteria and adopt the acquis of the EU as preconditions for EU accession. To arrive at this point, a brief overview is given of the evolution of the EU enlargement process and the position of the seven MATRA countries therein during the period under review.

3.1   EU enlargement process

Since its inception, the EU has grown from 6 to 28 member states (see Annex 4c, Box 1). The EU's next enlargement is expected sometime in the early 2020s. Eight countries are recognised by the EU as having the prospect to become members: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey (Iceland is discarded from the current research as it does not fall within Matra's remit). With the exception of Turkey, all these countries are small in terms of population. If all current candidate and potential candidate countries joined the EU, it would comprise 36 member states with a total population of around 590m. Its combined annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) would grow from US$16.7 trillion to US$17.6 trillion (International Monetary Fund (IMF) World Economic Outlook 2014 (2014)).

The accession process follows a series of steps, from a formal membership application to the ratification of the final accession treaty. These steps are primarily monitored by the European Commission (DG NEAR, previously DG Enlargement), but the actual negotiations are conducted between the EU member states and each candidate country.

For the current (potential) candidates is has mostly been practice to sign an (stabilisation and) association agreement to help prepare it for candidacy and eventual membership. Most countries currently in the enlargement process did or do not meet the criteria to even begin negotiations before they applied, so they need(ed) many years to prepare for the process. An association agreement helps prepare for this first step. In the case of the Western Balkans, a special process – the Stabilization and Association Process – exists to deal with the special circumstances there.

When a country formally applies for membership, the European Council asks the Commission to prepare an opinion ('avis') on the country's readiness to become an official candidate for membership. This does not necessarily mean that formal negotiations will immediately be opened. The Council can then either accept or reject the Commission's opinion. If the Council agrees to open negotiations, then a 'screening process' begins, whereby the Commission and candidate country

make a gap analysis of the country's laws and the EU acquis (the full body of EU law). The Council then recommends opening negotiations on 'chapters' of law that it feels there is sufficient common ground to have constructive negotiations. Negotiations are typically a matter of the EU telling the candidate country what it needs to do to be fully aligned with the acquis, and the candidate convincing the EU that its laws and administrative capacity are sufficient to execute EU law, which can be implemented as seen fit by the member states. A chapter is said to be provisionally closed when both sides have agreed it has been implemented sufficiently, however it can still be re-opened if the Commission feels that the candidate has fallen out of compliance. A chapter is only finally closed when the negotiations as a whole are closed and the accession treaty is signed.

To assess progress achieved by countries in preparing for accession to the European Union, the European Commission submits 'regular' reports to the European Council. Although normally these annual reports are referred to as 'progress reports', the actual evolution of preparedness of a potential candidate country is not one of constant progress. As Table 2 below shows, countries have been found to stagnate or even regress on the reforms expected by the Commission. Semantics aside, the reports serve as a basis for the Council to make decisions on next steps in the process.

Once the accession negotiations are complete an Accession Treaty will be signed, which must then be ratified by all EU member states, the institutions of the Union, and the candidate country. Once this has been completed the latter will join the Union on the date specified in the treaty.

The entire process, from application for membership to accession has typically taken about a decade, although some countries, notably Sweden, Finland, and Austria have been faster, taking only a few years. For most countries in the current group, the process from application through accession is taking far longer, as much as several decades (cf. the 1963 Ankara Agreement, on association with Turkey).

Table 2 Status and evolution of enlargement countries (based on a comparative analysis of the Commission's regular reports)

Countries	Status Jan. 2012	Status Dec. 2014	Evolution
Albania	Applicant state (since 2009), SAA in force	Candidate country, not yet in accession negotiations	Progress
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Potential candidate country, SAA ratified by all member states but not EU	Potential candidate country, SAA ratified by all member states but not EU	Stagnation / regression
Kosovo	Potential candidate, SAA negotiations not yet started	Potential candidate, Initialled SAA	Limited progress
Macedonia	Candidate country, not yet in accession negotiations	Candidate country, not yet in accession negotiations	Stagnation / regression
Montenegro	Candidate country, not yet in accession negotiations	Candidate country, in accession negotiations	Progress
Serbia	Applicant state (since 2009), SAA ratified by all member states but not EU	Candidate country, not yet in accession negotiations	Progress
Turkey	Candidate country, in accession negotiations	Candidate country, in accession negotiations	Stagnation

The enlargement process has developed and changed considerably over the decades, reflecting the differing situations and needs of the applicants and the growth of the EU's accumulated policies and laws (acquis). The EU has implemented lessons learnt, particularly from the enlargements of 2004 and 2007. Thus, future enlargement to the states of the Western Balkans emerging from conflict and transition will be a very different proposition to the first enlargement to the established democracies of the UK, Ireland and Denmark in the 1970s.

Enlargement conditionality (that is the standards, processes and criteria required for a new country to join) first underwent a major gear shift in the early 1990s when the EU found itself facing the prospect of enlarging to a large number of former Communist Bloc countries in the early stages of a highly-challenging transition. To square the circle, the EU reached agreement in 1993 on the so-called '**Copenhagen Criteria**' (see Annex 4c, Box 2).

The European Council further reinforced the need for compliance with the Copenhagen Criteria in 1997. Around the same time, the principle of '**own merits**' was established, which stated that each aspirant country should make progress towards to EU accession based on its own efforts and at its own speed. Gradually, a greater emphasis was placed on the EU's own '**absorption capacity**' of new members. This so-called 'fourth Copenhagen Criterion' has proved a powerful driver of those member states which are worried about incorporating bigger and poorer candidate countries (i.e. Turkey).

In 2003, the so-called 'Thessaloniki declaration' was adopted at the EU-Western Balkans summit, which spelled out additional membership criteria geared at overcoming the legacy of the region's violent recent past (i.e. full cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia; return of refugees; settling of claims).

Further innovations have been introduced to facilitate their application, such as the development of **benchmarks** that aspirant countries must meet in order to progress during negotiations of the 35 Chapters of the EU's acquis. Closing benchmarks (standards to be reached before Chapters can be provisionally closed) were introduced to strengthen the conditionality applying to Romania and Bulgaria's accession negotiations. Opening benchmarks (standards to be achieved before Chapters can be provisionally opened) were introduced and first applied to Croatia and Turkey. Interim benchmarks (standards to be met before closing benchmarks are set) have been put in place for Montenegro and Serbia with respect to negotiations on the chapters related to the rule of law.

Over the past five years, the Commission has strengthened the credibility of enlargement policy and enhanced its transformative power by ensuring a stronger focus on addressing fundamental reforms early in the enlargement process. In its 2012 enlargement strategy the Commission introduced a **new approach to rule of law**, by front-loading ('fundamentals first') the issues covered by Chapters 23 and 24 of the accession process (see Annex, Boxes 3 and 4). Nowadays, the Commission puts particular emphasis on the three pillars of rule of law, economic governance and public administration reform.

According to the Commission, in its latest Enlargement Strategy, the accession process is rigorous, built on '**strict but fair**' conditionality, established criteria and the principle of own merit. This is crucial for the credibility of enlargement policy, for providing incentives to enlargement countries to pursue far-reaching reforms and for ensuring the support of EU citizens. It is worth noting that the Commission has thus adopted the adagio first introduced by the Netherlands and like-minded member states, but has not kept pace with the change in attitude to conditionality displayed by The Hague since ('**strict and fair**').

It is important pointing out that, in terms of the process, the member states remain in control of every stage, from the definition of the membership criteria, to the direction of the enlargement strategy,

whether to accept a membership application, to grant (potential) candidate country status, to open accession negotiations, to open individual negotiation chapters, to agree screening reports, to set opening/interim/closing benchmarks, etc. The prevalence of unanimity means that, at each of these stages, individual member states may exercise a veto to block or hold up the progress of an aspirant country on its pre-accession track. Moreover, through their national ratification procedures for Accession Treaties, each national parliament also has a veto on new members joining the EU.

3.2 Fundamentals first: Elements of the rule of law

The rule of law is a fundamental value on which the EU is founded and is at the heart of the accession process. Countries aspiring to join the Union need to establish and promote from an early stage the proper functioning of the core institutions necessary for securing the rule of law. Rule of law is crucial for a stable business environment, providing legal certainty for economic operators, supporting consumers and stimulating investment, jobs and growth.

Strengthening the rule of law is a key challenge for most of the countries in the enlargement process, in particular in terms of:
- improving the functioning and independence of the judiciary;
- fighting corruption; and
- fighting organised crime.

This will require strong political will, moving beyond declarations to tangible results. Countries are required to build up credible track records of investigations, prosecutions and final convictions in cases of organised crime and corruption, with adequate sentencing and confiscation of assets. In most cases, far-reaching **judicial reforms** need to be undertaken with the aim of ensuring independent and efficient judicial systems capable of ensuring fair trials, where judges are appointed and promoted on merit and where they are impartial and accountable. Judicial reform strategies are in place in most countries. However, as recent research for the countries in the Western Balkans points out implementation is at an early stage and numerous challenges remain (see contributions to S. Rodin (ed.), Judicial Application of International Law in the Western Balkans (Springer 2015)). Independence of state judicial councils needs to be ensured, more sound procedures for the appointment of judges and prosecutors put in place and judicial independence needs to be safeguarded whilst ensuring accountability. The regression in a number of Southeast European countries (e.g. Turkey, Macedonia) is a token of the limits of the EU's oft-hailed 'soft power'. Quality and efficiency of justice is often lacking, with excessive case backlogs in most countries and difficulties enforcing court decisions. In all countries under survey, a change in judicial culture is needed towards an increased focus on delivering a service for citizens.

Corruption remains a serious problem in most enlargement countries. In areas such as public procurement and in privatisation, corrupt practices continue to divert scarce resources from national budgets, negatively affecting the business and investment climate, which needs legal certainty to thrive. Corruption also affects citizens directly when accessing certain public services such as education and health services. Tools to effectively prevent corruption remain under-used. There is a need for more proactive, well-coordinated and effective law enforcement to ensure corruption cases, including at high level, are properly investigated, prosecuted and sanctioned. Here too, the EU, by way of the Commission, requires a sustained track record of substantial results. Countries must ensure a strong framework for the prevention of corruption, with further efforts needed as regards the financing of political parties and election campaigns, the management of conflicts of interest, transparency in the use of public funds, access to information and the seizure and confiscation of assets. Public administration reform and public financial management will be crucial in this regard. Improvements in data collection and accessibility are needed to improve transparency and help monitor the implementation of anti-corruption policies.

The fight against **organised crime** remains a significant issue in most enlargement countries. Progress is being made, but much more needs to be done to provide law enforcement bodies and prosecution services with effective legal and investigative tools to properly fight and sanction organised crime and to ensure proactive investigations. Fighting organised crime and corruption is fundamental to countering criminal infiltration of the political, legal and economic systems. Law enforcement bodies, prosecution services and the judiciary need to be made more resilient to corruption and more controls put in place to detect apparently legal businesses providing a front for criminal activities. The capacity to conduct complex financial investigations as well as to tackle money laundering needs to substantially improve and new threats such as cybercrime need to be addressed. Proceeds of crime need to be effectively confiscated a system of extended confiscation of assets introduced and consideration given to criminalising illicit enrichment to address the phenomenon of unexplained wealth. The cross-border nature of many criminal activities and organised crime groups requires enhanced regional and international cooperation, with improved responses to EU member states' requests for police and judicial cooperation (incl. through the relevant European agencies, in particular Europol, Eurojust and Frontex).

3.3   Commission approach to rule of law in Southeast Europe

According to the Commission's latest progress reports, there have been some positive developments over the past year in the field of the rule of law in the aspirant Member States in Southeast Europe (see Annex, Box 5). The opening of chapters 23 and 24 provides an important framework for Montenegro to implement its comprehensive action plans covering a wide range of rule of law issues. Serbia is well advanced in developing similar action plans in the run up to starting its accession negotiations in these chapters. In Albania, efforts have been made to tackle organised crime. And a working group on chapter 23 has been set up under the positive agenda with Turkey.

The Commission continues to attach a high priority to all aspects of rule of law in the enlargement countries and requires solid track records of reform implementation to be developed throughout the process of preparing for accession. Rule of law issues are now being addressed at an early stage of the accession process with all candidate countries, and progress in this field is an important consideration when deciding on each stage of the EU accession process.

More broadly, the Commission is using all available instruments to strengthen the rule of law, including through its regular monitoring, in particular through the joint bodies under the Stabilisation and Association Agreements (SAAs), assessment missions and structured dialogues; through its reporting, especially the progress reports; through financial assistance, with a major focus on rule of law under IPA II; through institution building, Taiex, Twinning, and peer reviews, which bring judges, prosecutors and other experts in law enforcement, border management and migration from the member states into direct contact with their counterparts. In addition, individual EU member states have initiated programmes in support of the accession progress. On one side these are meant to complement and reinforce EU support processes, on the other side these are meant as instruments for individual countries to strengthen bilateral relations and emphasise own areas of interest in the accession process. The Matra programme is one of these and is therefore evaluated in this context.

4 Findings and analysis per programme component

In the following sub-chapters the facts and figures followed by analytical findings per programme component are reflected in response to the evaluation questions of the ToR.

4.1 CoPROL

4.1.1 Facts and Figures CoPROL

The current policy framework for Matra CoPROL is effective for the period 2013-2015 and contains the administrative rules for assessing applications for grants within this framework.[5] The policy principles underpinning the CoPROL programme are twofold: first, its overarching policy objective is to strengthen the capacity of government institutions in pre-accession countries in Eastern Europe to meet the Copenhagen criteria through partnerships with Dutch governmental and semi-governmental institutions on negotiation chapters 23 (Judiciary and fundamental rights) and 24 (Justice, freedom and security) of acquis of the EU. Secondly, the programme promotes closer ties between Dutch government institutions and their counterparts in the target countries, particularly by strengthening these countries' ties to the Netherlands and their appreciation of the Netherlands' 'strict and fair'-approach to EU enlargement.

The CoPROL programme focuses on three themes, which all concern aspects of the acquis which are essential to the process of transformation:
1. Legislation and justice
2. Public administration/public order/police/immigration policy- good governance
3. Human rights and minorities.

Submission and approval procedures have been formulated and are worked out in extensive detail in the overview of assessment criteria.[6] The application process is organised via a tendering procedure to ensure equal assessment of all submitted proposals. The assessment of the proposals takes place in three subsequent phases:
1) Threshold criteria (drempeltoets; D-test); applications have to meet all threshold criteria, failure to meet one single threshold criteria leads to rejection of the application
2) Organisation criteria (O-test); assessment of quality of organisation, mainly: track record, planning, monitoring and evaluation, and financial and administrative management criteria. Assessment is done in the form of a score, minimal score is 60%.
3) Programme criteria (P-test); assessment of quality of programme application. Assessment is done in the form of a score, minimal score is 60%.

The CoPROL component of the Matra programme ran in two phases with three approved projects each. The available budget for this programme was €12 million for the period 2013-2015 and the six projects that are currently running have a total value of €6.725.066.[7] (see Table 3). In the first phase of CoPROL ten proposals were submitted, of which three have been awarded with a total value of €4.6 million (out of the available €6 million).In the second phase of CoPROL, 11 projects were submitted, of which three were awarded with a value of €2.1 million out of the available €6.5 million. [8]

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[5] Order of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of 30 November 2012, no. DEU-1055/2012, laying down administrative rules and a ceiling for grants awarded under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grant Regulations 2006 (Matra CoPROL)

[6] See *Programmatoets format 12112013* and *Policy Framework Matra CoPROL 2013*

[7] Source: *Overview CoPROL Projects*

[8] Besluit van de Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken van 12 juli 2013, nr. DEU-0575/2013, tot vaststelling van beleidsregels en een subsidieplafond voor subsidiëring op grond van de Subsidieregeling Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken 2006 (Matra CoPROL 2014-2015)

Table 3 Overview of approved CoPROL Projects

	Country	Project	Lead party	Alliance	Partners in Netherlands	Start	End	Budget (€)
Phase 1	Albania, Macedonia, Kosovo	Improvement of Prison Conditions for Reintegration of Juvenile Detainees in Albania, Macedonia and Kosovo	Nederlands Helsinki Comite	N.A.	DJI, V&J	01-Jun-13	31-Dec-15	1,466,500
	Turkey, Serbia Albania	Leadership Programme for Security and Rule of Law	VNG International	HALG, CILC en ROI PBLQ	V&J, VNG	01-Sep-13	30-Nov-15	2,192,481
	Albania en Bosnia-Herzegovina	Promoting a Victim Centered Approach in Trafficking Cases in Albania and Bosnia Herzegovina	Nederlands Helsinki Comite	N.A.	SSR – Training and Study Centre for the Judiciary	01-Jun-13	31-Dec-15	964,300
Phase 2	Kosovo	Protecting Children in Kosovo: From Policy to Practice	Defence for Children	N.A.	V&J, Raad voor Kinderbescherming	01-Jan-14	31-Dec-15	540,081
	Montenegro	Support to the Probation Service and the System for Alternative Sanctions in Montenegro	Nederlands Helsinki Comite	CILC	Stichting Reclassering	01-Jan-14	31-Dec-15	807,685
	Bosnia-Herzegovina	Further Strengthening Asylum and Migration Management in Bosnia and Herzegovina	Center for International Legal Cooperation	Vluchtelingen Werk Nederl.	IND, COA,	01-Jun-14	31-May-16	754,019

In the two phases of applications, 15 proposals have been rejected. The reasons for rejection are depicted in table 4 below.

Applications have been rejected based on the threshold criteria 7 times: 3 times criterion D5 (adequate financial management); 2 times criterion D2 (involvement Dutch (semi-)government institutions); 2 times multiple criteria were not met. Out of the 8 proposals that passed the threshold criteria, 5 failed to meet the minimal required score for the organisation criteria and 2 applications failed to meet the minimal required score for the programme criteria. Finally, 1 project has been rejected because it was submitted too late.

Table 4 Overview of rejected projects

Project name	Thematic area	Lead agency	Reason for rejection
Respected, Served and Protected	LGBT	COC Nederland	P-test failed (46,8%)
Positioning Croatia as an EU member state in South-East Europe: Enhancing capacity for effective and efficient execution of EU responsibilities with focus on rule of law (chapter 23/24) within Croatia and in the Balkan region by means of Value Chain Management	Justice	Leiden University	D-test failed (D5 financial control)
Albania: reinforcing the regulatory process and good governance of the new Mental Health Act (2012): implementation support and strengthening the position of mental patients in society	Legislative reform	Healthy Progress	D-test failed (D.2, D.4, D.5, D.8 en D.10.)
Improving state budget accountability through stakeholder capacity building	Good Govern.	Nicolaas Witsen Stichting	O-test failed (34,3%)
Partnership for Tolerance: promoting and implementing rule of law LGBT in Serbia	LGBT	Rutgers WPF	O-test failed (42,8%)
Strengthening the Administration of Justice in the Republic of Serbia	Criminal law	TMC Asser Institute	O-test failed (54,3%)
Crossing the Borders - Strengthening Capacities for International Legal Assistance in Criminal Cases in the Western Balkans	Legal support	Center for International Legal Cooperation	O-test failed (40,5%) *Rejected twice.*
Albania: reinforcing the regulatory process and good governance of the new Mental Health Act (2012): Implementation support and strengthening the position of mental health patients in society	Mental health	Healthy Progress	D-test failed (D.2, D.5, D.8 en D.10)
Partners in tolerance: promoting and implementing rule of law LGBTI	LGBT	Rutgers WPF	P-test failed (37,1%)
Enhancing the Turkish criminal justice system through the improved used of forensic science	Judicial research	Center for International Legal Cooperation	D-test failed (D5 financial control)
Crossing the Borders - Strengthening Capacities for International Legal Assistance in Criminal Cases in the Western Balkans	Legal support	Center for International Legal Cooperation	D-test failed (D5 financial control)
Partners in justice - harmonization, operationalization and the coordination of alternative measures with the juvenile justice and the child protection system in Bosnia and Herzegovina	Child protection / justice	Save the Children	O-test failed (54,3%)
Overgave en Verzet	Child protection / justice	Islamitisch instituut voor maatschappelijke activering	*Submitted too late.*
Respected, Served and Protected	LGBT	COC Nederland	D-test failed (D2 involvement NL govt. Agency)
Increasing expertise on trafficking of the judiciary and prosecution in Serbia and Macedonia	Judiciary	Nederlands Helsinki Comite	D-test failed (D2 involvement NL govt. Agency)

4.1.2 Analytical findings CoPROL

Concerning relevance:
The six approved CoPROL projects all address relevant Rule of Law issues in the various target countries. Issues like: the improvement of the Juvenile Justice system, the promotion of a victim-centred approach in human trafficking or the strengthening of leadership and local democracy in the public security sector, all concern Rule of Law areas in which substantial improvement is required in light of EU accession. The priority of the issues addressed, as demonstrated by the sense of urgency and ownership in the target countries, varies among projects and countries. Looking at the three projects approved in the first round of CoPROL applications[9], the government institutes that stand to benefit, demonstrated a varied level of interest and involvement in these projects. Some were fully aware and able to provide clear examples of direct involvement in shaping project activities, while others expressed their appreciation without being able to demonstrate in-depth knowledge or active involvement.

Also the underlying intention of CoPROL to strengthen Government-to-Government cooperation is seen as highly relevant by government officials involved, representatives of the international community and independent experts. Linking officials from judicial and government institutes with their natural counterparts is widely seen as a sensible and effective way of sharing knowledge and experiences. Some officials of international organisations go even further and consider this the only way of exerting influence over senior judiciary / government officials in a context where progress in Rule of Law reform is found to be notoriously slow. *"No one talks better to a judge than another judge"* is a statement that would apply widely.

The relevance of CoPROL projects in light of what other donors, in particular the EU, are doing is also quite convincing. Project documents include a description of how the project fits and complements other past or on-going initiatives, while project partners describe deliberate efforts made during project design to build or expand on other initiatives. In most cases, reference is made to other organisations working on similar issues, succinctly describing that the project is meant to build on their work, while in some cases also the "how" is explained. In project documents, the relevance of the project in light of the EU acquis (chapter 23 and 24) is claimed and explained, but without linking this in further detail to priorities identified in the latest EU progress reports.

It is less convincingly clear how relevance in light of what others are doing is monitored during implementation. After approval the shift focuses to implementation and while relevant donor coordination mechanisms exist in most Matra countries, be it of varying quality, it is not clear how project management systematically engages in such mechanisms to secure optimal continued relevance. The fact that programme management takes place from the Netherlands obviously also complicates the regular engagement in wider donor coordination efforts.

Concerning effectiveness:
As explained in the inception report, effectiveness requires the availability of information concerning both intended and actual results. The first round of CoPROL projects started in the 2nd half of 2013 with projects having a duration of 27 to 36 months. Annual progress reports are to be delivered before the end of the first quarter of the calendar year, making that at present only the 2013 reports are available, logically providing limited information about actual results. Nevertheless progress towards results through the completion of project activities is described during interviews and in internal monitoring documents (e.g. minutes of meetings). Not surprisingly at this stage of implementation, most information is activity related, though some signs of results can be found (e.g. upgrading of infrastructural facilities in prisons, efforts made by representatives of beneficiary institutes to put new insights in practice, recommendations incorporated in the newly adopted asylum and migration law in BiH). Despite such initial signs of progress, overall it is too early to draw substantive conclusions concerning the effectiveness of CoPROL projects in increasing the capacity

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[9] 1) Leadership Programme for Security and Rule of Law in Albania, Serbia and Turkey (VNG-International), 2) Promoting a victim-centred approach in Trafficking cases in Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina (NHC) and 3) Improvement of Prison Conditions for Reintegration of Juvenile Detainees in Albania, Macedonia and Kosovo (NHC).

of target countries' partner institutions to meet the Copenhagen Criteria in light of the EU accession process.

Similar caution needs to be taken in drawing conclusions about effectiveness of CoPROL projects in strengthening bilateral relations. Also here encouraging initial signs are found, in particular at operational level (e.g. at level of prison directors) and less obvious at policy level. It is however remarkable that some CoPROL projects reflect Government-to-Government cooperation as part of the project strategy / approach, while in others it is explicitly included as indicator for success in the logical framework. The risk of this difference is that actual results in strengthening bilateral relations may not be documented if such results are not part of the project's results monitoring framework, which will later on complicate the assessment of effectiveness in this respect.

<u>Concerning Management of CoPROL;</u>

The management evaluation questions concerning the CoPROL component relate to the capacity of Dutch government bodies to cooperate with their partners in target countries and the quality of the CoPROL application process.

The CoPROL component was designed as a vehicle to facilitate increased and continued Government-to-Government cooperation in the strengthening of RoL in light of the EU accession of the seven countries on which Matra support has been concentrated since 2012. Direct 'contracting' of Dutch government agencies falling under the responsibility of another Ministry would be complicated given ministerial autonomy. In consultation with the interdepartmental committee for the strengthening of Rule of Law, which includes representatives of the ministries of justice, foreign affairs and home affairs, the public prosecutor and the police, it was decided to 'channel' the CoPROL component through Dutch-based NGOs, who would design and manage these Government-to-Government projects. For this purpose two public tender rounds have taken place, which resulted in the six approved CoPROL projects currently under implementation.

As mentioned, the shaping of the CoPROL component is the result of a deliberate reflection and consultation process of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with other relevant government agencies. In reviewing how these arrangements played out, the following observations can be made:

Even though the CoPROL component is meant to build and expand Government-to-Government relations, Dutch government agencies did not become consortium members but "cooperation partners" without contractual responsibilities vis-a-vis the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Lead Implementing Agency. This means that their capacity to partner in these projects has not been assessed as part of the appraisal process, as has been the case for the main applicant (NGO) and its formal consortium partners. The involvement of the Dutch and recipient government bodies had to be demonstrated through a letter of intent, which is a commitment to provide the necessary inputs necessary, but not an assessment that they actually have the capacity to do so. In a time of continuous budget cuts during which Dutch government agencies are forced to prioritise activities, it appears that some agencies had to reconsider their interest to participate in CoPROL while for others living up to CoPROL commitments proves to be an increasing challenge.

Another complicating factor in the CoPROL arrangement was that Dutch NGOs, which traditionally played a supporting and facilitating role in the pre-CoPROL Government-to-Government initiatives, were now expected to take on the responsibility for project design and management including the accountability for project results. This changes the dynamics of cooperation, whereby in a project meant to stimulate Government-to-Government cooperation the government bodies involved are positioned to provide expertise rather than being the driving force. In practice this meant that applying NGOs developed their own project ideas and took initiative to look for suitable and willing government partners to logically team up with. This is understandable but contrary to the original idea of government bodies taking the initiative to call upon NGOs to assist them in the design and management of projects meant to build new and expand on existing Government-to-Government relations. This reversal of roles continues during implementation with the main NGOs coordinating and monitoring the quality and results of inputs provided by cooperating government agencies in their effort to assume final responsibility and accountability for project results.

This shift has changed the nature of projects and initially caused some confusion or tension about roles, but does not mean that the projects in themselves have lost any of their relevance or likelihood to contribute to an improved RoL situation in the target countries.

Despite its deliberate design, there appears to be consensus that the CoPROL application process has not worked out satisfactory. The Ministry feels that the number and quality of applications has been disappointing with applicants in particular struggling to comply with the organisation capacity requirements (O-test). Embassies question the clarity, timing and intensity of their expected involvement, even though this has been streamlined in the second round. Applicants consider the application process too heavy and demands for eligibility too strict, while Dutch government agencies did not take the expected interest and initiative in getting projects designed. This would explain the low number of applications and the even lower number of approvals with a total commitment of € 6.7 million out of the available € 12 million. In this light DEU decided to cancel the third call for proposals, redirecting the remaining funds to other Matra components.

Nevertheless, the result of these extensive and time-consuming project design and proposal writing processes is the approval of six projects of substantial relevance meeting all eligibility, organisation and programmatic criteria. In light of the elaborate application process, the leading NGOs express some surprise or disappointment about the limited involvement of DEU during project implementation. Their projects deal with complex issues in a complicated setting, requiring regular adaptation and improvisation. They would like to see the Ministry more closely involved by acting as sounding board, providing feedback as well as political support and in reassuring its consent with significant deviations from the original plan.

4.2   PATROL and Diplomat courses

4.2.1 Facts and Figures PATROL / Diplomat courses

The second component of the Matra programme consists of two strands: the Pre-Accession Training programme on the Rule of Law (PATROL) for civil servants by the consortium of TMC Asser Institute, Ecorys and Hague Academy for Local Governance (HALG) and the training programme for young diplomats by Clingendael institute.

The general objective of the Matra PATROL programme for civil servants is threefold:
1.   To contribute to institutional capacity building of governmental organisations in the area of Rule of Law in the eight designated (pre –EU accession) countries in South East Europe (Albania, Croatia[10], Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo and Turkey), by sharing the necessary knowledge and skills with policy advisors, members of the judiciary and other civil servants working in the justice sector. This should enable the participants to lead and inspire the modernisation of the judicial systems of their home countries and enable them to adopt the EU Acquis, building from the Dutch experience.
2.   The creation of networks among the participants and between the participants and the (guest) lecturers and relevant government departments in order to promote the transfer of knowledge and the strengthening of local expertise in the various areas of policy.
3.   The strengthening of relationships with these countries by making the participants active and proud practitioners of the Dutch policy (strict and fair).[11]

The objective of the training courses for Young Diplomats is also threefold;
1.   The participants can afterwards contribute to the EU accession process of their country of origin.
2.   The training aims at contributing to strengthening the bilateral relationship between the Netherlands and the target countries, including strengthening the relationship of the participants with the Netherlands and strengthening the knowledge and understanding of Dutch policy.
3.   The creation of a network of alumni from the different countries is included, what eventually should strengthen the relations between the countries. [12]

This shows that both training programme focus on comparable objectives, although they contain slight differences adjusted to the different target groups.

PATROL civil servants

The consortium of TMC Asser Institute, Ecorys and HALG has broad experience in training of civil servants, policy makers, judges and prosecutors.
The programme runs from 1 September 2012 till 31 December 2015 and a total budget of €4 million is approved for the programme. The following deliverables have been agreed upon:

1. organisation and management of 8 annual training courses
2. development of an online learning platform
3. successful promotion and recruitment for the training courses
4. development of an alumni policy

An overview of the training courses for civil servants that are executed annually is depicted in Table 5. Each annual training series included approximately 25 participants. In total, 22 training courses with 538 participants (the targets were 24 trainings with 600 participants) have taken place from 2012 up till December 2014.[13]

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[10] Croatia has been excluded from participating in the Matra programme halfway the programme, as they joined the EU on 1 July 2013
[11] BEMO Matra PATROL net 2509
[12] BEMO Clingendael diplomatentraining
[13] Please note that the number of alumni that was approached for the online survey was different, as the survey was send out in November 2014 and these courses were still ongoing.

Table 5 Training courses and number of participants per course (series combined) 2012- 2014.

Name of Training Course	Number of series	Number of participants
Access to Justice	3	75
Administration of Justice	3	73
Alternative Dispute Resolution	3	74
Decentralisation	3	72
Integrity of Civil Servants	2	49
Public Finance Management	2	50[14]
Public Procurement	3	73
Quality, Implementation and Enforcement of Legislation	3	73
Total	**22**	**538**

The overview in Table 6 provides insight in the country of origin and gender of the participants in the PATROL trainings up till December 2014. This table shows that the distribution of the countries of origin is quite fair; although for Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro their share of participants is remarkably lower (8% and 11% resp.).

Table 6 Number of participants PATROL; per country and by sexe

Country	Male		Female		Total	
Albania	36	42%	49	58%	85	16%
Bosnia-Herzegovina	21	37%	36	63%	57	11%
Croatia	7	27%	19	73%	26	5%
Kosovo	39	48%	42	52%	81	15%
Macedonia	45	52%	41	48%	86	16%
Montenegro	14	33%	29	67%	43	8%
Serbia	25	34%	49	66%	74	14%
Turkey	69	80%	17	20%	86	16%
Total	**282**	**48%**	**256**	**52%**	**538**	**100%**

In addition Table 6 shows that 52% of the participants in the courses were female and 48% were male, which is in line with the gender-balance targets. Comparing the gender-balance per country it strikes that for most countries more female than male civil servants joined the training courses. In four countries the share of female participants is around (or more than) two-third (Bosnia, Croatia, Montenegro & Serbia). In contrast, the amount of female participants from Turkey is 20%.

Based on the interviews and annual reports of TMC Asser (for 2012 and 2013, the report for 2014 is not available yet), it can be concluded that the deliverables have been largely achieved:
- The trainings have been organised and managed, although the list of alumni shows that 2 trainings have not had a third cycle yet.
- An online learning platform is developed and used before and during the training courses.
- The promotion and recruitment has been quite successful, although it needs to be taken into account that the gender balance target for Turkey needs attention.
- The status of the development of the alumni policy is unclear; there is an online platform in place, but this is not used by the alumni.
- The trainings were realised within budget: Actual costs in 2012: €880.930,15; in 2013: €892.889,13 - incl. VAT.

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[14] TMC Asser was approached to check the 'missing' courses. They confirmed that there have been 3 series of all courses, making the total number of courses 24 and total number of participants 588. Nonetheless, the analysis is based on the list provided by the MFA, as details of these participants were not available to the evaluation team.

Young Diplomats

The Matra Young Diplomats training programme is awarded to Clingendael Institute for the period 15 July 2012 till 31 December 2014 with a total value of € 544.692 (2012 € 164.268 2013 € 167.553 and 2014 € 212.871). Clingendael has been providing training courses for young diplomats since 1991 and has a network of around 600 alumni from the target countries. In the trainings, special attention is paid to training both knowledge and skills and the following topics will be discussed, a.o.: functioning EU in general; EU accession conditionality; rule of law; international law (role and institutions in the Hague in this field); economic diplomacy; public diplomacy; human rights. Dutch policy will thereby be discussed emphatically. The agreed deliverables within this component are:

1. Development of a training course of six weeks for 20 participants in 2012, 2013 and 2014; incl. preparation, execution, evaluation and follow-up activities
2. *Alumni meeting in the Hague at the end of the programme (Dec. 2014)*

The number of participants in the Clingendael training course adds up to a total of 51 diplomats; the targeted number of participants was 60. The distribution per country of origin is depicted in table 5.

Table 7 Young Diplomats in Clingendael training, per country[15]

Country	Total	
Albania	10	20%
Bosnia Herzegovina	4	8%
Croatia	2	4%
Kosovo	7	14%
Macedonia	8	16%
Montenegro	9	18%
Serbia	5	10%
Turkey	6	12%
Total	**51**	**100%**

The training courses for young diplomats have achieved the set deliverables to a large extent:
- The training courses have been developed and implemented, although for various reasons only 51 participants have participated instead of the targeted 60.
- The alumnus meeting has been held in December 2014 in the Hague and was attended by 15 alumni.

4.2.2 Analytical findings PATROL / Diplomat courses

Concerning relevance:
The PATROL and Diplomat courses were outsourced by the Ministry, whereby the training topics were largely set. The contractors have conducted the courses according to contract, while in their own internal evaluations they have re-affirmed the relevance of training topics within the EU accession process.

In addition a survey questionnaire was sent to all 469 participants who attended a PATROL or Diplomat course in the period January 2012 – October 2014 with a response rate of 65% (304 respondents). The survey included a number of questions related to the relevance of courses with the following responses:

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[15] Sexe is not registered in the alumni list

Table 8 Relevance of training courses for EU accession

Question	Not at all	Some-what	Reason.	A lot	Rating Average (scale: 1.0-4.0)	Response Count
The training addressed the aspects of strengthening the Rule of Law that are most relevant to my country's EU accession.	2	28	134	124	3.32	288
The training addressed the aspects of the accession process that are most relevant to my country's EU accession.	8	42	147	95	3.13	292
All in all, the training I followed was useful for my country's EU accession process.	3	22	122	146	3.40	293

From the survey responses it appears that a large majority of participants (90%) rated the relevance of the courses from reasonable to high, in particular in relation to strengthening of the RoL situation. No significant difference in this was found between male and female participants. More significant differences can be observed between countries, whereby the Macedonian and Serbian participants gave the highest score (rating average 3.49 and 3.47) and Croatian respondents the lowest score (rating average 3.06). This illustrates that relevance for them may be going down with Croatia having obtained EU membership. Participants of the diplomat courses rated the relevance of courses for RoL lower, which is explained by the different nature of the courses being more focused on developing diplomatic competencies within the context of the EU than on specific RoL topics in the country of origin of participants.

Whilst reflecting on relevance during interviews, a somewhat different picture emerges. In these interviews the relevance of course content is reconfirmed. At the same time, questions are raised about the relevance of course participants. In other words: are the actual participants those who stand to benefit most from the course and are they in the best position to influence institutional practises back home based on newly acquired insights. Factors mentioned that prevent the courses from reaching the most relevant participants include: language barrier (often problematic for more senior staff) and limitations of the Dutch embassy network that affects the extent to which the courses are brought to the attention of the right participants (as participation requires an individual effort to register). These concerns with the selection of the most relevant participants are confirmed by the survey response of almost 50% of participants not having been involved in implementing EU accession *or* reform processes after the course (see figure below). Respondents that confirm involvement cite a wide range of examples related to policy making (see annex 4a), implementation and negotiation processes[16].
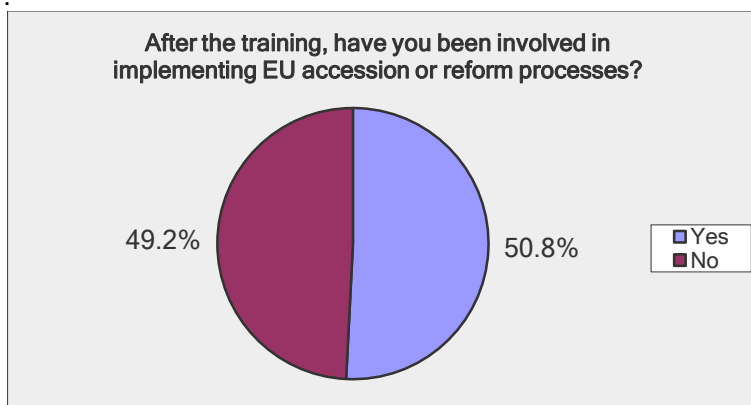
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Figure 4 Alumni involvement with reform processes following the training

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[16] It is therefore assumed that respondents understood that contributing to both *making* and *implementing* EU accession related policies as 'involvement'.

The use of government focal points to assist in the promotion of courses and the identification of participants has certainly helped broadening the pool of potential trainees. The same goes for efforts by some embassies to give the courses a higher profile by promoting them more formally through a communiqué of the ambassador. This certainly has increased the chances of attracting the most relevant participants, but it appears that further scope for improvement remains.

Another observation made concerning the relevance of courses is that key judiciary and government staff have 'competing' learning opportunities to choose from. Reference has been made to training opportunities in the UK and France, but also in other parts of Europe like: Slovenia, Poland and Turkey often within the context of regional twinning arrangements. Finally reference was made to learning opportunities that are embedded in larger interventions like the joint OECD/EU SIGMA (Support for Improvement in Governance and Management) initiative. Such courses often take place within the target country itself allowing for larger numbers of participants from the same institute, whilst being less affected by the language barrier through the use of interpreters.

In conclusion, the relevance of PATROL / Diplomat courses can be considered high in terms of content, but less in light of other learning opportunities that are available to those targeted by this programme component.

Concerning effectiveness:

The overall objective of the Matra PATROL programme is threefold:
1. To contribute to institutional capacity building of governmental organisations in the area of Rule of Law in the seven designated (pre –EU accession) countries in South East Europe.
2. The creation of networks among the participants and between the participants and the (guest) lecturers and relevant government departments in order to promote the transfer of knowledge and the strengthening of local expertise in the various areas of policy.
3. The strengthening of relationships with these countries by making the participants active and proud practitioners of the Dutch policy (*strict and fair*).

During the inception phase, it was already acknowledged that the gap between providing a 10-day course to approximately 100 participants from a range of governmental and judiciary institutes and the institutional capacity in the area of Rule of Law in the seven Matra countries was too large to identify a credible contribution. Therefore, in assessing the effectiveness of the PATROL / Diplomat courses the focus has been on the immediate effects of the training courses in terms of increased knowledge and skills of participants and on the medium-term effects in terms of participants making use of their increased competencies in Rule of Law related reforms in light of the EU accession process. In addition the development of bilateral ties between participants and the Netherlands as well as the establishment and use of networks among participants was assessed.

Table 9 Direct effects of the training courses on knowledge and skills of participants

Questions on immediate effects	Not at all	Some-what	Reason.	A lot	Rating Average (scale: 1.0-4.0)	Response Count
The training has provided me with better skills to implement relevant reforms in my country (for EU accession).	1	40	115	138	3.33	294
The training has increased my knowledge and understanding of the Netherlands' "strict and fair" policy on EU enlargement.	5	21	129	135	3.36	290
The training has increased my knowledge and understanding of the core European values and standards.	4	19	139	132	3.36	294

In terms of immediate effects of increased knowledge and skills, both the evaluation reports of the training institutes (T.M.C. Asser and Clingendael) and the survey responses provide a positive impression. Around 45% of survey respondents reported that the course had a lot of effect in terms of increased knowledge and skills, while another 39 to 47% claimed that the courses have resulted in a reasonable increase of their knowledge, skills and understanding of the Netherlands Strict and Fair policies and core European values and standards. This high score was reconfirmed during interviews with ex-participants, who in majority appreciated the quality of the training in terms of content, selection and quality of resource persons, interactive and diverse in training methods.

It is noteworthy that during both the PATROL and Diplomat courses so-called *Back Home Action Plans* were developed by participants to stimulate the application of learnings. Both training institutes acknowledge the importance of more systematic monitoring of actual implementation. Currently this is done once: six weeks for the PATROL courses and three months for the Diplomat courses after course completion. This may be too soon and insufficient to capture the real effects, making that current reports only provide anecdotal evidence of such effects. As mentioned before 51% (i.e. 152 of the survey respondents) confirm having been involved in EU accession related Rule of Law reform processes. Differences between countries are quite high with around 35% of the Croatian, Albanian, Turkish and Serbian participants claiming involvement, while all the other countries have more than 50% confirming involvement up to 78% of the Kosovar participants.

Approximately half of the respondents claim that the training has been of reasonable help in this, while another 33% indicate the training helped a lot. A total 112 respondents cite examples of their involvement, some rather generic, but 50 respondents refer to specific (law) reforms and another 21 to concrete processes related to the adoption of the EU Acquis. This group represents 37% of the total survey respondents, which can be considered a reasonable success, especially if we consider that this is 74% of those claiming to have had the actual opportunity of application their learnings.

Looking at the extent the PATROL / Diplomat courses have resulted in increased networks among each other, 277 survey respondents (92%) confirm having stayed in contact with other participants after the course, with 75% of the Turkish participants reporting the lowest level of contact.
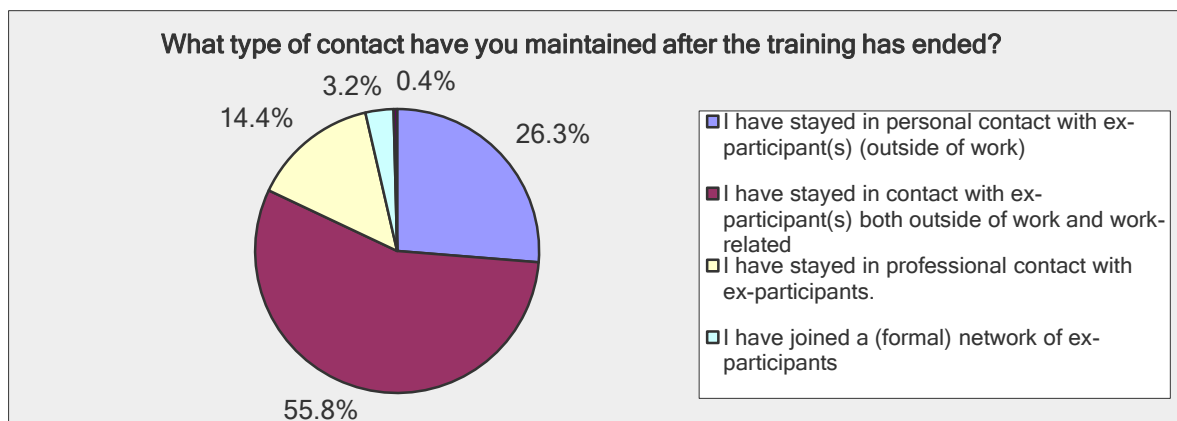
Figure 5 Network function: type of contacts maintained after the training

When looking into the type and frequency of contacts, a significant 70% of respondents label these contacts as at least partly work-related, while another 26% refer to this as purely personal. Out of the 174 respondents providing further details about these contacts, 55 cite concrete examples of work-content related interaction, while the rest mainly specify the type of interaction (in person, e-mail, social media, etc.). Most of these contacts remain informal, with 50% reporting contact at least once per month. Only 3% report having joined any form of formal network with ex-participants, despite all PATROL participants automatically being registered to the alumni site (www.matrapatrol.eu), but usage remains reportedly low. The survey results do not specify with whom participants have kept contact, but from looking at detailed responses and interviews it appears that even though the majority of these contacts may be with ex-participants from their own country for language and practical proximity reasons, there are also significant cross-border contacts being reported.

> Quote from one of the respondents:
> *"I'm in contact with a lot of participants ... also we had another training in Tirana.*
> *This training helped me a lot especially with participants from Republic of Serbia, because as u know*
> *we were in war with that country and I'm very glad that I had a lot of communication with the*
> *participants for problems that we have in our countries, especially in our way to EU.*
> *We continue to communicate also through Facebook now with lot of participants, and I think the*
> *training helped us a lot to share our ideas and our knowledge."*

Concerning the development of bilateral ties with the Netherlands, 66 survey respondents (22%) report having been in contact with representatives from the Netherlands Government (ranging from 7% in Croatia to 33% in Albania). These contacts have been mostly with the embassies and in 74% of these cases the initiative came from the Netherlands. Such contacts serve a wide range of purposes ranging from merely staying in touch to concrete work-related initiatives for cooperation. Most of these contacts were deliberate, but a number of them also took place by accident. This relatively low level of sustained interaction is confirmed in interviews and would have been even lower without the organisation of a number of *Back to the region roundtables* that were initiated by the programme management in the Hague using some of the remaining CoPROL funds. Nevertheless the limited continued contact with the alumni in the seven target countries is seen as a missed opportunity. Also the 2013 evaluation report of the Asser Institute includes similar observations by commenting on the apparent low interest of Dutch government institutes to participate in networking events during training courses. No significant difference is found in this regard in the responses of PATROL and Diplomat course participants, despite the difference in course duration (diplomat courses 6 weeks and PATROL courses 2 weeks).

These somewhat disappointing results in the strengthening of bilateral ties, has been one of the arguments for DEU to initiate the pilot of creating a network of Rule of Law specialists in the Western Balkans with the aim to stimulate further thematic cooperation in the region.

Concerning Management of PATROL / Diplomat courses:

In brief, the contractual obligations of the implementing institutes – as spelled out in the related BEMOs - are largely complied with. The required courses take place with the expected number of participants who appear highly satisfied with the quality of the courses. Annual evaluation and reporting by the training institutes takes place and covers the continued relevance, organisation, delivery and immediate results of the courses. Measures are seen to be taken based on these reports, illustrating the efforts of both institutes to learn and improve their service delivery.

Longer term learning effects in terms of what happens after participants return to their home-country, are however not (yet) systematically reported upon. Under the sustainability of learning effects, reporting from and about target countries is mentioned as one of the performance indicators in the BEMOs, though it is not specified what exactly this reporting is expected to entail.

The overall goals to which the courses are to contribute (institutional strengthening, strengthened relations among participants and with the Netherlands) are clearly communicated and incorporated in the BEMOs but the monitoring of this contribution is not part of the agreement. Nevertheless monitoring of the course contribution to the development of strengthened relations among participants and with the Netherlands does take place as this led to some remedial initiatives as described earlier. However, this appears to take place in a rather organic dialogue between DEU and the training institutes without the use of systematic monitoring protocol in place. At the same time there appears to be a silent acceptance of the fact that monitoring the contribution to institutional strengthening is not feasible with the available resources.

Another key managerial aspect is the identification and mobilisation of appropriate participants. Mobilisation of PATROL participants is primarily done via embassies in the target countries in cooperation with so-called 'focal points' within the government. These focal points are expected to bring the courses to the attention of the right potential participants. This effort largely depends on their goodwill, but is seen to be taken quite seriously. It appears that over time some embassies have

adopted a more formal systematic approach (e.g. formal written announcement by ambassador widely distributed among relevant ministries and judiciary institutions), while other embassies rely more on the efforts of the government focal point, complemented by bringing the courses under the attention of their existing contacts. It is ultimately up to interested individual participants to register for the course and ensure compliance with all entry requirements. Looking at the designations and positions of participants this appears to result in a largely relevant group of participants. At the same time 50% of the survey respondents report not to have had the opportunity to apply their learnings (yet), which raises questions about the selection process of participants. Also in interviews the selection process came up as an issue of concern, particularly given the English language requirement preventing in particular more senior officials to attend, who might be more influential in translating their learnings into institutional change.

The mobilisation of participants for the diplomat courses takes place primarily through the embassies of the target countries in the Hague. Given the specific target group of these courses, being diplomats for whom the language barrier is less problematic, the identification and mobilisation of appropriate participants goes relatively smooth. However, also here occasional language concerns are encountered. In addition, critical comments were placed by some embassies about not being aware who attends these trainings.

Another point of managerial concern relates to the linkage of courses with on-going reform processes. Even though participants need to get permission from their own institute, successful course registration depends on the initiative of an interested individual. This individual is not necessary actively engaged in a reform process directly relevant to the course. This risks the creation of an isolated learning process that is of interest to the individual without becoming embedded in a broader institutional reform process.

A final managerial issue concerns the coordination with similar training opportunities offered in other EU member states or by other international cooperation programmes. It appears that in the context of EU pre-accession support, government and judiciary representatives in target countries are faced with quite a few training opportunities. In interviews, reference was made to training opportunities in the context of IPA programmes, the OECD /EU initiated SIGMA programme and various bilateral opportunities a.o. in France, UK, Poland, Slovenia and Turkey, sometimes as stand-alone courses, sometimes as part of larger twinning programmes. Obviously these other training opportunities do not duplicate the PATROL and Diplomat courses in the strengthening of bilateral ties with the Netherlands. However, in the absence of coordination amongst these multiple learning opportunities, duplication (or even contradiction) of efforts in pursuit of RoL improvement is certainly a risk.

4.3 Delegated Projects

4.3.1 Facts and Figures Delegated Projects

The policy focus for the delegated projects is similar to the general Matra goals, namely: capacity building and institutional strengthening of civil society organisations and strengthening bilateral relations. In contrast to the CoPROL and PATROL components, the Delegated projects are not managed directly by DEU at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Hague. Instead identification, appraisal and approval of projects are delegated to the embassies in the Matra countries.

The budget allocation / expenditures for Delegated projects during the 2012 – 2014 period have been as follows (including the budgeted amount for 2015).

Table 10 Budget allocation delegated project per embassy, 2012-2015

Embassy	2012 budget	2012 spent	2013 Budget	2013 spent	2014 Budget	2014 spent	2015 Budget
Ankara/Istanbul	871,000	869,946	725,000	703,327	795,000	786,056	750,000
Belgrade (incl. Montenegro)	791,000	789,555	675,000	707,557	840,000	840,114	810,000
Pristine	395,000	370,011	350,000	332,304	445,000	434,502	450,000
Sarajevo	395,000	391,320	350,000	314,386	445,000	449,192	470,000
Skopje	475,000	474,617	425,000	433,383	595,000	609,065	565,000
Tirana	395,000	394,040	350,000	365,000	445,000	444,990	600,000
Total	3,322,000	3,289,489	2,875,000	2,855,957	3,565,000	3,563,919	3,645,000

Following the letter to parliament of 14 November 2011 announcing the adaptations to the Matra programme from 2012 onwards[17], a general instruction concerning the use of these funds was sent by DEU to the embassies in October 2013[18]. These instructions state that the emphasis of delegated projects had to be on the Rule of Law and *exclusively* concern one or more of the following themes: 1) legislation and justice, 2) public administration/public order/police or 3) human rights/minorities.

An updated version was sent in May 2014[19]. The main changes between the two instructions are:
- including Dutch organisations as eligible for project financing;
- allowing government-to-government projects and knowledge exchange between Dutch ministries and counterparts – civil society cooperation;
- and raising the minimum budget per project from €20.000 to €25.000.

The geographical and thematic scope of the Matra delegated projects has not changed.

In the period January 2012 to December 2014 a total of 309 delegated projects were approved and/or (partly) implemented. The distribution of these projects over the seven target countries is depicted in Table 11. In needs to be taken into account that some (larger and long-term) projects were already approved in 2011, but have been largely implemented in 2012-2014.

Table 11 Number of projects & total and average budget per country

Country	# projects	Total budget	Average budget
Albania	14	€1,845,887.00	€131,849.07
BiH	13	€1,016,708.73	€78,208.12
Kosovo	107	€963,289.20	€9,002.70
Macedonia	29	€2,222,317.00	€76,631.62
Montenegro	19	€424,765.00	€22,356.05
Serbia	85	€1,983,169.92	€23,609.17
Turkey	42	€2,005,834.88	€47,757.97
Grand Total	**309**	**€10,461,968.59**	**€33,967.43**

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[17] *Largely based on the policy brief "Matra gemoderniseerd" that was sent to parliament in November 2009.*
[18] See *Matra gedelegeerd DEU region instructie 2014 Oct 2013*
[19] See *Matra Instructions DEU May 2014.*

Table 11 shows a large variety in number of projects and in average and total budget per country, which is illustrative for the differences in approach adopted by the various embassies. This will be analysed in the next section of this report.

The thematic distribution of delegated projects among the three main themes of the instruction has been as follows.

Table 12 Distribution of delegated projects per thematic area

Thematic area	# projects	Value of projects
1. Legislation and Justice	32	€ 1,499,252.56
2. Public admin. / Public order / police.	58	€ 3,901,229.54
3. Human rights / Minorities	172	€ 3,343,158.21
4. Other	13	€ 583,437.00
1 & 2 combined	*6*	*€ 192,046.78*
1 & 2 & 3 combined	*1*	*€ 20,000.00*
1 & 3 combined	*9*	*€ 432,265.00*
2 & 3 combined	*18*	*€ 490,579.50*
Grand Total	**309**	**€ 10,461,968.59**

Looking at thematic coverage of the overall portfolio of delegated projects both in number and value of projects, it appears that the emphasis has been on Human rights / Minorities in terms of number of projects. In budgetary terms also the thematic area of public admin/public order/ police was significantly covered, while less support was provided under the thematic area 'legislation and justice'. Additionally, 6% of the budget is reserved for projects that target 'other' themes, for example the embassy in Skopje provides room for projects focusing on 'culture', while Tirana supported an Urban Development project, justified as RoL intervention as it demonstrates the positive effect of a sound regulatory framework on the law abiding behaviour of citizens.

Table 13 Thematic distribution delegated projects per country

Country	Total value	1	2	3	4	1 & 2	1, 2, 3	1 & 3	2 & 3
Albania	€ 1,845,887.00	3%	81%	-	12%	-	-	4%	-
BiH	€ 1,016,705.59	31%	47%	22%	-	-	-	-	-
Kosovo	€ 963,289.20	-	6%	77%	4%	3%	-	-	11%
Macedonia	€ 2,222,317.00	23%	41%	13%	14%	-	-	-	8%
Montenegro	€ 424,765.00	13%	29%	22%	-	10%	5%	22%	-
Serbia	€ 1,983,169.92	19%	16%	49%	-	6%	-	6%	5%
Turkey	€ 2,005,834.88	10%	26%	50%-	-	-	-	7%	6%
Total	**€ 10,461,968.59**	**14%**	**37%**	**32%**	**6%**	**2%**	**-**	**4%**	**5%**

The thematic distribution of the delegated projects per country reveals remarkable differences (see Table 13) illustrating the different choices made in embassies concerning thematic coverage. In some countries there is an apparent focus, while in other countries funds are more spread.. For example, Albania allocates 81% of its budgets for projects focusing on Public administration / Public Order / police, while also in BiH and Macedonia a relatively large proportion of funds is allocated to this theme. In Kosovo and to a lesser extent Turkey and Serbia there is a clear focus (77% of the budget) on Human rights and Minorities. It appears

4.3.2 Analytical findings Delegated projects

Concerning relevance:
In line with the TOR, relevance is regarded in different ways, including:
• Relevance in light of national RoL priorities in the context of EU accession (Target country interest)
• Relevance in light of the Netherlands policy priorities (Dutch interest)
• Relevance in light of other on-going RoL reform efforts in the context of EU accession (in particular IPA).

When regarding the delegated projects portfolio in light of national RoL priorities, it appears that the vast majority of delegate projects address national RoL priorities that are relevant for EU accession as reported upon in the EU progress reports and / or National Action Plans. In some countries this is logical given the wide variety of issues mentioned in these documents. However, also in countries like Macedonia and Albania, where a more specific prioritisation has taken place, the project portfolio approved since January 2012 demonstrates an almost 100% fit within these priorities.

In cases, where delegated projects do not obviously 'fit' in with national priorities, this is usually the result of a deliberate choice by the embassy, as it concerns a policy priority for the Netherlands or an indirect RoL effect. This concerns for instance projects related to LGTB rights in Serbia and Turkey, minority rights in Kosovo or press freedom in Macedonia, that are perceived as human rights priorities in light of EU accession, though not prioritised as such by the national government. In other occasions, the 'fit' with RoL is indirect and therefore not immediately obvious as it concerns initiatives in other sectors (e.g. urban development), but having a clear demonstration effect in terms of the creation and implementation of a legislative framework.

In assessing the relevance of delegated projects in light of the Netherlands policy priorities, the thematic areas as described in the DEU instructions to the embassies (dated October 2013 and May 2014) are used as reference. These instructions state that the emphasis of delegated projects had to be on the Rule of Law and ***exclusively*** concern one or more of the following themes: legislation and justice, public administration/public order/police, human rights/minorities. Looking at the approved portfolio since January 2012, it appears that over 90% of the delegated projects can be found to fit easily within these thematic areas. In the few cases, where this is not immediately obvious, the embassy has justified the intervention as "indirectly" focusing on RoL (e.g. economic empowerment of women and/or an ethnic minority). Nevertheless, it is clear that the embassies have had little problems identifying sufficient project ideas that fit within the policy priorities as instructed by DEU.

When looking at the overall thematic distribution of delegated projects over the three thematic areas (table 12), it is remarkable that the total number of projects addressing Human Rights and Minority issues (172) is much larger than those for the other thematic areas (resp. 32 and 58). This can be explained by the fact that this facility was originally intended as funding window for local NGOs while the topics under this thematic area more diverse and befitting the typical core business of local NGOs like: gender equality, media freedom, LGBTI, ethnic minorities etc. The average budgetary size of these projects is however much smaller, due to the nature of the project and the absorption capacity of implementing partners. As a result the overall budget distribution over these thematic areas is more balanced (14% dedicated to Legislation and Justice, 37% to Public admin. / Public order / police budget, 32% to Human Rights / Minorities, 6% to other themes and the remaining 10% covering more than one theme).

Looking at the thematic distribution per country, remarkable differences become apparent. Only in the portfolio of Turkey, Serbia and Kosovo the majority of projects address Human Rights and Minority issues, making up 158 out of 172 projects in this area. At the same time, Albania has zero projects in this area but allocated over 80% of its resources in the area of Public Administration / Good Governance and Police. Also in BiH, Macedonia and Montenegro the largest part of the portfolio is dedicated specifically to this area but to a lesser extent (resp. 47%, 41% and 29%) making the portfolios in these countries more balanced. The budgetary allocation in the area of legislation and justice is largest in BiH and Macedonia (resp. 31% and 23%) while in Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro and Turkey at most 10% of the delegated funds are allocated to this thematic area.

Differences in context explain these differences in thematic distribution[20]. In Kosovo the embassy deliberately aims at strengthening civil society itself, recognising a low absorption capacity of partners, which explains a large number of small projects in the area of Human Rights. In Turkey (and to a lesser extent Serbia), the current regime triggers the embassy to try working around formal government institutes as they believe more can be achieved through Civil Society. The opposite situation may explain the Albanian situation, whereby government and civil society appear to work in relative harmony and the biggest progress can be made in the area of anti-corruption and police reform. Historical events in BiH explain Dutch support for projects related to reconciliation and prosecution of war criminals explain the relatively emphasis on the area of justice. Montenegro appears to make steady progress in most RoL areas, which may explain its relatively balanced portfolio, while in Macedonia the independence and competence of courts offers and the freedom of media, pose major challenges. All in all, the local context seriously affects the shaping of portfolios, whereby the potential for progress (where can we make a difference) and relevance (where is the biggest need) appear to be key determining factors.

Relevance in light of other on-going RoL reform efforts is a more complicated issue. Overlap with other Dutch funds is minimal, given that only in Turkey the Human Rights Fund represents a significant alternative Dutch funding window, while in the other countries the Matra funds are the only remaining funding window for RoL initiatives at the discretion of the embassy. The embassy in Turkey has integrated both funds to optimise flexibility and efficiency and by that prevents duplication between the funds.

In terms of coordination and harmonisation with other non-Dutch RoL reform efforts, a more diverse picture emerges. In all target countries, formal and / or informal RoL related donor coordination mechanisms exist, but the intensity and functioning of these coordination efforts differ and are mostly limited to information exchange. In some countries the government takes active part in these coordination efforts, while in other countries government involvement is fluctuating. The most deliberate coordination efforts are found to take place in Serbia, while this is expected to improve further in other countries with the appointment of RoL specialists in the embassies.

Delegated projects are by nature small scale and in many cases respond to project ideas originating from local CSOs, who explain the relevance in their project proposal, implying a need that is not already addressed. A context description is normally included in project proposals and is a standard element of the embassy's appraisal document, but often without explicit reference to other related interventions. Nevertheless, among the sampled projects no evidence of apparent duplication was found. In addition, among the sampled projects examples that demonstrate harmonisation and coherence with other programmes / national action plans were encountered a.o. in Albania, Kosovo and Serbia either by the embassy co-funding an initiative or funding a particular 'niche' within a larger programme. Overall the portfolio of delegated projects can better be described as a diverse set of interventions with embassies deliberately using their delegated authority to fill gaps and respond to emerging needs, rather than aiming for a coherent set of focused interventions in a pre-determined thematic area. In this process they prioritise on issues of particular Dutch interest or expertise, are seen as outspoken, substantiating the Strict and Fair reputation of the Netherlands.

Despite this reactive way of building a portfolio, in some countries there are certainly more specific RoL areas in which the Netherlands embassy manifests itself as prominent player. For instance, in Albania a number of projects can be seen concentrating on the capacity and integrity of the police force, in Macedonia a concentration of efforts related to press freedom is visible and in Serbia the Netherlands evolves as a prominent proponent of LGTB rights. This concentration is however more a response to on-going developments than the result of a predetermined programmatic framework. Embassies clearly want to retain the freedom to shift emphasis as they see fit based on local consultations with partners and authorities.

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[20] The possibility of differences being caused by embassies categorising projects differently has been checked and can be ruled out. The categories are rather distinct and no significant evidence was found that similar projects were categorised differently.

<u>Concerning effectiveness:</u>

Effectiveness of the delegated projects is reviewed in light of their contribution to the strengthening of the RoL in the country and in strengthening bilateral relations between the target country and the Netherlands.

In reviewing the results of the 5 to 7 sampled projects in each country (see annex 3c for the list of sampled projects), it appears that the project deliverables (i.e. results at output level) are largely achieved, while in many cases evidence of RoL improvement at project level could be found (i.e. results at project outcome level). Table 14 below reflects a non-exhaustive list of examples that illustrates this;

Table 14 Examples of results of delegated projects on output and outcome level

Country	Deliverable (project output)	Effect (project outcome)
Albania	Piloting an innovative legislative framework for urban development	Significant increase in requests for construction licenses in project area, breaking the habit of illegal constructions.
	Perception research into the level of corruption in the police force.	Political debate about whether and how to combat corruption with international community intending to use the research as baseline.
	Development and implementation of action plan for the improved transparency of public services in three municipalities.	Increase demand for public municipal services and the resignation of municipal officials after price and conditions for provision of municipal services were made public.
Bosnia and Herzegovina	To empower a network of journalists to report on war crime trials and empower people with information through relevant media.	Network of 13 journalists reporting after project completion on court processing war crime trials – reporting in media, covering 70% of audience in BiH; BIRN recognised as a watchdog – EC/ICTY using their publications.
	Develop a network of volunteers to monitor the elections and capacitate them with necessary competencies.	3,500 people monitored elections and reported on violations, network of volunteers ready to be used again if needed.
	To empower people to make (local) government officials accountable for budgetary actions.	In 2014 people initiative to demand clarity on budgetary costs for election committee in Banja Luka.
Macedonia	To establish two regional Advocacy and Legal Advise Centres to provide support to victims and witnesses of corruption to report on cases and receive free, practical legal information/advice to enable them to file and pursue official complaints with the relevant institutions.	People reported during the project to ALACs (Advocacy and Legal Advise Centres) on 1,200 corruption cases, whereas official government anti-corruption commission reported about 200 cases.
	a) Align the national normative framework on child justice with the UN Convention of the Rights of Children (CRS) and other relevant international standards, and strengthen national level data collection and management system on child protection, including child justice; b) Ensure children victim of abuse and violence receive recovery and reintegration support through pilot multi-disciplinary response services, and capacity building for professionals working with child victims.	Normative framework was strengthened to include children's rights and special needs of children The different agencies (police, Center for Social Work, schools, health services, Prosecutors' office and NGOs) that are involved with juvenile delinquents have adopted the (more child friendly) multi-agency approach. None of the children taking part in the programme, have reoffended while included in the programme
	Establish an independent online platform for investigative journalism.	In the first 6 months: - published 1.572 different materials like investigative stories, daily and weekly articles, photo and video stories, as well as interviews, analysis; columns and letters. over 158.000 readers on the Macedonian

		site, Albanian site 15.552 readers and 4.346 on the English site. - many publications republished in other media
Kosovo	Increase awareness and public pressure on political parties by organising 10 television debates (that were also available online)	Political parties have developed concrete plans/programmes with achievable and measurable results, for which they can be held accountable.
	1) Building workshops (carpeting, sewing, shoe making, lock smith) to offer prisoners a prospect for reintegration 2) Psychological support to prepare prisoners for their reintegration	Workshops have been built and psychological sessions have been held. No inmates were released in the project period, so results remain unclear *(this project later linked up with the CoPROL project by NHC).*
Montenegro	Assessing judicial efficiency in processing anti-corruption cases and raising awareness among the general public as well as legal and media professionals of corruption problem and existing anti-corruption mechanisms.	Signed MoU with Ministry of Justice, Supreme Court and State Supreme Prosecutor. Identified, monitored and reported on 30+ corruption cases. Presented project results on a website and (national) media (6 appearances on TV/Radio). 2 Workshops and panel discussions organised with stakeholders.
	Strengthening the capacities of the Montenegrin police for the work with the LGBT community, contribute to the larger visibility and to the better understanding of human rights of LGBT persons within the police and help identifying the future LGBT liaison officers with which the education should be continued.	54 police officers underwent the specialized LGBT police training. A group of police officers with which additional training should be done in order to form a LGBT contact police network, have been recruited and mobilized. Over 60 Police Academy Cadets and more than 15 teachers were informed about the Human Rights of LGBT persons and about the work of LGBT Forum Progress. LGBT persons established the access to the Police Academy and to the police organization. A strong political and professional will and support has been manifested, on all levels, to support the inclusion of the LGBT phenomena into the police work and into the police education.
Turkey	Bridging the gaps and stimulating cooperation between groups in society (government/ngo/business, different religions,etc.). By working together towards a common purpose, the project will encourage cooperation among these sectors and enable leaders to build capacity and knowledge of human rights.	The MATRA contribution was used to facilitate the participation of three members of the LGTBI community in the project. This had never happened before, for lack of funds available for the LGTBI cause (each participant had to bring in their own funds). Afterwards, the participants in this project, some of whom reportedly had a strong negative attitude towards sexual diversity, joined forces to raise funds to make sure that the next edition of the project, again some LGTBI-representants could participate.
	Increased awareness on children's rights	As a result of the child rights campaign, at least one Turkish municipality requested information on child rights from the UMT (union of municipalities), which is taken as sign that the message reached more than the direct target audience.
	Increasing students and academicians' knowledge about legislation and scrutiny functions of parliament, and promoting specialization.	The newly developed Parliamentary Law course has been integrated in the curricula of the Universities of Eskişehir, Gaziantep, Karatay and Selcuk universities as an elective course (permanently).

| Serbia | Preparing a draft law on the protection of whistleblowers that will be presented to the government for consideration and adoption, and contributing to understanding of the necessity and benefits of whistleblowers' protection. | The project delivered a draft law to protect whistleblowers, which contributed to a faster adoption of such a law and with better quality. Even so, the real impact remains to be seen in the coming years. Will the law be strong enough for whistleblowers to come out, and will it not be abused by persons who are afraid of losing their job? |
| | Building capacity of local CSOs in the deprived regions of Sandzak and South Serbia | The project led to several 'citizens' initiatives' in the target communities. |

Despite the fact that many delegated projects are able to provide convincing evidence of effects at project outcome level, there appears to be limited attention for the upscaling and / or replication of these effects. Subsequently, little evidence that illustrate a wider improvement of the RoL (i.e. beyond the immediate project environment) could be found. With most portfolios still dominated by small scale and stand-alone projects the identification and attribution of wider RoL improvements beyond the immediate scope of individual projects remains difficult.

In terms of strengthening of bilateral relations, it appears that a minority (10 – 30%) of the delegated projects have Dutch implementing partners, partly because this was only possible from May 2014 onwards. Nevertheless most embassy funded projects continue to be initiated and implemented by local NGOs using their own strengthened capabilities without substantial involvement of Dutch NGOs to optimise 'value for money'. This means that a strengthening of relations takes place primarily between the embassy and local NGOs receiving funds and less between the CSO community in the Netherlands and the Matra region. The latter is also not an explicit objective of the Matra programme though one could argue that building Civil Society to Civil Society linkages could benefit EU integration as well, especially if such relations would be equal and not coloured by dependence. Such CSO to CSO relations could complement the bilateral ties with the embassy that carry the load of financial dependence with interaction largely driven by the existence of an on-going or prospective funding relation.

Concerning Management;

The management responsibility of delegated projects fully rests with the embassies with financial administrative support from the Regional Support Office in Prague. The focus here is on reviewing the capacity of embassies in the region to manage their portfolio of delegated projects throughout the subsequent phases of the project cycle.
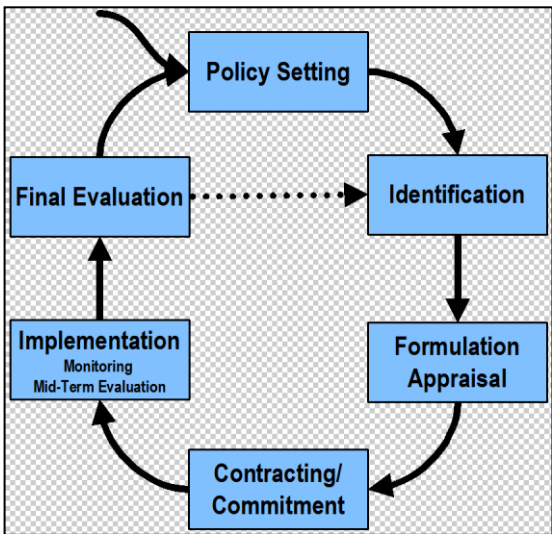

Figure 6 Project Cycle

In terms of policy setting, the embassies receive minimal instructions from DEU. In a one-pager, DEU explains the purpose, thematic focus and limitations in the use of delegated funds. Besides, the funding availability is communicated once per year, largely based on historical patterns in budget allocation and depletion. From here on, the funds are at the disposal of the embassy to use at their own discretion within the boundaries of DEU's instruction.

Initially funds were purely meant to finance local NGOs (although not strictly observed), but in the May 2014 this restriction was formally lifted and funds could be used to finance Dutch non-profit organisations and Government-to-Government cooperation as well. This has on one side increased the space for embassies to identify and flexibly respond to project opportunities. On the other side, it reduces the already limited space for funding of local NGOs.

Embassies in turn communicated the availability and purpose of this funding window within their networks and on their website outlining the minimal requirements of funding applications. In some cases this was done through a time-bound call for proposals in other cases an open announcement was made. In most cases, embassies did not translate the DEU instructions into a focused local programmatic framework, affording themselves flexibility to respond to incoming proposals as long as their emphasis would be on the strengthening of Rule of Law. From 2014 onwards, in some countries these calls for proposals were considered too cumbersome given the amount of funding available and replaced by more ad-hoc identification of project ideas that in one way or another would reach the embassy (e.g. in donor coordination meetings or through visiting missions).

The project proposals received by embassies differ widely in quality, shape and size within countries and among countries (e.g. the average size of projects is largest in Albania (€ 132,000), followed by BiH and Macedonia (between € 75,000 and € 80,000) The average size in other countries is below € 50,000 with Kosovo averaging € 9,000 justified by the embassy based on relatively young implementing partners with low absorption capacity). This was often done through concept-notes that, after initial approval, were elaborated further. Embassies throughout the region are praised for their supportive attitude during project formulation and appraisal. Rather than forcing local organisation to adapt a uniform project proposal format, embassies engage in dialogue and try to straighten out the rationale and content of proposals within their own appraisal documents.

Loosening of the payment procedures, which is set to take place from 1 January 2015, is stressed by some as being a move that needs additional consideration. The renewed guidelines prescribe projects with a value lower than €25,000 to be paid up front and in one tranche. Some embassies feel that the preceding 80-20 rule with regards to payments fits better as this provides them a tool to ascertain the submission of adequate final reports. In addition, paying 100% up front makes it more difficult to control the legitimate use of funds.

Since 2014, the guidelines furthermore prescribe that projects should have a value larger than €25,000, while 62% of all delegated project 2012 and 2014 was smaller than €25,000 between (mostly in Kosovo and to a lesser extent in Serbia and Montenegro). Funding smaller projects is justified based on the absorption capacity of the recipient organisation or the specific nature of the activity to be funded and illustrates that some embassies feel the need to be able to fund small-scale projects despite the obvious high transaction costs of such projects.

In the identification and appraisal of projects, we see the embassies making conscious and deliberate use of their delegated powers in finding projects that are either innovative, build on typical Dutch expertise and /or address "niche" issues in RoL strengthening in which the Netherlands can be complementary (e.g. interventions related to Whistleblower legislation and LGTB rights). The overriding concern is clearly more on being flexible and responsive to emerging project opportunities capitalising on the expertise and relatively liberal strict and fair reputation of the Netherlands than on building a coherent portfolio providing a focused contribution to a specific predetermined RoL priority.

Looking at the quality of the sample of project proposals and appraisal documents, particular strengths are the context analysis and the justified relevance of interventions. Given the small size of projects, in general clear and concrete deliverables are included supported by simple yet straightforward action plans. Less attention is being paid to higher level objectives (the contribution to strengthened RoL is implicit), monitoring of results (besides activities) and activity based budget

breakdowns. Besides, differences were found between countries in dealing with risk analysis. In some countries a risk analysis is not included in proposals but only in the embassy's appraisal document, which raises concerns about the extent to which project owners feel responsibility for risk management.

During implementation, besides regular reporting, implementing partners invite and / or inform the embassy about key events, which the embassy regularly and visibly attends and outspokenly supports. All this results in the embassy being described as a committed and engaged partner. Of course this approach results in significant transaction costs per proposal but at the same time creates an important sense of partnership. In that sense the establishment of the RSO in Prague is experienced as welcome addition in terms of financial management capacity allowing the embassy to focus more on content.

In line with DEU instructions, delegated projects have a short term focus with clear and concrete RoL related deliverables. Once the deliverables have been produced, the project is often over and closed. Sustainability, replication and upscaling of often impressive project results receives relatively little attention throughout the project cycle. At the same time few deliberate efforts are encountered where valuable local initiatives and experiences were linked to wider national lobby and advocacy processes. All this results in a portfolio of delegated projects with impressive and sometimes even unique project results with a relatively short planning horizon and / or incomplete contribution to wider national RoL improvements.

4.4   MPPP

The fourth component of the Matra programme contains the *twinning* projects for the political parties in the parliament of the Netherlands. The goal of this MPPP component is to strengthen democratisation processes by means of twinning of a political party from the Netherlands with a counterpart in one of the Matra countries. Entities are only eligible for funding when they are exclusively - or mainly - engaged in political education and training activities for one political party in the House of Representatives (Tweede Kamer), designated by that party as such.

4.4.1 Facts and Figures MPPP

According to the MPPP manual 2012, MPPP funded activities are meant to strengthen (pluralist) democratisation in the target countries though activities like:
1. To conduct political courses for members or aspiring members, cadre and chosen representatives in public bodies of political sister parties or affiliated organisations.
2. To prepare and compose documentation materials for schools, clubs and similar entities, which are interested in information about the political objectives of intended sister parties or their affiliated organisations.
3. To train staff, who are involved in training and or promotional activities as mentioned above.
4. To support substantive policy development of political parties with the aim to build their capacity by way of conferences, seminars and exchange of information.

The budget for the Matra programme is divided regionally, with different budget holders (DZO/DEU and DAM). In accordance with the guidelines, the budget allocation per region is depicted in Table 15. This table shows that the largest share of budget goes to the pre-accession countries in South Eastern Europe[21] (DZO/DEU initial) and the Eastern Partnership[22] (DZO/DEU amendment). The latter region follows an amendment[23] that took place annually, though the amount is decreasing.

Table 15 Total budget for MPPP per year, 2012-2014, allocated per region

Year	DZO/DEU initial		DZO/DEU amendment		DAM initial		Total
2012	€1.200.000	44%	€1.000.000	37%	€500.000	19%	2.700.000
2013	€1.000.000	44%	€750.000	33%	€500.000	22%	2.250.000
2014	€1.000.000	50%	€500.000	25%	€500.000	25%	2.000.000

The distribution of the budgets over political parties is determined as follows; First a basic amount is determined per party, second a sum per seat in parliament is calculated and the final amount then depends on the number of parties that apply for funding. The foundations apply for funding by sending an annual plan to the Ministry of BZK (since 2013[24]) based on explicit expectations concerning geographical distribution of funding (i.e. 2/3rd for European and 1/3rd for Arab countries) and regular exchange of experiences, who thereafter assesses the plans based on the WFPP.

4.4.2 Analytical findings MPPP

Concerning relevance;

As outlined in article 7.2.c of the Financing Political Parties Act (Wet Financiering Politieke Partijen, maart 2013) Dutch political parties are expected to contribute to capacity development and network building of sister-parties outside the Netherlands. The Matra Political Parties Programme (MPPP) provides funding for this purpose, particularly meant for the Matra regions in the Western Balkans and Arab region. Since early 2013 the MPPP funds, which belong to the budget of the Ministry of

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[21] South East Europe includes: Albania, BiH, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey.
[22] Eastern Partnership countries include: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.
[23] See for example *Amendement begroting 2014 kst-33750-V-39*
[24] As stipulated in the joint letter of BUZA and BZK to relevant foundations (April 2012).

Foreign Affairs, are channelled through the Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Affairs (BZK) who is tasked with overseeing the implementation of aforementioned act.

Given the autonomy of political parties, DEU can only express the expectation that MPPP funds will be used for its intended purpose in the designated regions. At the same time, through an amendment in parliament, the annual MPPP funds are usually increased to also enable the financing of activities in the so-called Eastern Partnership region. In practice this means that it is expected that around 40 – 45% of the total MPPP funds (after amendment) are allocated to support political parties in the Western Balkans and Turkey.

Important relevance question concerning the MPPP component of the Matra programme is therefore the extent to which funds are spent as expected in the region on issues of relevance to the strengthening of Rule of Law in light of EU Accession. From the detailed BeMo's by BuZa the allocation of MPPP funds to the three Matra regions could be analysed for 2012 (See Table 16).

Table 16 Allocation of budget per party per Matra region in 2012

Political Party[25]	Subsidy for South-East Europe 2012	Eastern Partnership 2012	Matra South 2012	Share SE-Europe per party
CDA	€178,954	€177,292	€78,000	41%
CU	€72,204	€72,216	€36,090	40%
D66	€95,148	€95,511	€47,037	40%
GL	€106,500	€106,500	€53,200	40%
PvdA	€237,239	€237,239	€118,619	40%
SGP	€52,800	€52,800	€25,200	40%
VVD	€243,780	€243,780	€121,890	40%
Total subsidy allocated	**€986,625**	**€985,338**	**€480,036**	**40%**
% total MPPP funds	40%	40%	20%	
Total subsidy available	**€1,200,000**	**€1,000,000**	**€500,000**	
% allocated	**82.2%**	**98.5%**	**96.0%**	

From 2013 onwards this geographical distribution in funds allocation is more difficult to make, as the planning and reporting documents demanded and used by BZK do not prescribe this geographical distinction as was made in the BUZA BeMo's. In the control of MPPP funds, BZK perceives the support provided to sister parties in the Matra region as one of many activities covered by the Financing Political Parties Act (WFPP), which does not have to be separately planned and accounted for.

Nevertheless some of the foundations responsible for MPPP implementation do make a geographical distinction in their financial planning and/or reporting, which for 2013 and 2014 results in the following overview.

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[25] Note that the APF only started its programme in 2013

Table 17 Example of geographical spread in MPPP budgets 2013-2014[26]

Type and description of budget line	S.E. Europe	East. Partnership	MENA region	Total	% SE Europe
2013 SGP (SVOE) project costs	€32,120	€39,424	€4,301	€75,845	42%
2013 D66 (IDI) programme costs	€32,525	€44,391	€44,122	€121,038	27%
2013 GL (de Helling) total costs	€111,019	€55,510	€0	€166,529	67%
2013 VVD (HVS) project costs	€195,964	€174,642	€105,268	€475,874	41%
2013 CDA (EFF) total allocation	€95,370	€26,789	€60,842	€183,001	52%
2014 GL (de Helling) total costs	€111,019	€55,510	€0	€166,529	67%
2014 SGP (SVOE) project costs	€37,000	€50,000	€25,000	€112,000	33%
Total (sample)	**€466,998**	**€340,756**	**€214,533**	**€1,022,287**	**46%**

From this sample it appears that, even though parties report on their finances in different ways, the average proportion of MPPP funds used in the seven pre-accession countries has overall not gone down after transferring MPPP responsibility to BZK. At the same time it is apparent that the geographical distribution of funds is less clear than before and has started to shift with parties being less consistent in allocating around 40% to activities in the Matra region.

The second relevance question concerns the extent to which MPPP projects address priority issues that political parties in their countries face in light of EU accession.

Looking at the actual MPPP funded interventions a broad variety of activities emerges, including:
• Conferences/regional events
• Capacity building (technical support)
   – Trainings on all aspects of running a democratic Political Party like: sustaining cohesion and campaign management.
   – Leadership (young politicians) & networking
   – Role of women in Political Parties
• Media campaigns (political ideology)
   – Documentaries/movies
   – Outreach and public relations
   – Translation of party's programmes (e.g. APF)
• Researches/assessments/fact finding/studies/policy papers
• Exchanges between parties/countries

The overview of the countries wherein the foundations focus their activities is depicted in Table 18 and encompasses information on the Dutch political party, their foundation and partners with whom they work in the different countries. The information is based on the annual reports 2013 and the annual plans for 2014.

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[26] This table is purely intended as a indicative sample and is not complete. The total budget per region is therefore not included (see Table 15 for the available budget per year).

Table 18 MPPP focal countries of political party foundations[27]

Political Party	Foundation	Focal countries							
		Alb	BiH	Cro[28]	Kos	Mac	Mon	Ser	Tur
CDA	Eduardo Frei Stichting		■		■		■	■	
Christen Unie	Foundation for International Christian Democratic Development (FICDD)			■			■		
D'66	International Democratic Initiative (IDI)		■					■	
Groen Links	Bureau De Helling		■	■			■		
Partij van de Arbeid	Foundation Max van der Stoel (FMS)	■				■	■	■	
SGP	Stichting Vormingsactiviteiten Oost-Europa SGP (SVO)	■					■	■	
VVD	VVD International / Haya van Someren Foundation (HvS)		■	■	■			■	■
Partij voor de Dieren	Animal Politics Foundations (APF)			■			■		■

Table 18 shows that most parties spread their activities among different countries. Some of the smaller parties focus their activities on 2 or 3 countries, where the larger foundations target 5 or 6 countries. From the interviews with the secretariats of the political foundations, this impression was confirmed: a limited budget affects the spread of activities among the countries. From the perspective of the countries, it is striking to observe that Albania and Kosovo are only included in the (direct) activities of two parties, whereas the other countries are targeted by at least four parties. From the interviews it became clear that the absence of a like-minded sister party or movement is the most important reason to refrain from working in a country. It also needs to be observed that a large share of the activities of the political foundations takes place internationally, e.g. attendance of conferences, and thus is not focusing on one country.

Besides interventions directly aimed at "party building", also workshops on how to deal with relevant sensitive socio-political issues like: reintegration of ex-convicts, treatment of LGTB, were conducted. The differences in activities between political parties can more be found in the ideology and size of activities, than in the type of activities.

The political parties implementing MPPP have long-standing relations with sister parties (or youth movements) and annual plans are largely shaped in a demand-driven way whereby the recipient entities are invited to come up with proposals that serve their needs. Embassies in the target countries are neither consulted nor in any other way involved in this process.

Overall it can be observed that in general MPPP funds were used to finance demand-driven activities fitting within the MPPP framework and as such can be considered legitimate and relevant in the eyes of the recipient party. The focus is on the delivery of direct project results without explaining their relevance for a well-functioning pluralist democracy nor in meeting the political conditions for EU accession. This relevance largely remains implicit, hence is not monitored and reported upon.

Finally, given the highly politicised RoL situation throughout the region in which (limited) political parties in power continue to exert enormous influence over the staffing and performance of both the government and the judiciary, the potential of strengthening RoL through political parties appears significant. So far the MPPP is the only programme component directly working with those political parties. This makes the MPPP potentially a highly relevant programme component even though only about 5% of the total Matra funds are spent through the MPPP component in South East Europe.

Concerning effectiveness;

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[27] The complete overview can be found in Annex 4b.
[28] Croatia is still a country where parties conduct their activities, despite being phased out since it became EU member. Most activities are also begin phased out by the foundations, although Croatia remains a location for regional activities and Croatian experience is also used as an example for other countries.

Effectiveness of the MPPP has been reviewed in terms of the extent to which MPPP funded activities indeed made a difference in leadership and network development of sister parties in the region. In addition, under effectiveness the question is being asked whether since the channelling of MPPP funds via BZK, the MPPP implementation has remained consistent with Matra objectives as formulated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

When looking at the annual plans and reports of the various political parties, it becomes apparent that a sizable portion of funding has been dedicated to leadership and cadre development. A wide range of training courses, workshops, exchange event (conferences / seminars) are planned and reported upon. Reports usually provide insight in the extent to which planned interventions have been successfully completed, but without systematic measurement of the effects of these interventions on the leadership and network development of the sister parties. The attention in planning and reporting is on the delivery of activities and as such it is difficult to find convincing evidence that would confirm the effectiveness of MPPP projects in terms of actual leadership / network development.

Additionally, plans do not elaborate on how interventions are expected to contribute to higher level Matra objectives (democratisation and compliance with Copenhagen Criteria) and subsequently reports do not describe to what extent such a contribution took place. This means that also no clarity can be given about the longer term effectiveness of MPPP in contributing to democratisation and compliance with the Copenhagen Criteria.

At the same time, it has to be acknowledged that the political power of counterparts differs enormously from party to party. In some cases the sister party is the dominant ruling party, while in other cases sister parties only play a marginal political role or are not even represented in parliament. As a consequence, the potential impact in terms of improved democratisation differs enormously. Given the political autonomy of each target country, capitalising on this potential impact is not something that can easily be planned for, which may explain that at present this potential impact is ignored in planning and reporting documents.

No significant differences have been observed in terms of planned and actual activities since the transfer of MPPP responsibility to BZK. Most parties continue to channel funds as expected to the designated region, while also the type and nature of activities largely remained the same. Activities still focus on capacity and network building of sister parties in the region, while the organisation of training courses, workshops and exchange events continue to be at the core of MPPP interventions.

Concerning Management;

Since early 2013, MPPP funds are channelled through BZK, whereby BZK has effectively taken over the management of the MPPP component. Individual parties have limited influence on budget availability as this is a fixed amount based on the number of seats in parliament and the number of parties applying.

Largely the management practices and instruments have remained the same but BZK uses its own more generic way of documenting the appraisal of plans and reports. Political parties are still expected to submit an annual subsidy request in which they provide an activity plan including budget as well as an annual report on the use of MPPP funds (incl. financial audit statement). The timeframe for submission of subsidy requests and reports are fixed, while formats for planning and reporting are free. In addition, an annual meeting in which parties are expected to share information and experiences with MPPP implementation continues to take place with both BZK and DEU present. This meeting has an informal nature and proceedings of this meeting are not documented.

Even though the formal procedures and instruments have remained the same, the spirit in which the management takes place has changed. BZK has (by definition) less affinity with international cooperation and perceives its role in overseeing the MPPP component primarily as assuring the legitimate distribution and use of funds. The channelling of funds through BZK is seen as logical given BZK's overall responsibility for the implementation of the earlier mentioned political parties act and the MPPP is seen as a funding window under this act. In other word, it fits the mandate of BZK

and makes the management of political entities implementing the MPPP more efficient and straightforward.

The transfer to BZK has put more distance between DEU and the implementing entities. Through BZK, DEU informs the parties about the annual available budget, whilst expressing the expectation that funds will be used in the designated Matra regions and furthermore only interacts with the MPPP implementers during the informal annual meeting. As DEU has little influence on the further shaping of the MPPP programme (plans and reports are approved by BZK), they consider the full responsibility of this programme component to be with BZK. Nevertheless MPPP remains part of the overall Matra programme framework and funds originate from the budget of Foreign Affairs.

Political parties shape and implement their plans with a high degree of autonomy, which makes that MPPP implementation happens largely outside the scope of BZK, DEU and the embassies. Embassies claim to have limited to no information about what MPPP funded activities take place in their country, nor are in any other away involved in the shaping of MPPP interventions. Embassies don't seem to work directly with political parties, which is understandable given that embassies need to prevent getting drawn into politics. At the same time it has to be acknowledged that those parties are amongst the most influential actors in shaping the RoL situation in the country.

As a result, programme management appears to be effective in ascertaining the legitimately of MPPP funds allocation and use. Up till now political parties largely comply with the expectations in terms of geographical distribution of funds and type of interventions funded, but neither BUZA nor BZK have the authority to ascertain this remains the case with future programmes. The MPPP contribution to higher level Matra objectives is not covered in plans, neither monitored nor reported upon. This means that results management of the MPPP does not take place and reliable insight in the effectiveness of MPPP interventions is minimal.

4.5 Overall findings

Relevance;

In view of the RoL challenges the seven target countries are facing in the EU accession process, the overall relevance of the Matra programme is high. Despite country-specific differences, Chapter 23 and 24 of the Acquis Communautaire remain by far the largest bottlenecks in the EU accession process for all with a range of shared RoL concerns including: the lack of capacity and independence of government and judiciary institutions, wide-spread corruption, organised crime, human rights violations of minorities and vulnerable groups and so on. These chapters are given the most weight in the negotiations concerning EU accession and are subject to large scale international support programmes most notably under the IPA.

Given the Strict and Fair policy on EU accession, having a dedicated strengthening of RoL programme portrays the Netherlands not just as a critical but also constructive EU member state. Providing support to RoL interventions whilst having the reputation of a 'difficult' member state is in some projects even experienced as advantageous as having Dutch support gives additional credibility and weight to the intervention. Even though there appears to be no formal delineation of the concept of Rule of Law while different categorisations of thematic RoL areas can be found in policy documents, the Netherlands' policy priorities in strengthening the Rule of Law are described quite broad in Matra programme documents. This creates ample space under each programme components to identify fitting RoL interventions that are consistent with the Netherlands' policy priorities.

Having a broad programmatic framework makes the identification of relevant interventions relatively easy, but at the same time complicates the setting of priorities. Even though the vast majority of Matra interventions can be considered relevant in light of the overall Matra objectives, the priority and sense of urgency of interventions may not be equally obvious to all stakeholders. In particular when it concerns projects dealing with sensitive issues (e.g. press freedom, minority rights) or issues on which the Netherlands has particular expertise (e.g. urban development, juvenile justice), DEU or the embassy may make deliberate choices to fund interventions that would not be given the highest priority by target country governments. This is inherent to the nature of RoL interventions that have to contribute to the understanding, acceptance and adoption of different European norms and values.

The added value of Matra interventions, notably to EU programmes like the IPA, is different per programme component. The added value of CoPROL projects is limited in the sense that the nature of these projects are not substantially different from interventions funded by the EU, OSCE or other international organisations. In themselves the CoPROL projects are certainly relevant and potentially add value to the improvement of the RoL situation, which is demonstrated in the elaborate context analysis justifying each project. The main intended difference between CoPROL and projects of other donors, lies in the fact that these programmes are meant to stimulate Government-to-Government cooperation and pursue the explicit bilateral objective of strengthening government relations with the Netherlands. This explicit bilateral objective is not part of EU programmes, which makes the CoPROL projects of potential added value to the Netherlands. Given that these projects are still relatively young whilst being managed through NGOs, it is still too early to draw definite conclusions about the extent to which this added value indeed materialises.

The relevance in terms of potential added value of PATROL / Diplomat courses is similar to CoPROL in the sense that many RoL related training opportunities exist but only the PATROL / Diplomat courses have the direct potential of expanding the Netherlands' network with key government and judicial staff in the seven pre-accession countries. One could furthermore argue that an additional added value can be found in the high appreciation of the PATROL / Diplomat courses, but this would require a more elaborate comparative analysis with courses provided by other countries and international programmes.

The added value of the delegated projects appears to be most obvious as this programme component provides a flexible and fast funding window to respond to relatively small emerging and / or innovative ideas for the strengthening of RoL accessible to a wide range of organisations. Other programmatic funding windows are less flexible, require more bureaucracy and time and only cater to

larger interventions that are beyond the management capacity of smaller local NGOs. At the same time the delegated projects provide the embassies with an important tool to position themselves visibly as a credible strict and fair proponent of European RoL standards, norms and values. Nevertheless, the analysis has shown that the thematic coverage of the projects has not been evenly spread amongst the three thematic policy priorities.

Finally the potential added value of the MPPP lies in the fact that this programme component works directly with political parties, being among the most influential actors for making progress in the strengthening of RoL. Most programmes target the government and / or judiciary institutes, while some aim to strengthen the countervailing power of civil society, but very few programmes can claim to have direct links with political entities like: party secretariats and officials. Whether this unique link turns out to be of real added value remains to be proven as programme management does not plan and monitor MPPP results at this level. Also in terms of strengthening bilateral relations this programme component has a unique potential, as the participants in MPPP funded training courses and workshops of today may be the political leaders of tomorrow.

Effectiveness;
The question whether Matra has contributed to the target countries meeting the Copenhagen Criteria and adopting the EU's RoL values and standards is, not surprisingly, difficult to answer. EU progress reports concerning chapter 23 and 24 of the AC in the various countries demonstrate a varied picture of progress. In some countries progress is reported (Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia) be it with caution and emphasising the long road ahead, while in other countries stagnation or even regress is reported (BiH, Macedonia, Turkey, Serbia). Looking at the complexity of RoL issues in each country in light of the overall size and fragmentation of Matra support, conducting a sound contribution analysis in order to make a convincing contribution claim has not been feasible in the context of this evaluation. In addition, existing monitoring systems are also not geared towards capturing this contribution.

What can be claimed however is that PATROL / Diplomat courses have enabled a significant number of individual government and judiciary officials (i.e. 37% of participants) in making an actual and improved contribution to RoL reforms. At the same time, a significant number of delegated projects are able to demonstrate results at project outcome level, but without (yet) fully grasping the opportunity for replication and upscaling to have a wider effect on the national RoL situation.

Despite some CoPROL projects reporting encouraging signs of progress, it is simply too early to make any significant contribution claim as most of these projects are not even half-way. Finally the MPPP interventions may certainly have the potential of making a significant contribution to target countries meeting the Copenhagen Criteria. However these interventions largely take place outside the scope of view of DEU and the embassies and do not systematically plan, monitor and report results at this level.

In terms of strengthened bilateral relations between the Netherlands and the target countries a mixed picture emerges. Improved Government-to-Government cooperation is a clear and explicit objective of the CoPROL programme framework. At the same time it is acknowledged that CoPROL projects may not have progressed far enough to draw definite conclusions about the achievement of this objective. Nevertheless, the relatively complex managerial arrangements in light of this objective are a cause for concern. CoPROL projects are managed by NGOs having their own expertise, policies and practices in the strengthening of RoL, who are made responsible and accountable for the overall project results, including the strengthened Government-to-Government relations. Government agencies are cooperating partners expected to contribute to the project's strategy and the implementation of project activities, but do not have formal accountability for project results including the improved relation with their own governmental counterpart. This together with the fact that in some projects, Government-to-Government cooperation is not included in the results and / or indicator framework, creates the risk that this will not be given the importance as originally intended when shaping the CoPROL framework.

In the period 2012 – 2014, the PATROL / Diplomat courses have resulted in an impressive list of 538 alumni including a large number of senior government and judiciary officials. This group potentially represents a strong network, but this potential is not (yet) used. After additional Back to the Region

roundtables that were not originally foreseen, only 22% of the 304 survey respondents claimed to have had contact with a Dutch government official in the Netherlands and /or the Netherlands embassy. A much larger number of survey respondents (92%) confirm having been in contact with other course participants, with 70% of these contacts being at least partly work-related. Notwithstanding that the majority of these contacts were with ex-participants from one's own country, approximately 30 respondents explicitly refer to work related contacts with ex-participants from other countries. These contacts are however described as taking place between individuals without providing indications of increased institutional cooperation.

Delegated projects have certainly strengthened contacts and relationships between the embassy and implementing partners, though these are largely project related and remain dominated by conventional donor-recipient dynamics. Strengthening of relationships between NGOs in the Netherlands and in the Matra region has not been pursued as an objective, hence most delegated project have been carried out without further involvement from Dutch NGOs. Remarkably, till May 2014 only the CoPROL component, meant to stimulate government to government collaboration, offered room for increased cooperation between NGOs with both sides involved in the management and facilitation of project activities. From May 2014 onwards changes in the guidelines made Dutch NGOs eligible to apply for funding from the delegated projects component, but this still happens sparsely for reasons of efficiency and availability of capable local NGOs.

Finally, the MPPP interventions have been going on for much longer than the 2012 – 2014 period covered by this evaluation. These party-to-party interventions have certainly led to increased bilateral relationships often at high political level, but these remain largely invisible to the Matra Programme Management. It is also not clear to what extent the potential of having these relations is being used in light of higher level Matra objectives like increased understanding and adoption of EU values and standards in the RoL or the Netherlands Strict and Fair policy in light of EU Accession processes.

Management;

When looking at the question how well Matra programme components were organised and managed, the CoPROL component receives the most critical responses. Despite the elaborate deliberations in shaping the CoPROL component, none of the stakeholders involved appears to be fully satisfied by how this played out. DEU representatives were disappointed with the interest shown / priority given by Dutch RoL related government agencies as well as with the number and quality of project proposals received. Ultimately it was felt necessary to cancel the third round of calls for proposals, leaving almost half of the allocated € 12 million uncommitted. In addition DEU staff acknowledges that repeated reorganisations combined with a high turnover of staff has in particular affected the management of the CoPROL component. This is in particular painful, since DEU decided to take over the management of this programme component from Agentschap NL to be more closely involved in CoPROL development, management and steering.

The main implementing NGOs experienced the application process as unreasonably strict, demanding and time-consuming, demonstrating a lack of confidence in the applicant organisations, especially when they already had a track record with the ministry in the area of RoL. Being made accountable for results was welcomed, despite the fact that in some cases this created some tension / confusion in the relations between the NGO and government cooperating partners, with the NGO now having to act as project manager supervising its partners rather than merely facilitating and supporting them. Once parties have settled in their roles, the arrangements are perceived positively by the government cooperating partners, as it relieves them of time-consuming project coordination and reporting requirements. Especially in the current context of rationalisation and budget cuts, this would have increasingly become a burden.

In addition, the NGOs express disappointment with the limited involvement, guidance and support received from DEU during project implementation, which is partly attributed to the regular turnover of staff but is also felt as low importance being given to CoPROL once the projects had been approved.

Finally, embassy staff commented on the lack of clarity of their expected involvement and questioned the short time frame and sensibility of their involvement, particular in the appraisal of the first round of proposals.

As the six approved CoPROL projects are at most halfway, it is unfortunately too early to draw definite conclusions about the extent to which these elaborate application procedures have resulted in successful and meaningful interventions.

Responses concerning management of the PATROL and Diplomat courses have been substantially less critical. Both Clingendael and the consortium led by TMC Asser Institute are felt to have properly managed their respective training programmes. Both institutes delivered according to contract, whereby TMC Asser was seen as going beyond its contractual obligations with the development of an online application system. The main remaining challenges here are how to best monitor and stimulate the actual application of learnings and how to make best use of the high potential of the alumni network.

The management of delegated projects by the embassies is widely appreciated for its speed and flexibility. The establishment of the RSO has helped reducing the administrative burden on the embassies, allowing embassies to focus more on the substantive appraisal and monitoring of projects. Main managerial challenges lie in the application of a more complete Theory of Change that may help in the pursuit of higher level Matra objectives. Besides this, there may be many lessons to be shared and leaned among embassies given their diverse approach in shaping and managing project portfolios.

Finally the management of the MPPP is successful in maintaining the legitimacy of the programme but is hampered by a lack of results orientation. The transfer of management responsibility to BZK has reduced the attention for results as managerial attention focused on assuring compliance with the WFPP and through that the legitimate distribution and use of MPPP funds.

5   Conclusions

Relevance

Overall it can be concluded that the **relevance of Matra interventions has been high** in terms of target country needs in the area of RoL. The vast majority of Matra interventions address priority RoL issues in the context of EU accession, whereby the emphasis of delegated projects particularly in Kosovo, Turkey and Serbia appears to be on Human rights issues like: Gender equality, LGTB rights, press freedom and minority rights. Other priority issues like: general capacity development, anti-corruption, transparency, press freedom and integrity are covered more prominently in Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro, while in BiH projects specifically related to reconciliation, war crimes and victims can be found. Institutional independence and cross-border issues (e.g. organised crime) are primarily covered in some of the larger CoPROL projects. **Embassies can be seen to adapt their portfolio to the context** to optimise relevance, which results in large differences in thematic coverage. Especially in countries with a heavy portfolio on human rights and minority issues, it can be observed that these are **not always fully aligned** with government priorities, especially when it concerns sensitive issues like: Press Freedom or LGTB rights. Nevertheless these issues are invariably relevant in the context of EU accession and in line with Dutch policy priorities, though target countries don't explicitly recognise these as priorities (yet).

The CoPROL projects and the PATROL / Diplomat courses primarily target the judiciary and /or government, while MPPP works directly with political entities, creating **a Matra portfolio that is reasonably balanced but not fully covering national RoL priorities for EU accession.** For instance a key constitutional issue like institutional independence remains largely unaddressed. As such the four Matra components complement each other, though are operated in relative isolation **without obvious efforts to achieve coherence and / or mutual reinforcement**. In particular the CoPROL lead agencies and embassies managing delegated projects could benefit from more exchange and cross-fertilisation during project design and implementation.

Relevance in terms of fitting within the Netherlands' policy priorities in strengthening the RoL is assessed high. Nearly all interventions funded under the Matra programme fit within the broader (be it informal) RoL definition most commonly used within the Ministry of Foreign. This broader definition explicitly includes Human Rights and Minority issues as a key thematic area and is also used in programmatic instructions for the CoPROL and Delegated projects component. The **distribution of efforts over the list of policy priorities is context specific and therefore varied**. There is an emphasis on the thematic area of Human Rights / Minorities in Kosovo, Serbia and Turkey with all its sub-themes substantially covered. Good Governance features most prominently in Albania and Macedonia, while Montenegro and BiH have a more balanced portfolio having project on LGBT rights in common but for the rest dealing with very different issues. The area of Legislation and Justice overall gets significantly less attention as these might require more extensive efforts less easily fitting the framework of in particular delegated projects. RoL priorities for EU accession like: law enforcement (incl. the fight against organised crime) and the independence of prosecutors and judges remain largely untouched by the Matra programme, notwithstanding the fact that these are of course covered by other programmes.

In assessing relevance in terms of added value to other on-going efforts, it is important to note that, with the exception of Turkey, the Matra programme targets relatively small countries all facing substantial RoL challenges. All these countries are subject to extensive international efforts to strengthen RoL in light of EU Accession, which is explicitly supported by the US as well. Added value of Matra interventions is therefore assessed in terms of their potential to make a contribution to the strengthening of RoL that is or cannot be delivered through other programmes. This unique contribution / **added value can be more convincingly found in the extent to which Matra interventions serve the interests of the Netherlands** in getting better connected in the region **than in the RoL issues being addressed**. Even though it is argued and acknowledged that the Netherlands have unique RoL expertise and is able to deliver high quality interventions, this expertise is being mobilised through other international channels as well (e.g. SIGMA, IPA, OSCE).

Looking at the specific relevance of the various programme components, the following can be concluded;

CoPROL projects are designed with elaborate attention for their relevance in the local RoL context and led by parties with a strong RoL track record using long-standing relations with government and non-government organisations in the region. The extent to which this relevance is translated into an apparent sense of ownership on the recipient government side is however varied.

Besides contributing to relevant regional RoL challenges, CoPROL has the **potential of strengthening bilateral ties** through improved Government-to-Government cooperation. This is widely recognised as a relevant strategy for building Government-to-Government relations and increasing understanding about European RoL standards. Given their stage of implementation, it is too early to draw final conclusions about CoPROL delivering on this potential, but this requires continued monitoring, especially given the rather complex cooperation arrangements of CoPROL.

Relevance of the PATROL / Diplomats courses is considered high as a large majority of participants confirm that **courses are dealing with relevant RoL issues in light of EU accession**. Relevance in terms of **reaching the right participants is less convincing** with almost 50% of participants claiming not to be involved (yet) in implementing EU accession or RoL reform processes. Over time, efforts are made to improve this, though scope for further improvement remains by linking training efforts more closely to on-going or upcoming reform processes. At the same time **relevance in light of other training opportunities open to the same target group is questionable** as there appear to be many PATROL-like training opportunities offered by other countries or international organisations. It has to be noted however that no comparative analysis was made of the course quality offered by other countries or organisations.

PATROL / Diplomat courses also carry the potential added value of strengthening and / or expanding bilateral ties between the Netherlands and key government and judiciary staff in the Matra region. This potential however is not (yet) fully taken advantage of as becomes apparent from the **relatively low number of alumni that have maintained contact with the Netherlands**.

Relevance of delegated projects is considered **high in terms of addressing priority RoL issues in light of EU accession that fit the Netherlands policy priorities** mostly in a direct sometimes in an indirect manner. Relevance in terms of full coverage of country priorities is less convincing even though the evaluation acknowledges that there are limits to what can be attained by a relatively small NGO-driven delegated project. The majority of delegated projects focus on human rights / minority issues, which is understandable given the original NGO focus of this component. Relevance is covered in most project proposals and an explicit point of attention in appraisal processes. It is in this programme component where the gap in alignment between national policy priorities and Dutch priorities becomes most apparent. In general this is a **deliberate effort by the embassies to address sensitive RoL issues** and by that give distinctive substance to the Strict and Fair policy of the Netherlands when it comes to the practical adoption of European standards, norms and values.

It can furthermore be concluded that relevance of delegated projects in terms of **added value to other on-going interventions is high**, as it provides a unique flexible funding window to provide a quickly and relative small-scale response to emerging RoL issues. In this way projects can be funded that fit the absorption capacity of smaller NGOs which would not qualify for larger facilities, while it offers the embassy a tool to position itself as a more credible partner in the EU accession process. At the same time the more reactive approach in identifying funding opportunities creates the risk of a biased portfolio in which certain priority issues are not covered.

In response to the main MPPP relevance questions, it can be concluded that the **transparency of the geographical distribution of funds has gone down** and become more varied among parties after BZK has taken over the management of MPPP funds early 2013. This is a logical consequence of the diverse relations parties have in the region and the fact that most activities are identified in a rather demand driven manner. Nevertheless for parties whose financial plans or reports do allow for insight in geographical distribution of funds, it appears that the proportion of funds dedicated to the Matra region has not gone down. On average it appears to have gone up, though as mentioned with larger variety among parties.

In addition, despite that control over annual plans of MPPP implementers has become looser since the transfer to BZK, the **nature of activities financed through MPPP has not substantially changed**. This is primarily due to the demand-driven way in which annual plans are put together, whereby project activities are part of a longer-term relation with established routines for cooperation.

At the same time it is observed that the true **potential of the MPPP is underexploited**. The MPPP is the only programme component directly targeting political parties, who in many of the target countries have significant influence over RoL reforms but takes place in isolation outside the view of Matra programme management.

Effectiveness

When regarding effectiveness at macro / impact level (i.e. in the sphere of control of Matra's intervention logic related to target country interest (ref. figure 1)) – Pluriform democracy grounded in RoL, meeting the Copenhagen Criteria and EU accession – we can see that most countries make slow but steady progress in overcoming their own specific challenges. It can be observed that the Matra portfolio is adapted to country-specific challenges and takes into account the potential for making a contribution. However the broadness of the context in which these contributions take place and the complexity of the pathway through which change is to take place, would make a contribution claim at this level unfounded and insensible.

Even when looking **at effectiveness at outcome level** (i.e. in the sphere of influence of Matra's programmatic intervention logic related to target country interests) – institutional strengthening by adopting and operationalising EU values and standards in the Rule of Law - it is **not possible to make a convincing contribution claim**. Overall Matra interventions take place in a complex turbulent RoL environment and in themselves are mostly too small and scattered to be expected to make a distinctive contribution. This goes to a lesser extent for CoPROL projects, which have the potential of making a noticeable difference but have not progressed far enough to claim such a contribution. At the same time it has to be acknowledged that most projects have an 'activity delivery' focus, which means that during design and implementation little attention is paid to sustainability, replication and / or upscaling in pursuit of higher level objectives.

If however **effectiveness closer to the scope of control and influence of <u>individual projects</u>** (i.e. at project output and outcome level) is reviewed, **encouraging signs of effectiveness** can be found.

For CoPROL projects signs of effectiveness remain limited to anecdotal evidence given that most of them are hardly halfway. For PATROL / Diplomat intended deliverables in terms of increased knowledge and skills (i.e. outputs) are met as demonstrated by a high level of satisfaction and appreciation by participants and the good reputation of these courses. In addition, results in the **use of newly acquired knowledge and skills are significant**, given that 37% of all participants confirm to be making an improved contribution to the RoL reforms. This is positive, especially considering that only 50% of participants confirm having been involved in the implementation of EU accession or RoL reform processes in their country after course participation. This means PATROL **effectiveness is affected by the challenge of mobilising the most appropriate / influential participants and the limited embeddedness in broader EU accession or RoL reform processes**.

Also a significant proportion of the **sampled delegated projects have been able to demonstrate results** at project output level (intended deliverables have been produced) as well as outcome level (intended deliverables have had a RoL effect beyond the scope of control of the project). This is partly due to the concrete nature of these projects having relatively straightforward deliverables and objectives pursued by implementing partners that are naturally close to the issue at stake. In addition this is due to the embassy making deliberate use of its delegated powers in identifying and funding emerging opportunities that carry a high sense of urgency and interest. As mentioned, apparent **effectiveness beyond the scope of the project remains limited**, with the opportunity of upscaling, replicating or advocating of often impressive project results being missed.

MPPP effectiveness remains unclear, as projects largely take place outside the view of the embassies or the controlling authority (BZK) while current project reports primarily demonstrate the successful completion of activities, while **information on immediate and longer term results is missing**.

The resulting **Micro-Macro paradox in some countries** (progress at micro level, but stagnation at macro level) cannot be avoided by a bilateral programme with the magnitude and nature of Matra that consists of four components delegated to different entities (DEU, embassies, BZK/ political parties). Understandably this leads to interventions at micro-level that attempt to complement larger programmes by addressing selected RoL niches that also meet the interests of the managing entity. As such a portfolio of relatively small and scattered projects emerges. Shaping the Matra programme in this way has been a deliberate choice that leads to good results at project (micro) level, but makes it impossible to discern Matra's contribution at macro level, hence carries the risk of a micro-macro paradox.

Assessing **effectiveness in strengthening of bilateral relations results in a mixed though less encouraging picture** (i.e. sphere of influence related to NL interests). In other words a low sense of urgency and little importance is being attached to network building as one of the main Matra objectives. This becomes apparent in a less than expected eagerness of Dutch government agencies to participate let alone initiate CoPROL opportunities, difficulties in mobilising Dutch government officials in PATROL networking events and in the limited extent to which embassies are seen to make use of the PATROL network. Overall it seems that the Theory of Change underlying the Matra programme carries the **assumption that Dutch government representatives are able, and feel the need, to connect** with colleagues in the pre-accession countries. This assumption apparently does not always hold true.

When reviewing effectiveness in strengthening bilateral ties closer to the scope of control of the four programme components, the following is concluded;

CoPROL projects have not progressed far enough to draw definite conclusions about strengthening of Government-to-Government relations. At the same time, there is some cause for concern about this. On one side, it appears that CoPROL projects do not consistently include strengthened Government-to-Government relations as a project result or indicator for success. On the other hand, current managerial arrangements make the leading NGOs accountable for CoPROL results that are largely beyond their control when it comes to improved Government-to-Government cooperation. The government agencies involved have expressed their commitment to this result but formally cannot be held accountable for this.

The effectiveness of PATROL / Diplomat courses in **strengthening bilateral relations** can only be demonstrated at individual participant level but also on that level remains **disappointing** with 22% of participants having kept in contact with a Dutch government representative. Effectiveness in terms of **network building between participants is much more encouraging** with the majority of them maintaining contact, 2/3rd of which are work related contacts.

Strengthening of bilateral ties is less explicitly targeted in delegated projects and **primarily takes place between embassies and the implementing partners**. Most delegated projects are implemented fully by a local entity without much involvement from the Netherlands and have been **less effective in building relationships beyond the embassy**. After the May 2014 instructions this has improved a bit as the delegated funding window opened up for Dutch organisations and Government-to-Government cooperation.

Finally the MPPP seems to be an **effective tool for political parties to expand and build their international networks**. MPPP funds are often used to finance international exchange initiatives and participation in international events with a clear networking objective. These networks are important, as parties need to build international coalitions that will make them more powerful in Brussels. However the extent to which these relations are being used and have an effect on RoL reforms or the understanding of European democratic standards and values is not clear.

Management

Looking at the overall Matra programme, it appears that **the four Matra programme component are shaped and managed independently** from each other and subsequently all implemented by different entities. This results in little programmatic guidance and limited coherence between the various programme components, whereby possible opportunities for cross-fertilisation and mutual reinforcement are not identified. In delegating, instructions are provided that delineate what can and cannot be funded, but without clear expectations or demands about how the broader relevance of portfolios is to be secured and reported upon light of on-going EU efforts. As a result it remains unclear how for instance annual EU progress reports are (to be) used to inform strategic thinking about shaping the Matra portfolio at country level.

This fragmentation of programme management is partly built into the programme design, but also due to the fact that DEU has been confronted with various reorganisations and unusual high staff turnover. At the same time, various international crises within Europe demanding attention, makes that DEU has not been able to attach as much importance to the Matra programme as they would have wanted.

Another concern related to programme management is the limited **attention for higher level results** during the implementation of the programme. In policy and planning documents and BeMo's higher level results are mentioned but not systematically monitored as part of the results framework. At the same time the Theory of Change behind the programme carries a number of **implicit assumptions** that are essential for attaining higher lever results, which become risks to the programme when not monitored. This includes the assumption of government agencies having the time and interest to establish and maintain connections with pre-accession countries but also the expectation that embassies will be clear and ready to take advantage of a large potential network of PATROL alumni.

Despite these critical remarks concerning continuity in programme management, it has to be **acknowledged that DEU has taken a range of remedial actions to optimise the performance** of individual programme components and with that the Matra programme as a whole. These remedial actions included efforts to streamline CoPROL procedures, to improve programme performance in network building and stimulate regional cooperation through the creation of a (pilot) network of RoL specialists.

When looking at the management of individual programme components, in particular the **management of CoPROL has to be critically assessed**. The question whether the programme component has resulted in a sufficient number of appropriate application is answered by the cancellation of the third call for proposals and the subsequent diversion of funds to other programme components. The extensive and heavy application process has resulted in six carefully designed and approved projects, but support and guidance during implementation has been experienced as limited. The conscientious intent of facilitating Government-to-Government cooperation for which the managerial arrangements of CoPROL were designed is appreciated. In practice these arrangements did not fully work out and resulted in **accountability arrangements that are not in line with the scope of control of cooperating partners**, with the risk of losing sight of the Government-to-Government objective of CoPROL projects. Finally, embassies have had the potential and desire to contribute more substantially to the CoPROL project design, but confusion about the timing and nature of their expected involvement remained.

The **management of PATROL / Diplomats courses has been adequate**. Training services have been designed, delivered and evaluated according to agreement and the quality of these is highly appreciated in terms of relevance and learning effectiveness. Both institutes demonstrate to pursue continuous improvement of their courses and think along with the Ministry to deal with performance concerns. In the BeMo's the importance of monitoring longer term learning effects is mentioned, though no clear agreement is made about how this is expected to take place. Further scope for improvement can be found in the selection of participants (though largely beyond the control of the training institutes), in linking training efforts more closely to on-going / upcoming reform process, and in the coordination of training efforts with other training providers.

The **management of delegated projects by the embassies can be characterised as pragmatic, accommodative and reactive with a deliberate eye for niches** where RoL interests of target countries in the context of EU accession and Dutch interests come together. This increases the visibility of the embassy and, be it to a lesser extent, the promotion of Dutch expertise. It is felt that embassies create high value for money by having meaningful projects carried out by local organisations at low costs. To make this possible ample support to those local organisations is given during the application and in the execution of project activities, which is remarkable given the limited staff available. At the same time, **delegated projects are largely treated as stand-alone interventions** without much attention for the higher level objectives to which they ought to contribute. This is further illustrated by the limited attention for the replication and / or upscaling of project results and for using these results in wider policy influencing efforts.

The transfer of the MPPP to BZK has not changed much (yet) in the nature of MPPP activities. The management instruments used by BZK make it **difficult to monitor the geographical distribution of funds**, though no evidence was sound that would indicate a significant diversion of funds away from the Matra target countries. There is however less consistency in the regional allocation of funds between the political parties than before. A managerial shortcoming in the MPPP is the activity oriented focus in planning and reporting and the apparent **inability to capture longer term but also immediate results** in terms of leadership or network development. This is a pity as the MPPP carries a strong potential in strengthening democratisation and the RoL, directly targeting the political parties that have a significant influence over these processes.

Overall the Matra has proved to be a relevant organic programme, complementary to IPA that is developed far in advance without much flexibility, and relatively successful in delivering quick and concrete results with a potential added value for the EU accession process.

6   Recommendations for future programming

Overall the evaluation supports the continuation of the Matra programme taking into account the following recommendations:

Concerning Strategy and overall Programme Management;

1. Recognise and address the "hybrid" nature of the programme that simultaneously pursues the interests of the target countries in terms of EU accession and the interests of the Netherlands in terms of improved bilateral linkages. While conceptually these interests may be combined, in the operational selection of projects to be funded this leads to a more organic but less coherent portfolio. Having a relatively scattered portfolio also explains the continuing micro-macro paradox of the Matra programme of having successful projects on the ground without seeing this translated in progress at macro level. A political decision is therefore required whether a Matra programme pursuing two parallel objectives of equal importance with earlier mentioned implications, is preferable over a programme with more clearly prioritized objectives.

2. (Re)construct a thorough and comprehensive Theory of Change for the programme that covers all three branches of the state (legislature, executive, and judiciary) along with civil society and private sector. DEU in consultation with the network of RoL experts in the region can take the lead in this.

3. This programmatic ToC can then be used to clearly *define* the strengthening of RoL and form the basis for an adapted results framework of the post 2015 Matra programme reflecting political choices in prioritization of objectives that include:
    (i)   increasing local awareness about the strict and fair approach,
    (ii)   strengthening and operationalising bilateral ties (also between target countries)
    (iii)   strengthening capacities of stakeholders in South East Europe, and
    (iv)   adding value by pioneering support projects and working in complementarity with other and bigger assistance projects (notably IPA).
    In this results framework critical assumptions are to be made explicit, especially where it concerns the ability and interests of Dutch government and judicial institutes to pursue or contribute to Matra results so that a deliberate risk management strategy can become part of the programmatic framework.

4. Using the country-based RoL network members, convert / specify the (regional) programmatic Theory of Change at country level to create a national Matra framework that summarises / visualises the specific expectations in Matra interventions contributing to progress towards EU accession. This ToC is to be largely based on the latest EU progress reports, to be updated annually and aligned with the key objectives and focal areas identified at EU level.

    This country level ToC would respect and support the continued delegation of authority to embassies to shape their own project portfolio in conscious *complementarity* to IPA with at least half of the available MATRA funds allocated to this. Having such a ToC would have to enable embassies to use their delegated powers in a more systematic and pro-active manner.

    More systematic means embedding selected interventions within 'their' Theory of Change and by that providing insight in the respective coverage of thematic RoL areas (i.e. being alternative Pathways of Change). This enables more conscious decision making in terms of thematic coverage. Placing interventions within the context of a larger ToC would also create more clarity about higher level results to be pursued and monitored.

    Having the overview of past and on-going interventions within the context of a country-level ToC will enable embassies to adopt a more pro-active approach in stimulating / prompting sound project ideas from credible and capable partners in the 'niches' the embassy feels need to be addressed (without compromising the appraisal criteria concerning project design and ownership).

5. Use the regional and country-level frameworks to identifying cross-border 'challenges / niches' to be addressed by *regional* Matra interventions for which part of the Matra funds is to be earmarked. This would allow for economies-of-scale by avoiding similar interventions taking place in separate countries and also provides the network with a more natural vehicle for collaboration, exchange and learning.

6. Be more explicit about the programme management responsibilities of DEU and key managerial partners throughout the programme cycle. In particular responsibilities related to the monitoring of higher level results, coherence within the programme and vis-à-vis European programmes (notably IPA), a balanced coverage of policy priorities and risk management need to be clarified and clearly assigned. This monitoring information will have to feed into a (bi)annual reflection process resulting in more systematic steering of the programme as a whole as well as it separate components.

Concerning individual Programme Components;

CoPROL

7. Adopt a more phased approach in the CoPROL application procedures, whereby applicants based on an initial concept note can be informed about their chances of approval, including critical elements to be covered before embarking on full proposal development in a simplified format, especially when it concerns an applicant having a track record with the Ministry. Include guidelines / instructions concerning the involvement of embassies during project design.

8. Re-assess the interest and resources of key government institutes in the Netherlands as basis for an adapted funding framework dedicated to the strengthening of Government-to-Government cooperation. Such a framework could include a (non-exclusive) list of interested and committed government agencies and include a "broker" function with the clear role of process facilitator that can be outsourced to a non-governmental entity.

9. Distinguish a funding window to stimulate civil society to civil society cooperation, forging partnerships between local and Dutch CSOs in pursuit of a joint RoL objective. To avoid 'domination' of the partnership by the Dutch partner, the funding window can be managed by the embassies with specific interventions to be initiated and led by the local partner. This window could include a regional component to be managed centrally or by the regional network.

10. Ascertain the explicit inclusion of *strengthened bilateral ties* in the results framework of projects, so it is ensured that these results are being separately monitored and reported upon.

PATROL / Diplomat courses

11. Continue close cooperation with embassies in the formal promotion of PATROL courses, and include a linkage to on-going or upcoming RoL reform process as precondition in the application procedure. These processes would then be the logical subject of their Back Home Action Plans.

12. Add a Training of Trainers (TOT) component to the training programme for selected participants that demonstrate aptitude and interest in transferring their knowledge / skills to their colleagues back home. Such a TOT can then be organized once a year in the region.

13. Create and maintain overview of the most important foreign funded RoL training opportunities in the region, and use this to ascertain distinct future training programmes that would include sessions in the Netherlands as well as in the region. Such sessions in the region could take the shape of advanced or refresher courses or round-tables as follow-up to discuss experiences with the Back Home Action Plans. These regional sessions are to be organised in cooperation with the regional network of RoL experts and the embassies to optimise the network function and

would also offer a platform to exchange ideas with and among embassies about the need and opportunities for using the growing network of alumni.

DELEGATED PROJECTS

14. Keep the delegated projects relatively small and simple, meeting the absorption capacity of local NGOs and complementing other funding windows geared towards larger interventions (i.e. using different criteria and procedures that stress the complementarity / additionality of proposed interventions).

15. Leave the management of these projects to the embassies, allowing them the continued freedom to identify and respond rapidly to the most promising funding opportunities within the RoL domain but in a more systematic and pro-active manner (see recommendation 4, including continued allocation of at least half of the Matra funds). This includes the possibility of embassies engaging in longer term commitments and / or the funding of follow-up activities.

16. At the same time, enable embassies to incorporate attention for higher level results in shaping their portfolio during project design and implementation, including insights in best practices in up-scaling, replication and connecting to wider Lobby & Advocacy efforts. This may include capacity building in force field and actor analysis to generate a systematic overview of the most relevant RoL actors and the (formal and informal) power division among them, which enables more strategic choices concerning cooperation channels.

17. Use the newly established regional network of RoL experts to give impetus to cross-country learning in the identification, design and management of RoL interventions in the region (see also recommendation 5 and 13).

MPPP

18. Intensify the connection between Matra programme management and the MPPP implementing agencies and explore possibilities for the Matra programme to support democratisation efforts through political entities in the region. This has to be done whilst respecting the political autonomy of individual parties by focusing on issues that are not subject to political ideology but relate to fundamental EU democratic standards, norms and values that are valid for all political parties (e.g. efforts to build awareness, understanding and acceptance of the importance of pursuing a pluriform democracy, grounded in the Rule of Law with room for dialogue between government and civil society).

19. Explore possibilities of getting access and using the MPPP network of political entities in the region for the strengthening of bilateral ties.

20. Engage in a dialogue with MPPP implementing entities to plan, capture and report better on results beyond the successful completion of activities. This can be done by identifying and articulating joint / common objectives in the Matra region without affecting their political autonomy.