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Annual Report and Accounts 2023



The Hague Academy for
local governance

Table of contents

1. Introduction	4
2. Our mission	6
2.1. Our Theory of Change	6
2.2. Our programmes	7
2.3. Our values	8
2.4. Our impact	9
3. Open subscription courses	11
4. Multiannual training programmes	12
4.1. MATRA-programmes	12
4.2. Shiraka-training programmes	12
4.3. We are Able!	13
4.4. Cooperation programmes with VNG International	14
4.5. Strengthening the capacity of training institutes	15
5. Short tailor made programmes	16
6. Talent for Governance	18
7. Organisation	19
7.1. Human resources	19
7.2. Strategic development	19
7.3. Integrity policy	22
8. Finances	24
8.1. Sources of income	24
8.2. Financial health	25
8.3. Risk management and in control statement	25
8.4. Future development	26

9. Accounts	29	lg
9.1. Balance sheet per 31 December 2022	29	
9.2. Profit and loss account 2022	30	
9.3. Cash flow statement 2022	31	
9.4. Notes to the accounts	31	
9.5. Notes to the balance sheet per 31 December 2022	33	
9.6. Notes to the profit and loss account	35	
9.7. Auditor's opinion	37	

1. Introduction



In 2023, The Hague Academy celebrated its 15th anniversary, marking 15 years of training practitioners in government, civil society and development agencies with the aim to strengthen local democracy worldwide. This milestone was celebrated with a public event in The Hague and an online alumni gathering, discussing current challenges and opportunities for local democracies around the world. With a worldwide trend towards more autocratic government and polarisation, strengthening knowledge and skills needed to practice democracy and dialogue is more relevant than ever.

The year showed the highest turnover in our existence. Despite a considerable investment in the organisation, in particular back office capacity, we managed to close the year with a slight positive financial result. The total income from programmes was € 4.073 mln and operating costs were € 4.070, leaving a net income of € 3,000. Additional income from interest led to a positive result in 2023 of € 10,348.

In total we delivered 13 open subscription courses in The Hague and 41 tailored programmes for in total 1400 participants from 60 countries. The tailor made training activities were organised in The Netherlands, the MENA-region (Middle East North Africa), Sub-Sahara Africa and Asia. Participants appreciated our programmes with scores that are consistently high throughout the years. In 2023, the programmes received an average overall score of 4.5 out of 5, with THA's staff, study visits and experts scoring similar or even higher rates. The impact measured shows encouraging results as well, not only for the multi-annual courses but also for the short courses in The Hague: 97% of the participants in these courses say they initiated change after the training, such as developing a new policy, starting a project, involving new stakeholders, and sharing the acquired knowledge with colleagues and managers.



Participants doing recap exercise, Urban Governance: Resilient & Smart Cities, 2023.

Our open course offer in 2023 consisted of thirteen open courses, attended by 135 Nuffic-scholars and 94 self-funded participants. The number of Nuffic-scholarships was less than foreseen, mainly due to visa issues of participants. Four young municipal talents participated in the Talent for Governance programme. They joined a course at The Hague Academy followed by internships offered by the Dutch municipalities of Oss and Amstelveen.

In addition to the open subscription courses, we delivered a variety of training activities for several multi-year programmes. For the programme 'We Are Able!', which promotes inclusion of persons with disabilities, we organised refresher trainings and coaching in six African countries. For the Shiraka-programmes in the MENA-region we delivered our five annual hybrid courses and several tailor made training programmes. For the Orange Knowledge Programme, we started up six programmes in different countries, and for the Dutch Ministry of Interior we started a training on project management in the Dutch Caribbean. We also delivered on demand training for clients such as the Royal Academy of Management of Oman and the Human Resource Centre of Ulaanbaatar in Mongolia.

In 2023, we were successful in acquiring a new five-year Rule of Law Training Programme, together with our partners the Netherlands Helsinki Committee and Leiden University. The programme aims to support countries in the Western Balkans and Eastern neighbourhood countries with implementing reforms in relation to EU-accession. Unfortunately, the changes proposed for the Orange Knowledge Programme, that have an impact on both the Nuffic-scholarships and Nuffic tailor made training, combined with huge budget cuts for development cooperation announced by the new Dutch government, will have a considerable impact on the participants of our open courses and make diversifying our income all the more a priority for the coming years.

2. Our mission

The foundation The Hague Academy for Local Governance is a non-profit organisation that aims to strengthen local democracy worldwide. We do this by offering practice oriented training programmes for practitioners of national and subnational governments, NGOs and development partners.

2.1. Theory of Change

At The Hague Academy, we believe that a stronger local democracy will ultimately lead to governments and citizens jointly contributing to stability, sustainable socio-economic development and better public services, thereby improving the quality of life of citizens worldwide.

The local level for most citizens is the first point of contact with the government. Here, people can raise concerns and participate in decision making. Moreover, due to the worldwide trends of decentralisation and urbanisation, local governments play an increasing role in tackling global issues such as poverty, migration, and climate change. It is our vision therefore, that real development starts at the local level, with local authorities and citizens working constructively together for sustainable development.

We work on our mission by organising practice oriented training programmes for practitioners at national and subnational governments, NGOs and development partners. Our programmes help them to develop awareness, knowledge and skills needed to act as change agents in their organisations and communities. This way, we support the development of well-functioning institutions that effectively manage public services and promote practices of democratic local governance. Moreover, we support citizens to effectively engage with their governments.

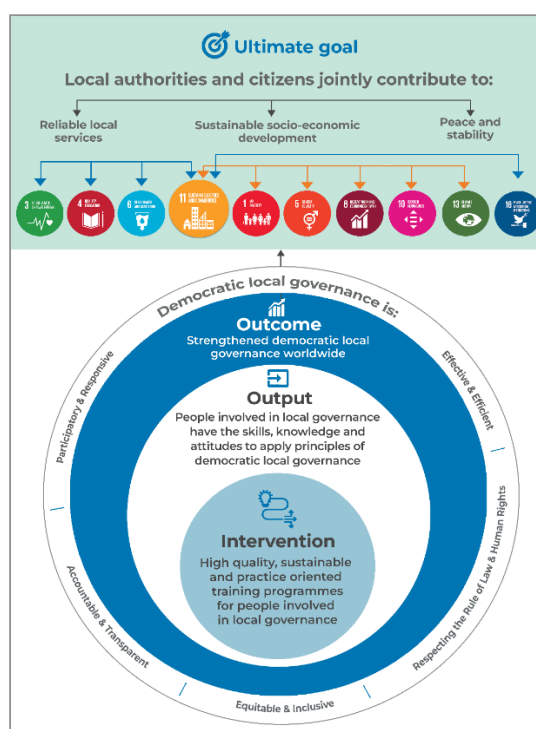


Figure 1 Theory of Change

In our programmes, we promote the following principles of good, democratic local governance:

- Participation and responsiveness
- Accountability and transparency
- Equity and inclusiveness
- Respecting the rule of law and human rights
- Effectivity and efficiency

2.2. Our programmes

The Hague Academy offers short courses for open subscription, short tailor made training programmes, multi-annual action-learning programmes, Training of Trainer-programmes (ToT) and training centre support. We also have our scholarship programme Talent for Governance for young, talented municipal employees in developing and transitional countries. Programmes are offered Face-to-Face and online and in different languages (English, Arabic, Spanish and French), both in The Hague and abroad.



Figure 2 Overview of programme types

The programmes we design are characterised by the following elements:

- **A local perspective**

Our programmes take a local perspective to development, considering all actors at the local level. This means we work not only with local government practitioners but also with national and regional governments, who coordinate and facilitate the local level, as well as with informal power holders and civil society organisations, businesses and development partners.

- **Practice oriented**

Our programmes are action oriented and designed around real life problems. Participants share work experiences and dilemmas with each other. Case studies and tools derived from practice are presented by experts who are practitioners themselves. We reflect with participants on how the lessons learned relate to their own local context, and coach them in the development and implementation of their action plans, to support the change process in their organisations and communities.

- **Expertise, Exchange, and Experience**

We offer a combination of content expertise, training expertise and an active exchange of knowledge between practitioners. Through dialogue, exercises, role play, games, and study visits, we involve participants as much as possible, thereby offering an experience that inspires and motivates them for their work back home.



An interactive and engaging approach based on adult learning principles

2.3. Our values

The Hague Academy has defined the following core values: expertise, innovation, diversity, passion, responsiveness and quality. These values reflect how we see ourselves as organisation and staff. They define the way we work, and how we communicate with our stakeholders: our training participants, clients, partners, and staff. They help us make decisions, plan for the future, and function as a team.

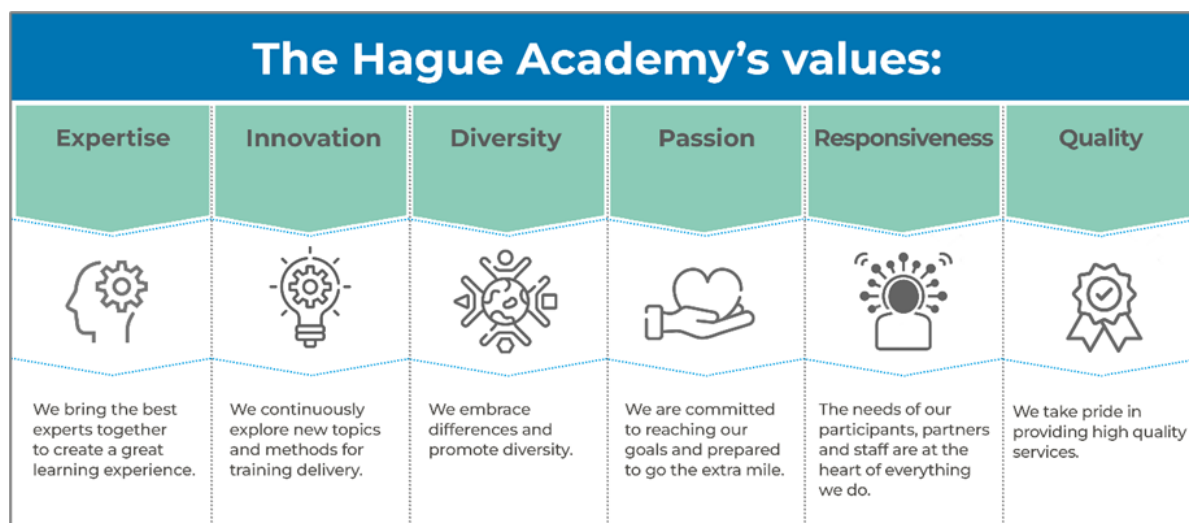


Figure 3 Our values

2.4. Our impact



In 2023, we trained 1,400 persons, which is 200 more than in 2022. About one third of the participants work for national government, one third for subnational government (local and regional) and one third for a non-governmental organisation. Of the latter group, about half works for a local and half for an international organisation.

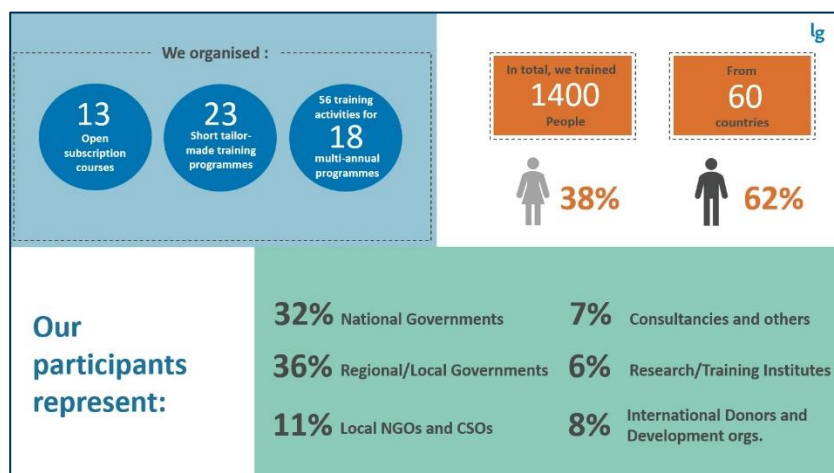


Figure 4 Overview training programmes and participants 2023

The percentage of women is with 38% similar to 2022. The number is influenced by some short on-demand programmes with very low female participation. For our open courses the percentage is 45% and for multi-annual programmes 40%. Considering that government officials which make up two third of our participants, in most of countries are usually men, it remains a challenge to realise an equal percentage of men and women. However, some programmes showed a clear majority of female participants, like the ones for Mongolia, Ukraine and Bangladesh and the Shiraka-courses on Ecosystems for Entrepreneurs. Moreover, some programmes that had their kick off in 2023 with high officials (most men), will have follow-up training in 2024 with more female participants.

The figures above also show that 47% of the participants come from Sub Sahara Africa, 34% from the MENA-region, 10% from Europe, 5% from Asia and 4% from the Americas. The decrease in participants from Asia is mainly due to the fact these countries were not eligible anymore for Nuffic scholarships.

Participants rated our programmes with an average score of 4.5 out of 5. Almost all (98%) participants would recommend the course to others. The Academy's staff scored excellent with a 4.7 out of 5. The study visits and expert sessions scored 4.5 and the balance between theory and practice 4.3, which is an important indication that our courses match our ambition to deliver training that is practice oriented and interactive.

Long term impact

To measure the change in that participants are able to create in their organisations and communities after the training, we conducted our annual open training impact survey. The survey showed that the courses are very effective in creating a professional network of practitioners: 99% of the participants were still in touch with their fellow participants after a year, of which 80% more than five times a year.

As in previous years, the open courses also proved to be successful in supporting change activities initiated by the participants. This year, 97% of the respondents said they initiated change after their training. Their actions of change concerned: sharing knowledge from the training with others in the organisation or community (87%), involving new stakeholders (56%), starting or adjusting a project (73%), developing or changing a policy (41%) or other actions (14%). See the table below. When looking at the success factors, respondents primarily attributed their success to the training: 73% of the respondents said the training contributed very or extremely to the change they initiated.

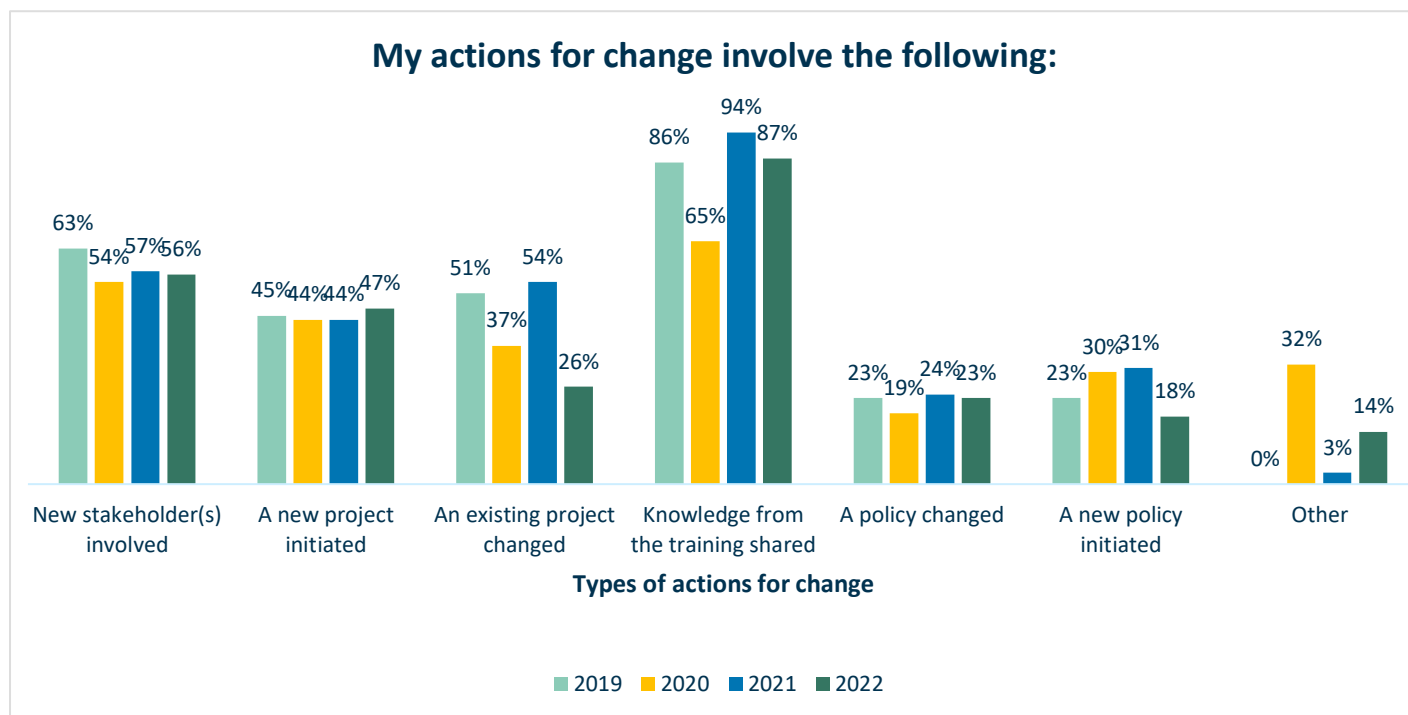


Figure 5 Actions for change

3. Open subscription courses

In 2023, THA organised 13 fully face-to-face courses in the Netherlands. Thanks to the large number of Nuffic-scholarships in the second half of the year, a total of 233 participants joined our courses, which is 18 on average. The number of self-funded participants increased by 80% compared to 2022. This increase compared to the year before was partly due to the fact that in the first part of 2022 there were still some COVID-related travel restrictions. The interest from Nuffic-sponsored and self-funded applicants for the fiscal and citizen participation course in February and May was high, so we decided to organise extra courses in August and November.

The number of participants to our open courses in the past three years was as follows:

Participants Open Training	2023	2022	2021
Self-funded participants	94	52	75
Nuffic-scholarships	135	152	165
Talent for Governance	4	0	0
TOTAL	233	204	240*

Figure 6 Participants open courses (*92 participants from 2020 followed second part in 2021)



Study visit to the Urban Green Village in Delft, Citizen Participation and Inclusive Governance, 2023.

4. Multiannual training programmes



In 2023, The Hague Academy continued with the Shiraka training programmes, finalised the Matra-programme on integrity in Ukraine and acquired a new four-year contract to implement the Matra Rule of Law Training programme together with the Netherlands Helsinki Committee, and Leiden Law School. Additionally, we continued our work under the 'We Are Able!'-programme on disability inclusion in the consortium led by ZOA. Finally, we started a multi-annual programme aimed at promoting rural development in Georgia, led by the Innovations and Reform Center and funded by the European Commission.

4.1. MATRA-programmes

The MATRA-fund, administered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, serves to strengthen the rule of law and democracy in potential EU member states and countries within the EU Eastern Partnership. The Hague Academy has been involved in implementing the Matra Rule of Law Training programme since 2012. In 2023, The Hague Academy, in close collaboration with the Netherlands Helsinki Committee and Leiden Law School, secured funding for a new four-year programme to be executed from 2023 to 2027.

Since 2018, we have also led a MATRA-programme in Ukraine, focusing on enhancing integrity and good governance within the civil service, through a partnership with the National Agency of Ukraine on Civil Service. Following several delays first due to the Corona pandemic and subsequently as a consequence of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, we consulted with our Ukrainian partners and continued the programme in 2023. We continued our previous activities by delivering online training on integrity. Furthermore, we expanded the scope of the programme by designing an online training on transitional justice for Ukrainian civil servants with the NGO Uprights.

Towards the end of the year, we received funding from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs to continue our work on transitional justice in Ukraine together with Uprights, under a new programme, implemented in partnership with the Asser Institute and under the lead of IDLO.

4.2. Shiraka-training programmes

In 2023, The Hague Academy implemented the following Shiraka training programmes for civil servants in the MENA-region, as part of our framework contracts with RVO (Netherlands Enterprise Agency):

- Local Governance
- Social Affairs & Employment (in collaboration with CNV International)
- Water Management (in collaboration with Wageningen University)
- E-government (in collaboration with PBLQ)
- Ecosystems for Entrepreneurs.

The regional training parts for the Ecosystems, E-government and Social Affairs-trainings were delivered in Tunisia and organised in collaboration with CILG.

In addition to these annual training courses, several spin-off Shiraka training programmes were organised:

- A training programme on e-government for civil servants from Iraq (in collaboration with PBLQ);
- A five-day training on 'Citizen Engagement for Urban Development' in collaboration with the Union for the Mediterranean;
- A Shiraka Water Management Alumni Conference for alumni of previous Shiraka-training programmes that were conducted entirely online during the Corona period;
- A follow-up Training-of-Trainers programme as part of the Ecosystems for Entrepreneurs programme for Algeria.



Study visit to Rotterdam, Shiraka Water Management Alumni Training

4.3. We are Able!

The 'We Are Able!'-programme is implemented by a consortium with ZOA (lead), VNG International, See You, Leprazending and ADF in six countries: Burundi, DR Congo, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda. The programme is funded under the 'Power of Voices'-partnership with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Throughout 2023, The Hague Academy has been actively engaged in a series of activities aimed at advancing disability inclusion policies in collaboration with consortium partners. The activities include refresher training sessions in South Sudan, strategic advocacy workshops in Ethiopia, and action learning review workshops in Burundi, Uganda, and South Sudan. In DR Congo, multiple rounds of action plan reflection workshops were conducted at the local authority level to enhance the inclusivity of persons with disabilities in the annual participatory budgeting cycle. Furthermore, in action planning review workshops, THA coached the local master trainers on-site to guide the action planning process.

Despite the conflict and security related challenges in Sudan, Local Inclusion Agendas were developed by all six localities with collaborative efforts from OPD and CSO representatives. The Hague Academy and VNG International provided crucial support, stimulating local authorities to prioritise inclusion of persons with a disability, and THA revised the 'Lobby and Advocacy Strategies'-curriculum, to be implemented in 2024.



Training on Disability Inclusion, We Are Able!-programme in South Sudan, 2023.

4.4. Cooperation programmes with VNG International

The Hague Academy has played a crucial role in developing the training component for various programmes by VNG International. In 2023, THA conducted a Training-of-Trainers programme both onsite and online, focusing on sustaining peace and public leadership in times of crisis, alongside coaching sessions for local coaches, as part of the 'Dan Wadaag' programme in Somaliland. Additionally, we conducted a Training-of-Trainers programme on gender-sensitive governance in Somalia under the same initiative.

The Hague Academy is a key partner of the five-year partnership programme of VNG International with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, titled 'Sustainable Development through Improved Local Governance (SDLG)'. As training partner of VNG International, we contribute to the training component of this programme, that runs in several countries. In Iraq, we delivered sessions on leadership for mayors as well as sessions on inclusion & participation. In Bamako, Mali, we prepared and implemented an eight-day Training-of-Trainers programme on adult training methods, the Sustainable Development Goals and inclusive governance. Following this training, the VNG International team implemented the training at the level of the local authorities.

The Hague Academy also contributed to VNG International's project in Upper Egypt on improving the sustainability of the WASH Sector. We facilitated a knowledge exchange workshop took place in 2023, with more expected to follow in 2024.



Training of Trainers on Inclusive Governance, Mali, 2023

4.5. Rural development in Georgia

In 2023, The Hague Academy initiated a European Commission-funded project focused on the development of the mountainous regions of Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti in Georgia. Led by the Georgian NGO 'Innovations and Reform Center', we provide the training components for this project. During 2023, we produced a guidebook on the European Union's LEADER approach to rural development, incorporating various case studies, and conducted a training session on participatory and sustainable rural economic development.

5. Short tailor made programmes

In 2023, various short training programmes were completed while new short programmes started up. In Oman, we concluded our collaboration with the Royal Academy of Management of Oman, conducting sessions on 'modern local administration' followed by sessions on 'local economic development & financial sustainability'. Through another programme, financed by RVO, we organised a study visit to the Netherlands for The Oman Human Rights Commission. We also concluded our support to the Human Resource Centre of Ulaanbaatar in Mongolia.

Other short programmes delivered on request in 2023 were a training on urban development for students at King Saud University, like in previous years organised together with VNG International. Furthermore, we executed short training assignments for Europris (leading meetings), the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (gender budgeting), RVO (Rule of Law in the Netherlands), Digileren (innovative teaching and programme design), the Dutch Union of Water Authorities (intercultural cooperation), and Wilde Ganzen (involved governments).

5.1 Nuffic Tailor Made Training

The Orange Knowledge Programme (OKP), implemented by Nuffic on behalf of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was extended until September 1, 2024. For the final call under this programme, THA submitted several project proposals, eight of which were granted. Activities for six programmes commenced in 2023.

Somalia

The Somali Federal Ministry of Public Works requested training on inclusive land governance for a pool of government officials. The objective is to enhance their understanding of inclusive governance, thereby enabling them to contribute to the development of a national land policy and the implementation of land administration in Somalia. The programme is implemented with the United Nations Saameynta Joint Programme of IOM, UN Habitat and UNDP. In 2023, we organised a training on inclusive land governance for 25 government officials from various member (?) states and the federal government of Somalia. During the training, participants developed an action plan for each member state, outlining their next steps in achieving inclusive land governance.



Participants Land Governance Training, Somalia, 2023

Burkina Faso

The commune of Ouou, along with four other communes in the province of Comoé, requested training on Inclusive Local Economic Development. The programme aims to train local policy and technical officers on economic and entrepreneurship development, including a Training-of-Trainers and a mid-term event to present their action plans to national tiers of government and development partners. In 2023, we conducted a training on inclusive local economic development for 25 officials from different communes, during which they developed an economic action plan.

Yemen

The objective of the programme is to train staff and stakeholders from the SOS Foundation in Aden on security and rule of law in relation to sustainable peacebuilding in post-conflict Yemen. The training will also contribute to SOS Foundation's long-term operational strategy. In 2023, The Hague Academy initiated the first online training workshops.

Jordan

Following a previous Nuffic-programme with Luminus Technical University College (LTUC) in Jordan, The Hague Academy started a new programme focusing on digital learning, in cooperation with the local training institute 'Mastery for Business and Training Development'. In 2023, a training needs analysis was conducted through focus group discussions with teachers, students, and management of LTUC. Based on the outcomes, key topics were determined for the next activities of the programme, planned for 2024.

Palestine

The Hague Academy, in cooperation with VNG International Palestine, developed a programme to enhance planning strategies for water service delivery in the West Bank and promote better governance overall. Due to the conflict in Palestine, we could only do the participant selection and training preparation in 2023. The first training session is postponed to the first half of 2024.

Oman

Through this project, two training workshops were organised with the aim to train staff of the Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR) Oman on the 'sustainable energy transition and renewables'. The project was implemented in collaboration with Witteveen+Bos.

5.2 Training for the Caribbean

On the request of the Dutch Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations, The Hague Academy developed and implemented a training programme on project management. The programme is aimed at civil servants from Aruba and Curacao working on their reform agendas. Throughout 2023, we organised meetings to discuss learning needs as input for the first in-person training in January 2024.

THA also supports the Caribbean Exchange Facility managed by VNG International. The exchange facility provides coaching and advice to the six Caribbean islands of the Kingdom of The Netherlands. Through facilitated exchange programmes, civil servants from these islands come to the Netherlands for internships. The Hague Academy offers introductory and wrap-up sessions for the interns. In 2023, one exchange visit took place.

6. Talent for Governance

After two years of Corona, we finally resumed activities to attract new municipalities for The Hague Academy's scholarship programme Talent for Governance. We presented the programme at a booth at the annual VNG Congress and tried to gain interest from Dutch municipalities to provide a three-day internship for young, talented municipal employees from our target countries. We also contacted previous internship municipalities and asked them for a renewed engagement. So far, this resulted in the interest of two municipalities, Oss and Amstelveen, to provide internships to four talents who took part in the courses Urban Governance and Citizen Participation. Ahmed Hadrawi from Najaf, Iraq, Eva Chavet Sawe from Nairobi, Kenya, Haddiatou Sarjo from Birkama, the Gambia, and Gan-Erdene Uitumen from Ulaan Bataar, Mongolia. The total amount of donations for Talent for Governance in 2023 was € 13,275.

After a call from our board member Janny Vlietstra at the 15-year anniversary event to support Talent for Governance, RVO showed interest in a pilot programme for young talents in the MENA-region. This programme started up end of 2023 and enabled Ahmed from Iraq to participate. In 2024 more talents from the region will follow.



Haddiatou meets the mayor of Oss, Wobine Buijten



Exchanging experiences with Dutch colleagues

7. Organisation

As part of the multi-annual strategy of The Hague Academy, our Annual Plan for 2023 included several actions to improve the quality of programmes, strengthen networks, increase visibility, work more efficiently and promote knowledge development. Although 2023 was a year full of training activities, significant progress was made on the strategic objectives as well.

7.1. Human resources

In 2023, we invested in the back office to increase the quality and efficiency of the logistic procedures and reduce workload for programme staff. A logistic support officer started in January, an information officer in April and a Team Manager HR & Support in May. Also, an extra intern was hired to support the scholarship team. One programme officer (PO) left the organisation in March and a new PO started in August. Two programme managers (PMs) and the communication manager left at the end of the year. A new PM and a new communication manager joined in November. At the end of the year, the team consisted of 24.2 fte.

The new Team Manager HR & Support started to further develop the onboarding procedure. The onboarding programme has become more tailored to the role of the new employee: programme staff, back office staff, interns. Also, evaluation moments have been added halfway and after the programme. Furthermore, all current employees were checked for their experience.

Since the Corona-outbreak, mental health has become a more prominent element in our human resources policy. In 2023, we offered a course about time management, organised a lunch meeting about mindfulness, and continued with the working group on mental wellbeing.

The working group on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) was also active in 2023. The members participated in a year-long learning trajectory on DEI, offered by Partos. The trajectory consisted of five modules: building DEI-strategies, intersectionality, how to measure DEI, creating a culture of DEI, and the role of human resources in DEI. The working group gave some recommendations that were given follow up, such as adjusting training application forms on the website and standard titles and salutations in the CRM-database.



Team members running the Breda loop

We paid extra attention this year to our crisis management structures and skills needed in case of an emergency. The roles and responsibilities of the crisis management team were described, the crisis management team took a training and all was practiced in a half-day simulation exercise. Further training has taken place for colleagues that joined the crisis team afterwards. Specific training was done on crisis management for HR-officers and the role of family support officers. To ensure continued vigilance we will repeat the crisis situation simulation every three years. Lessons learned were integrated into our security policy and have been discussed in our annual lunch & learn meeting about travel security in December.

7.2. Acquisition, fundraising and communication

To support acquisition and diversify our funds, an acquisition and fundraising strategy was developed for the period 2024 – 2030. The strategy aims to realise a stable, relevant and diverse portfolio and improve internal acquisition support. The strategy also outlines indicators to measure the achievement of these objectives. Within this framework, priority setting is done by programme managers developing personal acquisition plans for specific themes or regions. To support them and stimulate an exchange of ideas, we organised an acquisition workshop and brainstorm meeting.

We developed and started up an alumni ambassador network. Five ambassadors from different regions were selected and presented to the alumni network. Furthermore, we started asking feedback from Nuffic-alumni about the implementation of their Back Home Action Plans and created an archive to keep better track of the impact of our courses.

As part of our communication strategy we solved the backlog in adding new accounts and contacts in our CRM-database. A lot of effort was made this year to implement the new style guide by creating new templates and adjusting all external communication materials.

Events

Our 15-year anniversary event in March 2023, generated considerable exposure of our work for local democracy worldwide. Several international speakers and alumni were involved in the plenary panel that we hosted in the VNG-building and in the successful, online alumni network meeting. The event was also part of the campaign of the Netherlands Democracy Coalition around the International Democracy Summit.



Online facilitators and alumni in action during the 15 years event

The Hague Academy staff actively contributed to various events in The Netherlands and abroad, targeting different audiences. The events offer an opportunity to showcase our work, a.o. by facilitating sessions, delivering content contributions to sessions, an information booth, and networking with potential partners and clients. We contributed to the VNGI International Staff Conference (The Hague), UN Water Conference (New York), IOM-event on migration (xx), Humanity Hub Peace & Justice café (the Hague), VNG Annual Congress (Groningen), OECD Social Economy Conference (Paris), UNFCCC Climate week (Panama City), MATRA 30-year anniversary event (The Hague), IDLO 40-year anniversary event (the Hague) and many more events & conferences in person and online.

7.3 Working more efficiently

In March 2023, our Partos-ISO 9001:2015 (version 2018) quality certificate was recertified. The auditors were positive about our quality system and the continuous efforts to improve our work. Several internal audits were conducted in 2023 as well: a document inventory check and audits of both an open training and a tailor made training procedure. This has led to several points of attention and proposals for improvement. Based on earlier internal audits, the procedure and for open training was adjusted in consultation with the team, to sustain a consistent quality of our open courses offer.

Much progress was made in improving the IT-support procedures and tools, thereby lifting the administrative burden for finance and programme staff. The following improvements were made:

- Scansys was introduced to automatically book purchase invoices.
- Validsign was introduced to make signing processes more transparent and ensure proper archiving of contracts. This procedure saves the PMs time for monitoring the signing and archiving process. Moreover, the quality of contracts to be signed has improved a lot.
- A consultant assisted with simplifying the financial booking system in Exact Globe in order to improve financial reporting.
- Adjustments were made to the Synergy workflow request for creating new projects: item codes are automatically registered instead of being added manually by the finance staff.
- A workflow request was created for the approval of project reports. As a result, programme managers don't have to send separate emails anymore to the different approvers nor do they have to request for or send sales invoices to clients any longer.
- 'Workspaces' for each job type were designed so that staff have easier access to the functions they often use.

We also started with registering indirect hours that are spent on projects, to create more insight in the real costs of implementing projects. In some cases, it was possible to submit the hours that were reported as indirect project hours to the client.

7.4 Increasing staff knowledge and internal learning

In 2023, staff of The Hague Academy staff attended numerous (online) events to develop their expertise. In addition, Lunch & learn meetings were organised by different colleagues to share knowledge and experiences about the Plan of Action for tailor made training programmes, ChatGPT, the Code of Conduct, travel security, 'climate change and environmental governance', and 'regenerative local governance'.

In addition, knowledge and skills were also developed in security trainings, a crisis simulation, an internal acquisition workshop, a training on Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI), an internal training of trainers on dealing with difficult participants, a workshop on writing skills and instruction workshops on Synergy and Outlook. Furthermore, an external online learning platform was set up with training modules on good local governance, time management, gender sensitivity, travel safety and security, training of trainers, Excel and (logistical) training support.

7.5 Integrity policy

The Hague Academy's integrity framework consists of our integrity policy, the Code of Conduct and a reporting procedure, supported by an integrity officer, three internal confidential advisors (at VNG), two external confidential advisors and a whistleblower authority.

To increase awareness of the staff about the integrity framework and how it works in practice, annual meetings about the Code of Conduct are organised. In 2023, the focus was on why and how to report (suspected) breaches of the Code of Conduct. The integrity officer highlighted the importance of reporting breaches in order to prevent incidents and promote a safe and ethical organisational culture. Furthermore, we elaborated on when to discuss and when to report issues, which persons to address and how to find them. Finally, the reporting procedure for participants breaching the Code of Conduct for participants was highlighted. During breakout sessions staff discussed experiences with difficult participants, the way we responded, and the dilemmas faced.

7.6 Social responsibility

Our social responsibility policy describes how we are looking after our employees and stakeholders, what we do to protect the environment and how we engage the community. The policy aligns with our HR policy (remuneration, personal development, health), our Code of Conduct, our Equality and Diversity Policy and our Travel Security Policy.

To reduce our ecological footprint, we have taken environmentally friendly measures such as agreements with our travel agency Humanitair about CO₂-compensation on our flights. Humanitair is a front runner in making agreements with air companies about the use of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF). This fuel leads to much less CO₂-emission than traditional fossil fuel. On the occasion of our 15 year event, Humanitair offered us an certificate for using SAF on flights with Lufthansa. We also offer public transport cards for home-work travel by employees.

With technical facilities having improved a lot in the past year, online consultation in some cases prove to be a good alternative for Face-to-Face meetings and is encouraged to avoid unnecessary travel. For training delivery, however, Face-to-Face gatherings are most often the preferred mode. Different types of online training methods have been developed though that can replace in-person training if suitable.

Furthermore, we aim to select suppliers that care for the environment and have a social policy. We work with hotel Court Garden that is qualified with the GAIA Green Award and the European ECO-label, and with catering provider Vitam, that applies a 'zero-waste'-policy aimed at recycling food where possible. In the training programme in Curacao and Aruba, social enterprises were hired to provide the lunches.



The Hague Academy's team together at 15 year celebrations, March 2023

8. Finances

The total turnover realised by The Hague Academy in 2023 is € 4,07 mln, which is € 66,000 less than budgeted. Revenues from open courses are € 1,28 mln, which is € 0,17 mln less than budgeted, mainly due to less Nuffic-scholarship participants. Turnover from tailor made training is € 2,75 mln, which is € 0,1 mln more than budgeted, mainly because of : € 168,000 more for reimbursement of material costs (tickets, accommodation etc.) and € 69,000 because of less realised productive days. Income for Talent for Governance was € 8,000 more than budgeted.

Project expenditures in 2023 are about € 86,000 more than budgeted: € 167,000 more for tailor made training, € 74,000 less for open courses and € 7,000 less for Talent for Governance. The other operating expenses are € 142,000 less than budgeted: € 135,000 less personnel costs and € 7,000 less for other expenditures.

Income from operations was € 3,000, which is € 10,000 less than budgeted. The income from interest was € 6,000 more than budgeted and amounted to € 7,000. This adds up to a net income of € 10,000, which is € 4,000 less than budgeted. The net income will be added to the general reserve of the foundation.

8.1. Sources of income

The figure below shows the sources of income in 2023. Compared to 2022, the percentage of revenues coming directly or indirectly from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has decreased from 80% in 2022 to 78% in 2023. The MFA-funding comes from different sources: the strategic partnerships, the MATRA-programme, Nuffic (scholarships and tailor made training) and RVO (Shiraka-training). Other subsidies were received from the Dutch Ministry of Interior and the EU. Revenue from other organisations (19%) relates to organisations that sponsor participants of our open courses or organisations for which we provided training on demand.

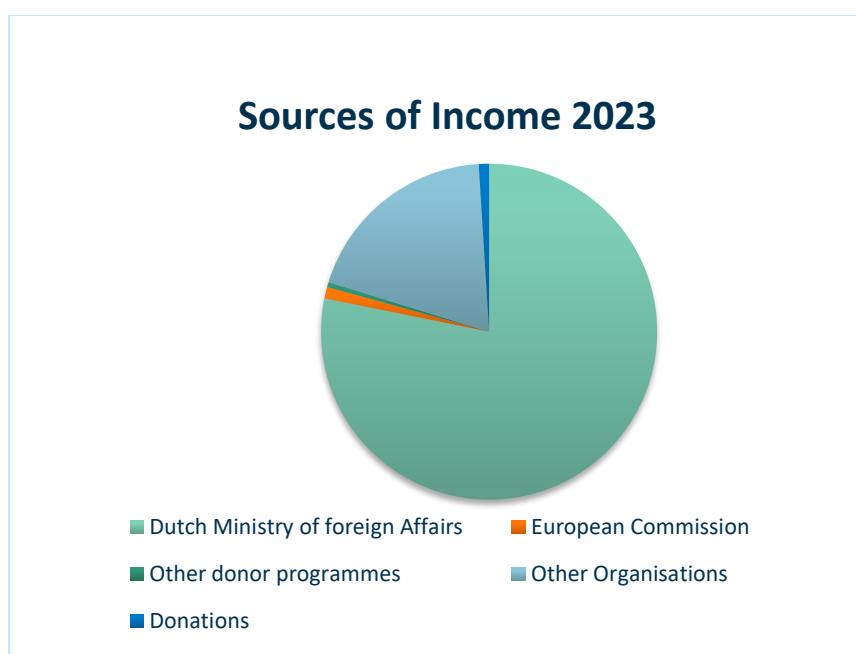


Figure 7 Sources of Income

8.2. Financial health



As of 31 December 2023, the financial position of The Hague Academy was as follows:

- the quick ratio for our liquidity position was 1.3;
- the solvency ratio was 23%;
- the amount to be received from debtors € 226,337
- the amount for creditors to be paid was € 172,286;
- there is no need to make a provision for doubtful debts;
- the continuity reserve is € 523,000.

Based on these figures, the auditor has confirmed that The Hague Academy is a financially healthy organisation. The figures reflect the ability of The Hague Academy to carry the present current liabilities and support the continuity of the foundation. Considering the healthy financial position of the organisation, the financial statements have been prepared by the auditor on a going concern basis.

8.3. Risk management and in control statement

In 2020, we developed a risk management framework to identify and analyse risks, their likelihood and impact as well as prevention and mitigation measures. Organisational risks are assessed and updated annually to incorporate the effects of mitigation measures and adapt and anticipate to the changing context.

Risks and mitigation

The main organisational risks for The Hague Academy relate to security issues in countries of work, which may threaten the security of our staff and/or lead to postponement or cancellation of activities, and therefore less income. To mitigate staff security and health risks, we take preventive measures for staff travelling abroad. We have developed an elaborate travel security policy that is updated and discussed with the staff annually. Staff and experts travelling for The Hague Academy follow the travel advice of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and before planning their trip, prepare a detailed security analysis based on several reliable, international sources. Staff also receive basic, advanced and refresher security trainings. Female staff follow a special security training for female travellers. In 2023, we tested our crisis management by organising a simulation after which adjustments were made to the crisis management plan.

To mitigate the risk of cancelled or postponed activities due to security issues, we continuously monitor and adjust the planning of productive days, and we are flexible in adjusting our staff planning if necessary. At the same time, we keep track of opportunities for new assignments in other countries that can be pursued to replace planned activities in case of cancellation or delay. In previous years, we have showed that cancellations and delays of planned activities could be compensated by new assignments and/or cutting expenditures. The past years have shown that we are well able to shift to online alternatives if necessary. In Yemen, for example, we offered training online for a network of local trainers who then delivered follow-up training in-country.

Apart from security, other risks relate to the number of subscribers to our open courses. In 2023, quite some scholarships were cancelled, partly because of political reasons and partly because visa for The Netherlands were denied or delayed. We have brought this up with Nuffic and the Ministry and are in contact with the Dutch embassies to prevent this from happening as much as possible.

We had estimated around 7% scholarship cancellations for 2024 but the situation has improved a lot and so far no cancellations due to visa have been reported for 2024.



The risk of fraud or mismanagement is considered low since THA has a solid financial control system in place with sufficient checks and balances. Moreover, we do not have local offices abroad and provide only very limited amounts to local partners. The lack of in-house HR-knowledge has been mitigated by hiring a Team Manager for HR affairs.

To mitigate integrity risks, we have identified the vulnerable work areas and developed our reporting and investigation procedures in case of violations of the Code of Conduct. As a preventive measure, we organise regular internal lunch meetings about dilemmas of staff in their work.

In control statement

The Executive Board has acknowledged that The Hague Academy's management has mapped out organisational risks, the likelihood of these risks occurring and the possible impact and has taken appropriate mitigation measures, thereby minimising the occurrence of these risks. The administrative organisation and internal control system, as confirmed in the auditor's report, function at a professional level. The Board therefore has expressed its confidence that the foundation has sufficient control over the identified risks.

8.4. Future development

The budget for 2024 shows a turnover of € 4.95 mln, an increase of about € 806,000 compared to the budget of 2023. The increase is based on the expectation that income from Tailor Made Training will grow with € 812,000, because a large part of the extra revenue is generated by reimbursements for material costs, and from Talent for Governance with € 60,000 thanks to the contribution from RVO. The income from open subscription course, however, will be € 65,000 less. In 2023 we didn't manage to achieve the target of 20 participants and we assess it is more realistic to budget for 19 participants per course.

Expenditures are budgeted at € 4.93 mln, an increase of € 806,000. Project expenditures increase with € 870,000 for Tailor Made Training and with € 37,000 for Talent for Governance. Costs for open courses are expected to be € 43,000 less. The other operating costs are estimated at € 2.25 mln, a decrease of € 58,000. This is caused by lower personnel costs of € 91,000, mainly because of staff changes and recalculations of social security premiums and pension premiums. The other operating costs show an increase of € 33,000. The main reason for this is the huge increase in charges by VNG for housing (17.6%) and equipment of (10%). In addition, we had to almost double the costs for auditing based on the higher prices and different calculation methods applied by the auditors in 2023. This leads to an income from operations of € 14,155.

Thanks to increased interest rates, we expect an additional income of € 13,125 in 2024, resulting in a net income of € 27,280.

Budget		2024	2023
Income open courses	€	1,392,076	1,457,489
Income TMT projects	€	3,462,179	2,649,933
Donations	€	91,600	32,000
Total income	€	4,945,855	4,139,422
Material costs open courses	€	613,450	656,200
Material costs TMT projects	€	2,003,300	1,133,450
Material costs Talent for Governance	€	68,600	32,000
Personnel costs	€	1,930,911	2,022,378
Other operating and financial costs	€	315,439	282,005
Total expenses	€	4,931,700	4,126,033
Interest	€	13,125	1.000
Net income	€	27,280	14,389

Figure 8 Budget 2024 compared to 2023

At the time of writing this report, the forecast for 2024 already shows significant changes to the budget. In January, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that they cannot extend the Orange Knowledge Programme (OKP) and as a result no OKP-scholarships will be awarded for the second half of the year. The open course after summer will therefore have limited Nuffic-scholarship participants, just two or three MENA-scholarships (average) per course. To mitigate this change, we decided to cancel one course that was scheduled twice and to adjust another one. At the same time, we invest more in the promotion of open courses to attract sufficient self-paying participants. We adjusted the financial forecast for 2024 for the income from open courses: income is reduced with € 443,000 and expenditures with € 192,000. Fortunately, income from Tailor Made Training will be more than budgeted for, because of new requests for on demand training (DA Philippines, KSU, MFA Burkina Faso, GIZ Pakistan) and new project proposals awarded from GIZ (Integrity training together with the Dutch Helsinki Committee) and the Ministry of Interior (additional training for Curacao and St Maarten).

From the period 2025 to 2027, we will run the five Shiraka-training programmes as well as the MATRA ROLT-training programme, ensuring a reliable source of income for these years. In 2024, we also aim to acquire two new MATRA programmes, for which a call will be published in the second quarter of the year. Furthermore, discussions are ongoing with VNG International about the contribution by The Hague Academy to their SDLG-programme. Our partnership programme 'We Are Able!' runs until 2025 and the consortium aims for a continuation under the new round of strategic partnerships, which is expected to open up in the second half of the year. However, new programmes may be confronted with budget cuts, because of current discussions about a new government. Also, we will take into account that the Dutch MFA has plans to gradually phase out the Nuffic-scholarships for short courses in The Netherlands, which would be a shame considering the positive effect of these short courses, especially for mid-career professionals working for governments and civil society in partner countries. We are still in discussion with the Ministry about the impact of these plans and at the same time we are intensifying contacts with other potential sponsors of open course participants. Furthermore, as part of the acquisition strategy that we adopted in March 2024, we aim to diversify income a.o. by focusing our acquisition efforts on other donors such as USAID, the EU and charity funds, and improving our client relation management.

Governance

The Hague Academy for Local Governance is a foundation under Dutch law. The foundation is governed by an Executive Committee consisting of Pieter Jeroense as chair, Nathan Ducastel as treasurer and Janny Vlietstra as the third member of the Executive Board. Membership of the Board is voluntary and does not involve any form of financial compensation other than the reimbursement of expenses.

The Board appoints and supervises the director of the foundation. Cecile Meijs was appointed as director as of 1 October 2011. The director takes financial and operational decisions within the policies set by the Executive Committee. The salary of the director is in accordance with the remuneration policy of The Hague Academy, as established by the Board in 2008 and revised in 2011 and 2022. The remuneration policy describes the job positions at The Hague Academy and the accompanying salary scales.

9. Accounts



9.1. Balance sheet per 31 December 2023

(After appropriation of result)

Assets	2023	2022
(in euros)		
Current assets		
Receivables		
Debtors	226,337	233,855
Taxes and social securities	45,866	-
Other receivables	<u>803,259</u>	<u>602,525</u>
	1,075,462	836,380
Cash at bank and in hand	1,177,732	1,240,578
Total current assets	2,253,194	2,076,958
Total assets	2,253,194	2,076,958

Equity and liabilities	2023	2022
(in euros)		
Equity		
General reserve	522,967	512,619
	522,967	512,619
Current liabilities		
Creditors	172,286	238,732
Taxes and social securities	78,139	91,957
Pensions	24,478	22,001
Accruals and other liabilities	<u>1,455,324</u>	<u>1,211,649</u>
	1,730,227	1,564,339
Total equity and liabilities	2,253,194	2,076,958

9.2. Profit and loss account 2023



	Actual	Budget	Actual
	2023	2023	2022
Income			
Open courses	1,284,173	1,457,489	1,163,788
Tailor made projects	2,749,037	2,649,933	2,492,449
Donations	<u>40,177</u>	<u>32,000</u>	<u>1,562</u>
Total income	4,073,387	4,139,422	3,657,799
Material costs			
Open courses	582,585	656,200	588,100
Tailor made projects	1,300,552	1,133,450	1,121,171
Talent for Governance	24,952	32,000	1,357
Personnel expenses	1,887,414	2,022,378	1,653,942
Other expenses	274,546	282,004	275,854
Total expenses	4,070,049	4,126,032	3,640,424
Operating result	3,338	13,389	17,375
Financial result			
Finance income	7,010	1,000	-
Finance expenses	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>3,672</u>
	7,010	1,000	3,672-
Total result	10,348	14,389	13,703

9.3. Cash flow statement 2023

in euros	2023	2022
Cashflow from regular activities		
Operating result	3,338	17,375
Changes in working capital:		
Taxes	59,684-	25,583-
Changes in receivables	284,948-	447,267-
Changes in liabilities	271,438	387,427
	<u>73,194-</u>	<u>85,423-</u>
	69,856-	68,048-
Received interest	7,010	-
Paid interest	-	3,672
	<u>7,010</u>	<u>3,672-</u>
Cash flow from regular activities	62,846-	71,720-
Changes in cash at bank and in hand	62,846-	71,720-
Amount cash at bank and in hand per January 1 st	1,240,578	1,312,298
Amount cash at bank and in hand per December 31 st	<u>1,177,732</u>	<u>1,240,578</u>
Changes in cash at bank and in hand	62,846-	71,720-

9.4. Notes to the accounts

The financial statements are prepared in accordance with the Guideline for annual reporting for small organisations not-for-profit (RJKC1) of the Dutch Accounting Standards Board.

Activities

The Hague Academy for Local Governance is a foundation based in The Hague that aims to strengthen local democracy worldwide. The foundation aims to achieve its goal by increasing knowledge and skills of people working in the field of local governance in developing and transition countries, by raising funds and offering practice oriented training and other projects that contribute to the goal of the foundation.

Principles of valuation

Receivables are included at nominal value, less any provision for doubtful accounts. These provisions are determined by individual assessment of the receivables.

The pension plan can be defined as a defined contribution plan. Contributions are included in the financial year in which the contributions are paid. Outstanding contributions are included in current liabilities.



Principles of revenue recognition

Income consists of:

- Subsidies, these are allocated to the financial year in proportion to the actual spent costs;
- Donations, these are included in the financial year in which the donations are received;
- Revenues for services rendered, these are included in the financial year in which these revenues are rendered.

Expenses are recognised in the year in which the expenses are incurred. Provisions for estimated losses, if any, are made in the period that such losses are determined.

Principles of the cash flow statement

The cash flow statement is drafted using the indirect method. Cash at bank and in hand consists of the amounts held at the bank accounts of the foundation. Received and paid interest is included in the cash flow from regular activities.

Related parties

The Hague Academy for Local Governance is an independent, non-governmental organisation. The foundation rents office space and facilities from the Association of Dutch Municipalities (VNG) at Nassaulaan 12, but is financially nor administratively related to the VNG.

	2023	2022
Costs for housing and facilities paid to VNGI (in euros)	422,436	218,272

Principles off-balance sheet

The off-balance sheet commitments regarding workplace, laptops, accounts, ICT support are included in a service agreement with VNG International. The renewal of the contract takes after three years with the possibility to end the commitments one month before end of the contract period with no further commitments.

Principles after balance date

After balance date, no remarkable developments have taken place.

9.5. Notes to the balance sheet per 31 December 2023

	2023	2022
Receivables		
Debtors	226,337	233,855
Taxes and social securities	45,866	-
Work in progress	732,942	464,715
Receivables others	12,062	61,793
Advances employees	2,000	2,000
Pre-paid costs	56,255	74,017
	<u>1,075,462</u>	<u>836,380</u>

No provision for doubtful debts is deemed necessary.

In 2022 the 'Receivables others' is including the NOW-grants for COVID 19-related loss of income.

	2023	2022
Cash at bank and in hand		
Cash in hand	1,124	11,875
Banks	<u>1,176,608</u>	<u>1,228,703</u>
	<u>1,177,732</u>	<u>1,240,578</u>

Cash at bank and in hand consists of amounts at the foundation's bank accounts. All amounts are free at disposal of the foundation.

	2023	2022
Equity		
General reserve		
As at January, 1 st	512,619	498,916
Current year result	<u>10,348</u>	<u>13,703</u>
As at December, 31 st	<u>522,967</u>	<u>512,619</u>

	2023	2022
Current liabilities		
Creditors	172,286	238,732
Taxes and social securities	78,139	91,957
Pensions	24,478	22,001
Other current liabilities	31,280	179,233
Accruals	1,424,044	1,032,416
	<u>1,730,227</u>	<u>1,564,339</u>
<u>Accruals</u>		
Work in progress	1,312,890	921,029
Accrued Holiday allowance and end of year payment	59,510	53,931
Accrued Holidays	51,644	55,833
Net salaries	-	1,623
	<u>1,424,044</u>	<u>1,032,416</u>

9.6. Notes to the profit and loss account

	Actual	Budget	Actual
(in euros)	2023	2023	2022
Income			
Income open courses	1,284,173	1,457,489	1,163,788
Income tailor made projects	2,749,037	2,649,933	2,492,449
Donations Talent for Governance	40,177	32,000	1,562
Total	4,073,387	4,193,422	3,657,799

Material costs			
Material costs open courses	582,585	656,200	588,100
Material costs tailor made projects	1,300,552	1,133,450	1,121,171
Talent for Governance	24,952	32,000	1,357
Total	1,908,089	1,821,650	1,710,628

Income and expenditures open courses

In 2023, we organised thirteen Face-to-Face courses. Thanks to a large number of Nuffic-scholarships in the second half of the year, we received a total of 233 participants, which is 27 less than budgeted. The total number of Nuffic-sponsored participants is 39 less than budgeted, among other things due to nineteen scholarship cancellations that could not be replaced. In total, revenues are € 1,284,173, which is € 173,000 lower than budgeted. This is not only because of less income from course fees but also because of less reimbursements for tickets and accommodation of Nuffic-scholars.

Income and expenditures tailor made projects

In total, the turnover from tailor made training is € 2.75 mln, which is € 99,000 more than budgeted: € 168,000 more for reimbursement of material costs (tickets, accommodation etc.) and € 69,000 less because of less realised productive days. The total income from manhours is 95% of what was budgeted.

The turnover for the multi-annual programmes is € 2.01 mln, which is € 10,000 more than budgeted. € 58,000 more was received for covering expenditures, mainly for Shiraka-programmes (€ 63,000) that were postponed from 2022 to 2023. The turnover for short tailor made programmes is € 739,000, which is € 89,000 more than budgeted: € 109,000 more for covering material costs and € 15,000 more thanks to several fixed price contracts, which compensates for the lower number of realised productive days.

Donations Talent for Governance



For the Talent for Governance programme, we received donations from two municipalities, in total € 14,000 (budgeted € 30,000), as well as € 27,000 (not budgeted) from RVO for a pilot of Talent for Governance for the MENA-region. Donations and RVO-funding were used for fundraising activities, organising the talent programmes, the placement of four participants in two open training courses, tickets, visa and accommodation in The Netherlands. The material costs were budgeted at € 30,000 (six talents) and actually amounted to € 25,000 for the four talents.

	Actual	Budget	Actual
	2023	2023	2022
Personnel expenses			
Wages and salaries	1.344.841	1.432.424	1,166,909
Social security premiums	242.630	262.156	202,475
Pension premiums	205.629	235.438	198,670
Travel and accommodation	19.250	14.100	15,088
Services third parties	13.860	13.740	24,332
Other employee costs	60.989	64.520	65,187
NOW-grant	215	-	18,719-
	<u>1.887.414</u>	<u>2.022.378</u>	<u>1,653,942</u>

Personnel expenses

The total personnel expenses are € 135,000 less than budgeted. Wages and salaries are € 87,000 lower than budgeted due to several staff changes. Social security premiums are € 20,000 less than budgeted and pension costs € 30,000, due to the lower salary costs and recalculations of the premiums. Home-work travel costs are € 5,000 higher than budgeted. Other employee costs are € 3,000 lower, mainly because of a decrease of the reservation for outstanding vacation days.

	Actual	Budget	Actual
	2023	2023	2022
Other expenses			
Housing	63.532	63.532	61,321
Office costs	117.911	127.372	108,883
Auditing	23.307	12.500	21,999
Communication and fundraising	33.649	40.600	49,677
Other costs	<u>36.147</u>	<u>38.000</u>	<u>33,974</u>
	<u>274.546</u>	<u>282.004</u>	<u>275,854</u>

Other expenses

Office costs are below the budgeted amount, mainly due to lesser costs for maintenance of software and ICT support. Auditing costs are higher because of increased prices of our suppliers. Communication expenditures are lower than budgeted, mainly due to lower participation in conferences in 2023.

	Actual 2023	Budget 2023	Actual 2022
Financial result			
Financial income	7,010	1,000	-
Financial expenses	-	-	3,672
	<u>7,010</u>	<u>1,000</u>	<u>3,672-</u>

Financial result

Due to higher interest rates in 2023, we received an interest on the savings account of nearly € 7,000, which is € 6,000 more than budgeted.

Staff members

Per end of 2023 24.2 fte staff were working for the foundation.

Remuneration of executives

The remuneration of the current members of the executive board which are included in the current year financial statements amounts to € 0.

Appropriation of result

The result for 2023 amounts to € 10,348 and will be added to the general reserve.

Subsequent events

Between the time of preparing the financial statements and the balance sheet date there have been no events that give a different view on the annual result for 2023.

9.7. Auditor's opinion

See next pages.