



SHALOM CHAVERUTH

שלום חברות

Nordrhein-Westfalen Israel

Shalom Chaveruth – Solidarity Partnerships NRW-Israel - Criteria for funding local government and civil society projects between North Rhine-Westphalia and Israel -

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1. Purpose of the grant

On the 7th of October 2023, the terror group, Hamas murdered more than 1.200 people, amongst them women, children and elderly, and abducted 250 victims. Within hours, also the Lebanese militia Hezbollah launched a terror campaign against Israel's north, which led to tens of thousands of Israeli citizens being forcibly evacuated to this day and for people, from the invaded Kibbutzim, to live in temporary housing. In later phases of the war, all of Israel was shelled with rockets and drones from Iran, Iraq, and Yemen. The consequences of the fighting are therefore not limited to the regions and their communities along the Gaza border and Israel's northern border. Even in 2026, despite the ceasefire, all of Israel is still burdened by the physical, psychological, and material repercussions of the ongoing war.

From the very beginning, the state of North Rhine-Westphalia demonstrated its solidarity with Israel through concrete acts of support. The Shalom Chaveruth initiative was launched in November 2023 and, by the end of 2025, had initiated a total of 35 projects between stakeholders from North Rhine-Westphalia and Israel, often in cooperation with municipalities.

The Minister for Federal and European Affairs, International Relations and Media and Head of the State Chancellery is allocating budgetary resources in the shape of grants to local government and civil society projects as part of the partnership between NRW and Israel. The funds are intended to serve activities and projects for the restoration of the social, economic and ecological conditions in line with the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

2. Subject of funding; regional and content-related focus

As before, the Israeli border region with the Gaza Strip and the northern border region with Lebanon remain the focus areas for funding.

However, despite the ceasefire in October 2025, the entire territory of Israel has long been directly affected by the consequences of the war. Eligible projects can therefore relate to the entire territory of Israel.

Projects should contribute to the sustainable creation of new participatory relationships between municipalities, institutions, and organizations in North Rhine-Westphalia and Israel, or to the intensification of existing relationships. This is to be achieved through the restoration of the social, economic, and environmental conditions in Israel in line with the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda, and at the same time contribute to a sustainable improvement in the living conditions of the local population. The grant covers the implementation of projects carried out in cooperation between non-profit, public, and charitable actors, both municipal and civil society, from North Rhine-Westphalia and Israel.

The projects should align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations, the development priorities of the State of NRW, and the principles of sustainable, transformative reconstruction, as per SDG 17 (Partnership for Sustainable Development). Reconstruction is understood as the elimination of all war-related damages to physical infrastructure and political,

economic, and social structures, presenting an opportunity for a future-oriented, sustainable development, and the rebuilding of previous structures that already met the above criteria.

Reconstruction of physical infrastructure touches on several sustainability goals. The exchange of knowledge and insights in both directions and capacity building in both countries are also among the initiative's objectives.

Thematic equal areas for eligible projects in line with achieving the Sustainable Development Goals include:

- Strengthening civil society – physical and mental health, social cohesion, dialogue programmes, resilience building, youth work, coping with trauma, assistance programmes for those in need, cultural programmes – SDG 3 (Ensuring a healthy life for all)
- (Vocational) education and upbringing – SDG 4 (Access to education)
- Joint promotion of economic projects, especially the connection of Israeli start-up hubs to be located in the region, with players from North Rhine-Westphalia – SDG 9 (Expansion of technological capacities)
- Sustainable economic practices and job creation/employment, especially in areas such as agriculture and research and development in the high-tech sector – SDG 8 (Economic growth, productive full employment), 12 (Sustainable consumption and production patterns)
- (Re)building of public safety and law enforcement organisations (police, court systems, fire brigade, emergency services, security services) – SDG 16 (Supporting national institutions in capacity building at all levels for violence prevention and the fight against terrorism and crime)
- Public Services (water supply, wastewater disposal, sanitation, waste management, energy supply, healthcare, mobility, transportation infrastructure, and other projects in the interest of basic services for the population) – SDG 9 (Building high-quality, reliable, sustainable, and resilient infrastructure), SDG 6 (Access to clean water, improving water quality, access to sanitation)
- Ensuring ecological sustainability, environmental protection, access to clean water and renewable energies, reforestation and greening of public areas – SDG 6, 7 (Access to affordable, reliable, and modern energy)
- Intensification of exchanges and economic strengthening through the establishment of mutual tourism projects – SDG 8 (Promotion of sustainable tourism)

Formats for eligible projects include:

- Exchange of experts, expertise and experiences
- Psychological counseling and support for traumatized and re-traumatized individuals, possibly through rehabilitation measures for first responders, therapists, and volunteers in partner communities in North Rhine-Westphalia ("Help the Helpers") Offering training, workshops, information events, seminars, and qualification programs, or the joint development of new action plans
- Establishment of school and university partnerships
- Cultural exchange
- Joint science and business projects
- Joint water and farming projects

- Exchanges of young people, students, and professionals in the fields of health and research, hospital partnership
- Joint development of institutions
- Addressing existing damages through joint projects

3. Grant recipients

Grant recipients shall include NRW-based non-profit, public, and charity stakeholders (both municipal and civil society) active in the eligible projects listed under 3.2.1, who wish to establish or deepen sustainable relationships with partner organizations, institutions, or municipalities in Israel. These relationships should be characterized by shared long-term interests that enable and justify the continuation of the exchange after the first funded project. In exceptional cases, the applicant's headquarters may also be located outside of North Rhine-Westphalia, provided that the benefit to the state of North Rhine-Westphalia and its specific interests within the framework of the aid initiative can be demonstrated. Applicants are not bound to existing partnerships with their projects and may also operate outside of formal partnerships.

These include:

- Institutions under public law (such as town or district councils, museums or similar bodies based in North Rhine-Westphalia)
- Community groups/NGOs, not-for-profit municipal enterprises, schools (and their governing boards), childcare centres (and their governing boards), vocational colleges, universities and student groups, foundations and trusts, sectional associations and non-profit corporations based in NRW.

In addition, applicants who fall under private law must demonstrate that they are entitled to tax breaks (non-profit, charitable or church-related). Applicants must have their own bank account.

These are not eligible to apply: Individuals, loose associations, commercial operators, political foundations, local government institutions (except those listed above) or organisations that are based outside North Rhine-Westphalia or which are not entitled to tax breaks.

4. Approval of grants

Grants may only be transferred through a transfer agreement, if:

- The need for financial support is proven, and the purpose cannot be achieved in other ways, e.g., through the applicant's own funds or third-party donations.
- Proper governance has been confirmed,
- The project is self-contained and fully funded. It must not entail follow-up funding from state coffers. Projects that have already commenced cannot be funded.

5. Type, scope and amount of the grant - Own contribution

Funds are provided as one-off, non-repayable grants through project funding (typically as shortfall financing). Where justified, in exceptional circumstances (e.g., in the context of preparatory,

accompanying, evaluating, and follow-up projects according to the proper explanatory documentation), full financing may also be granted.

Ongoing operational and personnel costs of the applying entity in North Rhine-Westphalia and its partner in Israel are not eligible for funding. Exceptions must be justified and coordinated with Engagement Global before applying.

Personnel and operating costs related to the projects (handymen/construction workers etc.) that arise in Israel can be recognised as eligible expenses if they are detailed and verifiable in terms of type and scope (receipts, contracts, etc.). This also applies to qualification and training measures for employees of Israeli partners (municipal and civil society) that are likely to make a direct contribution to the implementation of the projects listed under 2.

In exceptional cases, travel and accommodation costs for employees of the funding recipient or experts commissioned by them may be funded, if they are detailed and verifiable in terms of type and scope and make a direct contribution to the achievement of the project's objectives (taking into account the applicable travel advisories of the German Foreign Office). This limitation does not apply to players in Israel if this benefits the project purpose.

The current travel advice of the German Federal Foreign Office must be respected. As long as a travel warning is in place, travel to Israel can only be funded in exceptional cases with special justification. This restriction does not apply to actors in Israel, provided that it serves the purpose of the project.

When booking flight tickets, it is important to ensure that they can be cancelled or rebooked free of charge or at low cost.

The amount of the grant depends on the circumstances of each individual case. The forwarding of funds to partner structures in Israel for the implementation of projects is permitted.

Grant limits:

- Institutions under public law – As a rule, grants for each project will **not exceed 40.000,00 Euro**
- Civil society - As a rule, grants for each project will **not exceed 20.000,00 Euro**

The grant may be used only to meet the purpose within the meaning of the agreement with Engagement Global.

A grant may be provided in the current year for a maximum duration (implementation period) **until February of the following year**. The implementation period of the current funding cycle ends on 28 February 2026.. Generally, grants cannot be given to projects with a duration beyond that. Engagement Global advises on the procedure for longer project durations.

5.1 Own contribution

As a rule, applicants must provide a cash contribution of at least 10 % of the eligible costs. The use of third-party funds from other public sources (e.g. the European Union or the Federal Government) is possible. Exceptions need approval from Engagement Global. This aid initiative supports projects aimed at building sustainable and long-term partnerships that can continue independently of the funding. Applications indicating a higher contribution than 10% are therefore expressly welcomed.

5.2 Financial plan

The total eligible costs and the financing of the project must be outlined in the attached application form.

The total costs must furthermore be detailed in a 'cost and finance plan', to be attached to the application.

6. Public Relations

A concept for the planned public relations work must be submitted with the application. The grant recipient and the Israeli partners will present the funded project to the public in North Rhine-Westphalia and Israel in an appropriate manner before its completion. Publications must acknowledge the Ministry for Federal and European Affairs, International Affairs and Media of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia and the aid initiative "Shalom Chaveruth" as the source of the funding and use their respective logos. Public relations work is an integral part of the project. This could include posts in newsletters and on social media, event announcements, requests for journalistic coverage in digital, print, audio, and visual formats, as well as self-produced audio, image, and video recordings and texts.

The project's implementation and the associated public relations work should be documented, where possible, with relevant audio and image material (photos/videos), which will be made available to Engagement Global free of charge and without any royalties. This material may only be used for non-commercial purposes in the public relations work of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia and/or for later documentation of the aid initiative "Shalom Chaveruth" by the state office of North Rhine-Westphalia in Israel.

7. Procedure

Implementation and processing of the applications is performed by the Duesseldorf office of Engagement Global as recipient of the funds coming from the State Chancellery of North-Rhine Westphalia. Any project subsidised by Engagement Global must comply with the principles of efficiency and economy. Applicants need to guarantee that the funds are used properly, appropriately and economically.

7.1 Application procedure

We will be happy to **provide advice and answer any queries** you might have.

ENGAGEMENT GLOBAL gGmbH - Service für Entwicklungsinitiativen

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Please understand that, from a funding law perspective, we also require the documents **in writing and with a legally binding signature**. Please submit these to Engagement Global at the above **postal address and by email to israel-nrw@engagement-global.de**.

Applications may be submitted at any time but preferably four weeks before the project starts. Please use the attached application form.

The information provided by the applicant must allow assessment of the proposed project in terms of objectives, practical implementation, and financing. If the project is part of a larger measure, it must be presented in the overall context, i.e. along with related projects. The application must include:

- an agreement or memorandum of understanding (MoU) concluded between the players on the cooperation relating to the project (recommended)
- Cost and financing plan
- Individual purchases exceeding 1,000 Euro typically require three comparative quotes
- North Rhine-Westphalia's procurement guidelines must be complied with
- Concept for public relations

7.2 Transfer agreement (grant)

If the application is approved, a formal agreement on the amount of the grant will be concluded between the applicant and Engagement Global. The agreement will rely on the information provided in the application. The ancillary provisions attached to the contract are binding and must be observed. Engagement Global reserves the right to terminate the contract with effect for the future if it becomes apparent that the purpose of the subsidy cannot be achieved.

7.3 Proof of use

Even though the forwarding of funds to partner structures in Israel for project implementation is permitted, the obligation to provide a proof of use lies with the local applicant in NRW. Three months after the project's completion, the applicant submits a factual report and a statement of accounts. The factual report should describe the implementation and progress of the project (with information about the applicant – municipal or civil society organisation, person responsible, project title – as well as objectives and target groups, project duration, activities, results, and prospects). The account consists of a budget/actual comparison of costs and revenues according to the structure of the cost and financing plan, along with a detailed, meaningful list of receipts (with information on individual expenses, payees, and purpose of payment).

8. Other

Please refer to the advice given by the service point, 'Local Government in the One World' (*Servicestelle Kommunen in der Einen Welt*) and the information resource run by the Federal Government:

<https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/service/laender/israel-node>

<https://www.mbei.nrw/sites/default/files/asset/document/entwicklungspolitische-schwerpunkte.pdf>

Current to 27th February 2026