



Doing Business in Qatar

The State of Qatar and the Netherlands share common features: both countries are both relatively small in geography but high in aspirations, they are connected to the sea and international trade is the basis of their wealth and economic prosperity. Qatar's government laid out a blueprint for its future economic structure in 'National vision 2030', where economic diversity and sustainability are pivotal themes. This broad plan opens up a new range of business and investment opportunities in amongst others, healthcare, agriculture, water, sports, innovation and vitality.

Qatar was established on 18 December 1878 and declared independence on 1 September 1971 after having been a British protectorate for over half a century. The country rapidly modernized during Sheikh Hamad's term of office (1995 –2013). In 2013 he ceded power to his son, the current Emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani (1980).

In recent years, Qatar has been one of the fastest growing economies globally, and its GDP per capita of USD 62,088 is the world's highest. Qatar ranks 29th in the Global Competitiveness Index and is placed 77th in the Ease of Doing Business Index. Qatar has a large expat community: the 2.8 million expats account for nearly 90% of the country's population.

Qatar is one of the smaller Gulf States in terms of population and geographical area, but boasts the third largest gas reserves in the world and is the second largest exporter of natural gas.

The abundance of natural resources coupled with a strong fiscal position and ambitious economic diversification plans help create many commercial opportunities for trade with and investment in Qatar. Qatar's Ministry of Commerce and Industry has set various incentives to attract foreign direct investors in key sectors, including regulation allowing up to 100 percent foreign ownership and the creation of numerous free trade zones.

Priority sectors

Energy

Qatar's energy sector is vast and well developed, encompassing a diverse array of state-owned energy companies, along with strong private sector participation in nearly all major energy projects.

Qatar in April 2017 lifted a self-imposed moratorium on development of the world's biggest natural gas field, and announced that LNG production would increase by 40% over the next several years. Qatar Petroleum has signed numerous contracts for the first phase of its North Field LNG project expansion totaling tens of billions USD with more investments in the pipeline. Qatar's diversification strategy Vision 2030 underscores the importance of sustainability. Examples include the Al Kharsaah solar project (800 MW facility), Qatar Petroleum's sustainability strategy, opportunities in hydrogen and Qatar's pledge to host the first-ever CO2 neutral World Cup.

Agriculture and Water

Improving self-sufficiency in food production is a priority of Qatar's government. Qatar has achieved rapid gains in dairy production and has ambitious targets over the next few years to increase domestic vegetable production, which includes setting up new 1400 new farms in the next five years. Qatar's climate and water scarcity are the major constraints in crop production in Qatar, which offers opportunities for Dutch companies with innovative solutions aimed at saving water.

Healthcare

Qatar's healthcare market is the fastest growing healthcare market in the region, with a commitment to achieve the 2030 vision that aims to ensure a comprehensive world-class health care system accessible to the whole population. Qatar's government is working to introduce a national health insurance facility led by the private sector, where expatriates and citizens alike will be able to access health insurance for basic health services in Qatar.

The healthcare market in Qatar encompasses opportunities in R&D, products & equipment, knowledge transfer, education and business development.

COVID-19 has greatly increased the need and acceptance of eHealth initiatives in Qatar and it has expedited its implementation. The embassy recently

published an eHealth sector study outlining commercial opportunities for Dutch companies: [eHealth in the Gulf region. phase 2 \(rvo.nl\)](#)

Sports, Innovation and Vitality

Qatar has positioned itself as a hub for global sports events and sports form an important pillar within its National Vision 2030. The market size of the sports sector in Qatar is expected to reach USD 20 billion by 2023. The Ministry of Economy and Commerce has identified 83 commercial and investment opportunities for the private sector in Qatar in seven sectors: management and promotion of sporting events, sport development, establishment and construction of sports facilities, merchandise and sports equipment, sports marketing, sport tourism, and operation and maintenance of sports facilities. Qatar will host the 2021 FIFA Arab Cup, 2022 FIFA World Cup and the 2030 Asian Games in addition to numerous annual regional and international sporting events.

Numerous Dutch sports companies are active in Qatar many of which as part of a Partners for International Business (PIB) partnership that focuses on Sports, Innovation and Vitality.



Responsible Business Conduct

- Dutch companies are expected to act in accordance with the [OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises](#) and to integrate environmental and human rights concerns into their business operations and core strategy in close collaboration with their stakeholders.
- Qatar has passed numerous reforms to improve labor migrants' working and living conditions, but implementation and enforcement continue to require attention.
- Supply chain due diligence is an important step to identify potential risks in activities and partnerships in Qatar.
- More information can be found on the [RVO website](#) and via the Netherlands Embassy in Qatar (see below).

Do's and don'ts in Qatar

Be prepared

With a population mainly consisting of expats, the protocols for doing business in Qatar often depend on whom you deal with. For expats, it is important to familiarize themselves with Arabic business culture.

Personal relationships and networking

Qatar is very friendly and open to foreigners. The business culture places a lot of emphasis on personal relationships. Qatari entrepreneurs prefer to do business with people they are familiar with, and whom they feel they can trust. For this reason, expats may need help from a local agent (or sponsor) who can provide them with important introductions and recommendations. One should also invest time to get to know one's (potential) partners.

Make sure to discuss general topics at the beginning of a meeting such as family life and show curiosity in country and culture. Being patient during the first dealings with potential Qatari business partners is important – a lot of time is devoted to 'getting to know each other' before business is discussed.

Meetings should also be confirmed ahead of time, as business schedules can quickly change.

Understand Business Etiquette

- The official language of Qatar is Arabic, although English is widely spoken and understood.
- Dress code is smart and conservative for both men and women.
- It is essential that expats always behave with respect for Islamic culture and traditions.

- Business etiquette in Qatar reflects the close distance between personal and professional life that many Qataris maintain. The most senior person present should be greeted first. Arabic titles, such as Sheikh and Sheikha, should be used where appropriate to show respect. At the same time, personal discussions are common, especially in the beginning.
- Exchanging gifts when meeting Qatari business associates for the first time is customary. Gifts should be wrapped and of high quality. Never give alcohol or anything made of pork (skin) products.
- Qatar is one of the more progressive Gulf countries with regards to attitudes toward women in the workplace. Foreign women are respected in Qatar although they need to dress and behave more conservatively than they would back home.

Know your challenges

Qatar has a lot to offer, but there are undoubtedly challenges in doing business here.

- Most Qatari entities have a hierarchical management style. This slows down the decision-making process as different levels of hierarchy need to be passed to reach the final decision maker.
- Understand where to expect challenges: culture and language, laws and regulations, intellectual property rights, trade barriers, logistics, personnel and bureaucracy.
- Finding the right Qatari partner is essential for connections, networking and usually an active partner opens business opportunities doors.
- The time between your first contact and winning a contract can be long. Patience is needed for those aiming to secure business in Qatar.



How can we support your business?

If your company is in need of support, do not hesitate to contact the Netherlands Embassy in Qatar. The economic section of the Embassy can be contacted via email at DOH-EA@minbuza.nl [DOH](mailto:DOH-EA@minbuza.nl). In a government-dominated environment such as Qatar, we can help open doors for you. Our main services are as follows:

- Advising on potential business partners.
- Providing information on sectors, rules and regulations and Responsible Business Conduct.
- Facilitating matchmaking with local stakeholders.
- Supporting trade missions and visiting programs to Qatar.
- Organizing meetings with relevant authorities
- Monitoring business opportunities.
- Advising on available instruments and services.

Business Support Instruments

For further promotion and strengthening of economic relations, the following Dutch trade instruments are offered in Qatar:

Customized information

Specific information leads to help taking a strategic decision on how to enter a market such as precise sector information.

Tailor-made services

Offers guidance on doing business, including providing network contacts and facilitating introductions. Additionally, it means providing market information and advice on suitable trade events to attend.

Starters International Business (SIB)

This program aims to support companies likely to be successful with their first steps in a foreign market. Companies can apply for a voucher worth € 2,400 that can be used for individual coaching support supplied by various agencies, such as chamber of commerce, various trade associations and consulting companies.

Partners for International Business (PIB)

Create market entrance and long-term positioning of clusters of Dutch SMEs in promising markets with the help of the unique role of the government.

Official name	State of Qatar
Capital	Doha
Government type	Absolute hereditary monarchy
Geography	11,437 square kilometers
Population	Around 2.88 million (91% of the population are expats).
Time difference	(UTC + 3)
Official languages	Arabic, English
Currency	Qatari Riyal
GDP growth rate	0.8 % (2019)
GDP per capita	\$62,088.06 (2019)
Global Competitiveness Index	29 (out of 138)
Global Corruption Index	30 (out of 176)
Netherlands Qatar trade	EUR 975 million (2019)
Sources: World Bank, World Economic Forum, Qatar Statistics Authority, official Gazette of the state of Qatar	

Promotional activities include missions, seminar, liaison, Holland branding and promotion materials.

Relevant links and contacts

Netherlands Embassy in Qatar:

<https://www.netherlandsandyou.nl/your-country-and-the-netherlands/qatar/doing-business>

Qatar Embassy in The Hague:

<http://hague.embassy.qa/en>

Dutch Business Council in Qatar:

www.dbcqatar.com

Enterprise Agency (RVO):

<https://www.rvo.nl/onderwerpen/internationaal-ondernemen/landenoverzicht/qatar>

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