



SOUTHERN PARTNERS

The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) covers Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria and Tunisia. It consists of bilateral policies between the EU and the 10 individual partner countries, plus a regional cooperation framework, the Union for the Mediterranean. The EU boosted support for democratic transformation under the ENP in 2011, in response to the uprisings in its southern neighbourhood. It further reviewed the ENP in 2015.

LEGAL BASIS

- Article 8 of the [Treaty on European Union](#);
- Title V of the Treaty on European Union: the EU's 'external action';
- Articles 206-207 (trade) and 216-219 (international agreements) of the [Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#).

INSTRUMENTS

The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) is implemented through bilateral (tailor-made for each country), regional, neighbourhood-wide and cross-border cooperation programmes (between EU countries and neighbourhood countries sharing a land border or sea crossing). Association agreements provide the legal basis for the EU's bilateral relations with Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority and Tunisia. The association agreement initialled with Syria before the Syrian Government's violent crackdown on public protests in 2011 was never signed. The negotiations for an EU-Libya framework agreement were suspended in February 2011 and have yet to be resumed.

In the framework of the ENP, the EU and its southern partners (except Libya and Syria) have adopted bilateral action plans, partnership priorities or association agendas. These establish agendas for political and economic reform with short- and medium-term priorities of between three and five years. Reflecting the needs, interests and capacities of the EU and each partner, ENP action plans are aimed, in particular, at developing democratic, socially equitable and inclusive societies, promoting economic integration and education, developing small and medium-sized enterprises and agriculture, and facilitating the movement of people across borders.

The European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) was the key EU financing instrument for bilateral cooperation with the southern partners for the 2014-2020 period. The new Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI)



– ‘Global Europe’ – will frame the EU’s cooperation with these countries for the period 2021-2027. Under the new NDICI ‘Global Europe’ instrument, an increased emphasis on blending EU grants with loans from European and international financing institutions will allow partner countries to unlock substantial levels of concessional funding for investments. The new system of guarantees provided for under the NDICI ‘Global Europe’ instrument will give access to additional funds from the crowding-in of both public and private investors.

On 9 February 2021, the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy adopted a joint communication proposing an ambitious and innovative [new Agenda for the Mediterranean](#) to relaunch and strengthen the strategic partnership between the European Union and its Southern Neighbourhood partners. This new agenda focuses on five policy areas: a) human development, good governance and the rule of law; b) resilience, prosperity and digital transition; c) peace and security; d) migration and mobility; and e) the green transition – climate resilience, energy and the environment. At the same time, a dedicated Economic Investment Plan for the Southern Neighbours aims to aid the economic recovery and improve the quality of life of people in the region, including following the COVID-19 pandemic.

The EU is also seeking to advance market access and cooperation on migration and mobility issues with its southern partners. Mobility partnerships have been concluded with Morocco, Tunisia and Jordan, and negotiations are ongoing with Lebanon. A number of projects have been implemented within these frameworks, in particular under the [Mobility Partnership Facility](#), launched in 2016. In addition, regional and bilateral initiatives on migration and mobility are being funded under the [EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa](#), the North Africa window, in Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia. The [EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis](#), the ‘Madad Fund’, has provided support to Syrian refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and local communities in Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt. The Madad Fund officially expired in December 2021, though projects funded by it will run until June 2025.

The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), launched in 2008 to revive the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, provides a regional framework for cooperation between the EU Member States and 15 Mediterranean countries, including the 10 southern partners.

CURRENT STATUS

A. Algeria

As a major regional player and an important energy producer, Algeria is a key EU partner in the southern neighbourhood. An association agreement entered into force in 2005. Since 2013, Algeria has also been involved in the European Neighbourhood Policy. The EU and Algeria have not yet adopted [partnership priorities](#) for 2021-2027, so work is continuing on the basis of those adopted at the Association Council of March 2017. The partnership priorities set up a renewed framework for political engagement and enhanced cooperation, with a focus on: (i) governance and fundamental rights; (ii) socio-economic development and trade; (iii) energy,



environment and climate change; (iv) strategic and security dialogue; and (v) the human dimension, migration and mobility.

B. Egypt

Relations between the European Union and Egypt are governed by an association agreement, which has been in force since 2004. In June 2022, the ninth EU-Egypt Association Council confirmed that the two parties had an effective and multifaceted partnership by adopting new [partnership priorities](#) to guide the relationship until 2027. These are in line with the new EU Agenda for the Mediterranean, its Economic and Investment Plan and Egypt's Sustainable Development Strategy Vision 2030. The EU and Egypt decided to further deepen dialogue and cooperation around three main priorities: (i) sustainable modern economy and social development; (ii) partnering in foreign policy; and (iii) enhancing stability. In March 2024, the EU and Egypt agreed to elevate their relationship to the level of a [strategic and comprehensive partnership](#) covering other priority areas such as political relations, macroeconomic stability, sustainable investment and trade, migration, security and human capital development. The EU financial package which underpins this partnership is worth EUR 7.4 billion for 2024-2027.

C. Israel

EU-Israel relations are extensive, underpinned by strong economic and trade relations and technical cooperation. Based on the 2000 association agreement, the relationship developed dynamically in subsequent years, with a substantial expansion across many sectors. The EU-Israel action plan, agreed in 2005, is based on shared common values of democracy, respect for human rights, the rule of law and basic freedoms, and it promotes the integration of Israel into European policies and programmes. In 2009, the EU decided that, in order for relations to be upgraded to 'advanced' status, there would have to be progress in the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP). Cooperation continues on the basis of the [2005 ENP action plan](#), whose validity was further extended to January 2025.

D. Jordan

The EU considers Jordan an important partner that plays a stabilising role in the Middle East. The EU-Jordan association agreement, in force since May 2002, provides the legal basis for this bilateral relationship. Jordan was the first Mediterranean partner country to conclude technical negotiations leading to an 'advanced status' with the EU in 2010. An ENP action plan was adopted in 2012 and new [EU-Jordan Partnership Priorities](#) were agreed in June 2022 to guide the relationship until 2027, in line with the new EU Agenda for the Mediterranean and its Economic and Investment Plan. The EU and Jordan will further deepen their dialogue and collaboration around three objectives: (i) strengthening cooperation on regional stability and security; (ii) promoting sustainable economic stability; (iii) strengthening good governance and respect for human rights.

In October 2014, the EU and Jordan launched a Mobility Partnership to manage mobility and migration. In addition, Jordan has benefited from EUR 1.08 billion in macro-financial assistance from the EU since 2013. The latest loan programme, for EUR 700 million, was adopted in 2020. This will help Jordan to support economic



stabilisation, enhance public debt sustainability, expedite economic reforms and limit the economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic. Jordan also receives funding under the 'Madad Fund', the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis.

E. Lebanon

Relations are based on the EU-Lebanon association agreement, in force since 2006, the 2016 [EU-Lebanon Partnership Priorities](#) and the EU-Lebanon Compact, addressing the impact of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon. The validity of the existing partnership priorities has been extended until new priorities can be agreed under the NDICI 'Global Europe' instrument. The partnership priorities focus on (i) promoting growth and job creation; (ii) fostering local governance and socio-economic development; and (iii) promoting the rule of law and enhancing security. EU-Lebanon cooperation includes specific support for capacity development and institution building, as well as measures to benefit civil society. The EU-Lebanon Association Council, held in July 2017, agreed to pursue discussions with a view to the signature of a Mobility Partnership. A country of 4.4 million inhabitants, Lebanon currently hosts around one million registered Syrian refugees. Lebanon receives funding under the 'Madad Fund', the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis. In December 2020, the EU announced that it would launch, together with the UN and the World Bank, a '[Reform, Recovery and Reconstruction Framework](#)' to 'build back a better Lebanon' guided by the principles of transparency, inclusion and accountability. However, in addition to a people-centred recovery, substantial EU assistance for the reconstruction of a democratic, transparent, inclusive and prosperous Lebanon will continue to be conditional on tangible progress on the necessary reforms.

In December 2023, during times of uncertainty and instability in the region, the [European Union reaffirmed its support to the people of Lebanon by allocating EUR 205.5 million](#) to address several priority areas. This assistance will go towards supporting the country's stability and recovery including: border management, economic and structural reforms, fiscal policy and public finance management, enhancing governance, accountability and transparency, renewable energy and energy efficiency, water sector, electoral processes, education and social protection.

F. Libya

Since the fall of the Gaddafi regime, Libya has been sliding into civil war, against the background of complex political, territorial, social and tribal divisions. Libya is also known as a Sahelian transit route for human trafficking and contraband. In this context, the EU is seeking to assist Libyans in establishing a stable and inclusive state. The EU supports the UN's mediation efforts to bring an end to hostilities, and makes diplomatic approaches to Libyan and regional stakeholders. Libya does not have an association agreement or other contractual agreement with the EU, but the country is eligible for funding under the NDICI 'Global Europe' instrument and other financial instruments. Local and regional instability have turned Libya from a destination country for migration into a transit country, requiring an immediate EU response to tackle the most urgent needs. Libya has therefore received funding through the North Africa window of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, which tackles the root causes of irregular migration and provides support to protection and migration management.



G. Morocco

Of the southern partners, Morocco has one of the most developed relationships with the EU. An association agreement has been in force since 2000 and a new ENP action plan was adopted in 2013. The country was granted ENP ‘advanced status’ in 2008, reflecting the ambition to strengthen EU-Morocco cooperation and to further support economic and political reforms. The EU-Morocco mobility partnership was launched in June 2013. In 2021, under the new EU Trade Policy Review, the EU offered to discuss modernising trade and investment relations with Morocco, to better face current challenges. [The EU and Morocco concluded a sustainable fisheries partnership agreement](#) that entered into force on 18 July 2019 and is tacitly renewed. Its first implementing protocol had a duration of four years covering the period 18 July 2019 – 17 July 2023. It expired on 17 July 2023. A further renewal of the protocol is linked to a ruling by the European Court of Justice (ECJ), expected in 2024, in a case brought by the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Saguia el Hamra and Rio de Oro (Polisario Front), claiming that the agreement was not valid.

H. Palestine

The EU is the leading financial supporter of the Palestinian Authority (PA), with an indicative annual bilateral allocation of around EUR 300 million. The overall objective of EU support is to help build the capacities of a future viable, independent and democratic Palestinian state, coexisting in peace and security with Israel and other neighbours. The legal basis for the EU’s relations with the PA is an [interim association agreement on trade and cooperation](#), concluded in 1997. The EU and the PA have signed an ENP action plan, which entered into force in 2013. That same year, the EU offered Israel and the future state of Palestine ‘Special Privileged Partnerships’ providing an unprecedented package of political, economic and security support subject to the conclusion of a future final status agreement. The EU is active in the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) and is a member of the Middle East Quartet, working towards a two-state solution based on the 2003 Roadmap for Peace. In June 2022, the Commission approved a new bilateral allocation to Palestine worth EUR 224.8 million. This new assistance package is earmarked to support the Palestinian Authority and crucial projects in the occupied Palestinian territory. In 2023, the EU initially allocated close to EUR 28 million in humanitarian aid. Following the 7 October terrorist attacks, the EU mobilised an additional EUR 75 million. In 2024, the EU has earmarked over [EUR 125 million in humanitarian funding](#) for Palestinians in need, over EUR 50 million of which is directly being used to tackle food shortages, cover medical supplies and other basic needs. [In March 2024](#), the Commission allocated an additional EUR 68 million to support the Palestinian population across the region. The extra funding will be implemented through international partners, such as the Red Cross and the Red Crescent. This comes in addition to the expected EUR 82 million of aid which will be implemented through The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNWRA) in 2024, bringing the total to EUR 150 million. Following the terrorist attacks of Hamas in Israel in October 2023, the Commission launched an urgent review of the EU’s assistance for Palestine. Following [the review](#), the Commission’s NDICI committee launched an urgent procedure to pay the PA the funds allocated to the PEGASE programme for 2023, worth EUR 122 million and has



set aside [EUR 125 million in humanitarian support for 2024](#) to ensure continued support for the people of Palestine.

I. Syria

The EU suspended all its bilateral cooperation with the Government of Syria in May 2011, following the escalation of violence and the unacceptable human rights situation. In parallel, the EU adopted various restrictive measures in the form of sanctions. In line with the [EU Strategy on Syria](#) of 3 April 2017, the EU supports inclusive peace talks towards a Syrian-led political transition. The EU is the leading donor in the response to the Syrian crisis, and the EU and its Member States have collectively provided more than [EUR 30 billion](#) for humanitarian, development, economic and stabilisation assistance since 2011. Since 2017, the EU has organised yearly Brussels Conferences, co-chaired with the UN, on ‘Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region’. The overarching objective of these conferences has been to support the Syrian people and mobilise the international community in the search for a lasting political solution to the Syria crisis in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2254. All Brussels Conferences to date have addressed the most critical humanitarian and resilience issues affecting Syrians and communities hosting Syrian refugees, both in Syria and the neighbouring region.

J. Tunisia

Following the 2011 Tunisian revolution, the EU provided political, financial and technical support for the country’s democratic transition. The legal basis of the bilateral relationship remains the association agreement, which has been in force since 1998. In 2012, taking account of the progress achieved, the EU and Tunisia agreed to establish a ‘privileged partnership’ with a detailed [action plan](#) for 2013-2017. Tunisia and the EU launched a mobility partnership in March 2014, which led to the opening of negotiations on visa facilitation and readmission agreements. Since July 2021, respect for fundamental rights has significantly deteriorated in Tunisia. The EU continues to support the Tunisian population through its various tools, notably the NDICI ‘Global Europe’ instrument. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the EU and Tunisia on 16 July 2023, within the framework of the association agreement. The MoU covers five pillars focusing on current challenges: macroeconomic stability, economy and trade, green energy transition, people-to-people contacts, and migration and mobility. Under the first pillar, the budget support programme worth EUR 150 million was adopted in December 2023 to support Tunisia’s macroeconomic stability and was received in March 2024. In its resolution of [14 March 2024 on the adoption of the special measure in favour of Tunisia for 2023](#), Parliament contested the need for an urgent written procedure for the granting of EUR 150 million in budget support. In this resolution Parliament also deplored the Commission’s lack of prior consultations with the Parliament.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Parliament is fully involved in the European Neighbourhood Policy. Through its Committee on Foreign Affairs, it monitors the implementation of the ENP, with particular regard to annual progress reports and reviews. The committee follows the political



situation in partner countries through regular exchanges of views with high-level government officials, experts and civil society stakeholders. Budgetary powers give Parliament a direct influence on the amounts allocated to the relevant financial instruments. Parliament's consent is required for the conclusion of all association agreements with southern ENP partners. Parliament must also consent to any new trade agreement.

Regular bilateral relations with the parliaments of southern partner countries are maintained through [standing delegations](#). Relations with the Moroccan Parliament were thus upgraded with the creation of a joint parliamentary committee (JPC) in 2010. JPCs were further established with Tunisia in 2016 and with Algeria in 2018. Parliamentary relations with Syria have been suspended due to the civil war, and the current context in Libya is also preventing inter-parliamentary relations. Parliament has taken part in several EU Election Observation Missions in southern partner countries. At regional level, Parliament participates in the Parliamentary Assembly of the UfM, which holds one plenary session and several committee meetings per year. The Spanish Parliament currently holds the rotating presidency of the Parliamentary Assembly.

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