

Renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood

25 years since the Barcelona Declaration adopted at the Euro-Mediterranean conference, the European Commission reiterated the EU's commitment to this process with a Communication on renewing the partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood through dialogue, exchange and cooperation, guaranteeing peace, stability and prosperity. These will be the basis to achieve some of the EU's priorities including the twin green and digital transitions and a people centred agenda in the region.

In the strategy published in February 2021, the European Commission proposes a five-point agenda focusing on the following key policy areas:

- 1) Human development, good governance, and the rule of law
- 2) Strengthen resilience, build prosperity, and seize the digital transition
- 3) Peace and security
- 4) Migration and mobility
- 5) Green transition: climate resilience, energy, and environment

This document provides a background to the motivations outlining these priorities and how the Commission plans to meet its objectives, with more emphasis being put on aspects related to the economic and business dimension.

Human development, good governance, and the rule of law

An important factor for the development of the southern neighbourhood region is to invest in youth, which demographically makes up a significant number of the population and is expected to grow in the coming years. Youth require empowerment and opportunities to become the agents of change. The EU has a role to play by helping the partners improve their educational system governance, support the mainstreaming of national youth policies, and support reduce the structural causes behind early school dropout and young people in the NEET category. The Commission will be looking at opening up access to EU programmes and networks to southern partners during the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework, including the Erasmus+ and Creative Europe.

The EU will also look to promote its fundamental values in the region, including respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, democratic institutions, and the rule of law. These are integral to our partnership as enshrined in the Barcelona Declaration. These foundations will provide decent jobs, growth, investment, and long-term stability. To this end, the Commission

will continue supporting initiatives involving civil society organisations and social partners from the region as key interlocutors to shape this partnership cooperation.

Strengthen resilience, build prosperity, and seize the digital transition

As we look at rebuilding our economies after the Covid-19 crisis, the EU will look at supporting southern partners to become more economically resilient by building economic buffers against future shocks. Linked to fulfilling specific conditions, the Commission will provide financial assistance from the EU's multiannual financial framework. Support will also be provided to diversify the economy especially for those that rely on sectors that are more volatile to exogenous shocks. The EU intends to strengthen the business environment, by supporting SMEs and entrepreneurship to bridge the financing gap through a comprehensive plan of international financial instruments that will focus on micro-finance and social enterprise.

The Mediterranean also holds a digital potential which would require better digital connections to promote further economic integration. The EU will provide technical assistance for the development of strong policy and regulatory frameworks, infrastructure, and secure networks in the southern region. This will be accompanied by initiatives to improve digital services and digital literacy skills.

Furthermore, to unlock trade and investment, the EU will look at reducing non-tariff barriers and trading costs with a special focus on bilateral, multilateral, and regional agreements, starting with building on existing network of Association Agreements and the Deep Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) negotiations currently underway with Morocco and Tunisia. Synergies will also be required with sub-Saharan Africa in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

Peace and Security

The EU is already the main provider of humanitarian and development assistance in the region. It will look to upgrade and intensify the political dialogue in the region and work with other strategic partners to solve conflicts and reduce tensions in the region. The fight against radicalization will be key for conflict resolution and stabilisation. The EU will also step-up cooperation on anti-money laundering and counter terrorism efforts, encouraging the ratification and implementation of relevant international conventions. Strengthening judicial and police cooperation will also be crucial, and negotiations will take place for cooperation agreements with Europol and Eurojust.

Migration and mobility

An important area of cooperation that requires building on previous years to ensure stability in the region and save lives is in migration and mobility. This will primarily continue to depend on financial support. Furthermore, technical assistance will be given for effective migration and asylum governance and border management, including readmission capabilities. Target assistance will be offered to migrants, displaced persons, and host communities, creating socio-economic opportunities. Legal pathways to Europe will be developed through resettlements and labour mobility schemes while fully respecting the EU member states' competences. A Talent Partnerships scheme will be launched.

Green transition: climate resilience, energy, and environment

The Mediterranean region is highly vulnerable to effects caused by climate change, but also home to some of the best solar and wind energy sources. The EU will work together with the southern partners to increase their climate ambition and shift towards green growth through achievable and measurable climate action measures in line with national commitments under the Paris COP21 Agreement and with the European Green Deal. Focus will be placed on climate and environmental governance, supporting carbon pricing initiatives, and technical assistance to implement and enforce environmental legislation.

Through specially designed International Financial Instruments (IFIs) focused on sustainable finance, large-scale investments in renewables and clean hydrogen production for both domestic consumption and export will be supported. Focus will also be made on implementing sustainable food systems, from production to consumption, in line with the EU's Farm to Fork Strategy. There will also be support for education and awareness raising with the private sector and the public at large, initiatives on waste management, biodiversity protection and restoration, and sustainable use of natural resources and transition to a circular economy.

The full text of the Commission Communication can be found in the link below:

[joint communication renewed partnership southern neighbourhood.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

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