



Union for the Mediterranean
Union pour la Méditerranée
الاتحاد من أجل المتوسط

Study Guide
for
the Union of the Mediterranean

**Topic Area: Strengthening Maritime Connectivity and Capabilities: Positioning the
Mediterranean as a Global Hub**

Table of Contents

1. Welcoming Letter	3
2. Introduction to the Committee	4
3. Introduction to the Topic Area	5
4. Key Words and Definitions.....	6
5. Legal Framework	8
6. Main Discussion.....	13
6.1 The infrastructure gap and the promotion of urban development in Northern and Southern Mediterranean Countries.....	13
6.1.1 Infrastructure Disparity and Relevant Strategic Solutions	13
6.1.2. Public -Private Partnership (PPPs)	16
6.1.3 Smart Coastal Cities: Integrating Digital Infrastructure and Climate Resilience	17
6.2 Maritime Trade and International Interconnectivity.....	18
6.2.1 UfM cooperation with international stakeholders.....	18
6.2.2 Regional States and national initiatives on international cooperation	20
6.2.3 The TransLog MED project.....	21
6.3 Addressing Economic and Trade Security in the Mediterranean Region	21
6.3.1 Post-Pandemic Logistics and Regional Free Trade Agreements.....	21
6.3.2 Blue Economy: Institutionalizing Ecological Finance and Green Energy transitions	24
6.4 Key Stakeholders.....	26
7. Conclusion.....	27
8. Points to be Addressed	28
9. Bibliography	29
10. Further Reading	33

1. Welcoming Letter

Honourable Ministers,

Welcome to the Union for the Mediterranean, a regional organization that aims to examine a flaming topic: *“Strengthening Maritime Connectivity and Capabilities: Positioning the Mediterranean as a Global Hub”*. You will dive into how the Union can expand its international routes on maritime trade, how it can address urban planning and infrastructural growth via holistic public policies and, lastly, how the Mediterranean region can secure a safe economic and trading environment for private enterprises as well as its citizens.

UfM, as a regional body, sees maritime trade and international interconnectivity as key factors that have helped regional stability and economic growth. On this topic, Ministers will have the opportunity to expand their knowledge on maritime policies, notably internal maritime strength, WTO to UfM cooperation and additional ways to position UfM as a global energy mediator. Another key aspect will be infrastructural progress and urban development, taking into account the Union's commitment to a sustainable and environmentally friendly Mediterranean region. Trans-Mediterranean cooperation, Port-City connection, strategic and green Urban Planning are concepts that Ministers will debate and propose solutions upon, as the Mediterranean region is one of the most densely populated regions worldwide.

The Union for the Mediterranean aims to address these topics with international dialogue, cooperation and empathy, as they have an immense impact on millions of people. We wish you a fruitful debate and we welcome you to the magical world of MUNs!

Warm regards,

Maria-Theotoki Spiliopoulou, Co-President (EU)

Marios Badanis, Co-President (Jordan)

2. Introduction to the Committee

The Union for the Mediterranean is a regional body initiated in 1995 via the Barcelona Process¹ with its core values being peace, regional stability and economic growth. Yet, it was formally established in 2008 in Paris. In 2010, the Secretariat was created in Barcelona, serving as the operational institution that fosters regional dialogue among UfM Member States, stakeholders and private enterprises, thus creating synergies and policies with direct impact on millions of citizens. Since then, the Union has expanded its Members as well as its mandate and bodies.

The UfM mandate works as a compass consisting of major pillars such as the expansion of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation, the establishment of best practices on a regional level, and the promotion of peace, stability and economic resilience. This shared ideology between its 43 Member States² (27 EU countries and 16 Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries) has led to the creation of the Ministerial Committee, UfM's main policy-making body. Ministers and Senior Officials gather under the Chairmanship of the Committee, which is composed of two co-presidents, one coming from the Northern part of the Mediterranean and one coming from the Southern part. Currently, the co-presidency is held jointly by the European Union for the North and the Kingdom of Jordan for the South.

We should also highlight that the UfM is not a political organization nor a purely economic alliance but rather a platform of dialogue and project coordination between Member States. It aims to deliver tangible results and to facilitate cooperation between regional governments, private sector officials, international bodies and Non Governmental Organizations in an uncertain region characterised by political instability, cultural polymorphism, and economic differences.

¹ "25 Years of the Barcelona Process." 2021. Union for the Mediterranean - UfM. February 11, 2021. <https://ufmsecretariat.org/25bcnprocess/>

² "Member States." 2025. Union for the Mediterranean - UfM. July 9, 2025. <https://ufmsecretariat.org/who-we-are/member-states/>.

3. Introduction to the Topic Area

The Mediterranean's strategic position connecting the major hubs of Africa, Asia and Europe, acts as a vital corridor that facilitates transnational maritime trade, cooperation, and dialogue. With an estimated 80% of global trade being transported via maritime routes, the interconnectivity of the Mediterranean basin is essential for global logistics and regional economic prosperity³.

However, despite these inherent geostrategic advantages, the Euro-Mediterranean region remains highly fragmented⁴. A significant infrastructure disparity exists between the Northern countries and Southern and Eastern Mediterranean counterparts, which often struggle with underdeveloped, road-dependent logistical networks, thus destabilizing economic cohesion. Furthermore, the region faces rapid urbanization⁵ and climate vulnerability, thereby necessitating the urgent adaptation of coastal infrastructure⁶. Additionally, recent global disruptions, including the post- pandemic recovery and ongoing geopolitical tensions, have altered the global trading landscape, thereby emphasising that trade security is closely linked to the robustness of infrastructure. In order to reshape the position of the Mediterranean as a Global Hub, the Union for the Mediterranean needs to address these challenges holistically. This entails creating integrated transport networks, bridging the infrastructure gap with targeted investment, and securing the economic environment of the region

³Raj, Anjaly. "Seven Sea Routes That Can Shake Oil, Food, Freight and Geopolitics." *Business-Standard.com*, Business Standard, 24 Apr. 2026, www.business-standard.com/world-news/global-sea-routes-trade-oil-shipping-geopolitics-explained-126042400356_1.html

⁴Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. *Regional Integration in the Union for the Mediterranean 2025*. OECD Publishing, Sept. 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1787/6422396e-en>

⁵Union for the Mediterranean. "Transport & Urban Development." *Union for the Mediterranean - UfM*, 25 July 2024, ufmsecretariat.org/what-we-do/transport-urban-development/

⁶Union for the Mediterranean. "MedECC Scientific Reports on Climate and Environmental Change in the Mediterranean." *Union for the Mediterranean - UfM*, 4 Dec. 2024, ufmsecretariat.org/what-we-do/energy-and-climate-action/medecc-scientific-reports-on-climate-and-environmental-change-in-the-mediterranean/?utm_source

4. Key Words and Definitions

Maritime Trade: The exchange of goods, commodities, raw materials, energy resources and industrial products via sea routes connecting ports and networks. In the case of the Mediterranean region, maritime interconnectivity and trade are vital factors of economic prosperity, as commerce is strongly fueled via maritime trade. Positioned between major hubs of Asia, Europe, and Africa, the Mediterranean region acts as a corridor allowing and facilitating maritime trade, cooperation and regional dialogue. 80% of global trade is transported by sea⁷, making maritime trade a key field of interest for the Union.

Port Infrastructure: Refers to the physical means, the technological innovations and logistic means which facilitate and support maritime trade and economic growth. This includes terminals, cranes, tracking systems, telecommunication and custom services⁸. The Union invests in the field with new systems such as digital administration of ports, automation and enhanced security means. As an example, better regional trading integration and logistical cohesion are being examined, thus making intra-Mediterranean trade more secure and cohesive.

Supply Chain Resilience: The ability of UfM's economy to withstand international or geopolitical risks. Such cases are political turmoil, trade conflicts and economic sanctions. In the case of the Union for the Mediterranean, economic cohesion and notably supply chain resilience are particularly vital as they are heavily influenced by maritime transport and naval route security. Close cooperation with stakeholders and regional policies is necessary to ensure that Mediterranean economies can better support trade flows and economic stability during international crises or crashes of global markets⁹.

⁷ Data Insights | UNCTAD Data Hub." 2024. Unctad.org. UNCTAD Data Hub. 2024. <https://unctadstat.unctad.org/insights/theme/94>.

⁸ "Infrastructure: Regional Integration in the Union for the Mediterranean 2025." 2025. OECD. 2025. https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/regional-integration-in-the-union-for-the-mediterranean-2025_6422396e-en/full-report/infrastructure_3cf9d59b.html#section-d1e12569-62fcc69200.

⁹ "UfM Regional Conference - Fostering Transport Connectivity in the Mediterranean Region through Infrastructure Investment and Trade Facilitation - a Strategic Conversation in an Era of Geopolitical Shifts." 2025. Union for the Mediterranean - UfM. 2025.

Infrastructure Gap: The phenomenon in which technological and infrastructural capabilities between Northern and Southern regions seem disproportionate. This issue can be further explained as Northern countries benefit from EU policies and stronger investments as they are mostly members of the European Union. On the contrary, Southern countries face serious misalignments with global standards and a limited flow of funds aiming at bridging the infrastructural gap among them¹⁰.

Sustainability in urban development: As a result of the rapid urbanization of cities, national governments and the Union for the Mediterranean have adopted concrete policies to combat pollution caused by this phenomenon. Renewable energy¹¹, greener public transportation and waste management are being enhanced by cooperative projects¹² under the auspices of the Union¹³.

Energy Security: Energy security refers to the reliable transportation of energy resources necessary to sustain economic activities and international cooperation. Energy pipelines, bilateral and multilateral cooperation are the main factors that support UfM's energy autonomy, as they connect Europe and Africa with the Middle East's rich environment of raw materials vital for energy production^{14 15}.

Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) : Regional or international treaties among counterparts aiming to facilitate trade, to reduce administrative obstacles , such as tariffs, to implement quotas and regulatory restrictions, while fostering economic cooperation and best practises between

¹⁰ "Infrastructure: Regional Integration in the Union for the Mediterranean 2025." 2025. OECD. 2025. https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/regional-integration-in-the-union-for-the-mediterranean-2025_6422396e-en/full-report/infrastructure_3cf9d59b

¹¹ "SEMed Private Renewable Energy Framework 'SPREF.'" 2023. Union for the Mediterranean - UfM. February 22, 2023. <https://ufmsecretariat.org/project/semed-spref/>.

¹² "Euro-Mediterranean Smart City Innovation Centres." 2023. Union for the Mediterranean - UfM. February 22, 2023. <https://ufmsecretariat.org/project/euro-med-smart-city-centres/>.

¹³ "UfM Environment Agenda." 2025. Union for the Mediterranean - UfM. January 16, 2025. <https://ufmsecretariat.org/ufm-environment-agenda/#greener>.

¹⁴ Drobinski, Philippe, Marta Guadalupe, Mohamed Abdel Monem, Fatima Driouech, and Katarzyna Marini. 2024. "MedECC, 2024: Interlinking Climate Change with the Water-Energy-Food-Ecosystems (WEFE) Nexus in the Mediterranean Basin." December 16, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13365388>.

¹⁵ designer. 2025. "UfM Calls for Urgent Climate Action as Mediterranean Pavilion Unifies Regional Voice and Unveils Latest Scientific Findings at COP30." Union for the Mediterranean - UfM. November 13, 2025. <https://ufmsecretariat.org/mediterranean-pavilion-cop30/>.

countries¹⁶. Such cases are the CETA¹⁷ and bilateral agreements between Members of the Union for the Mediterranean and the European Union grounded in the Barcelona Agreement.

Blue Mediterranean Partnership: The BMP¹⁸ is a regional financial initiative created by the Union for the Mediterranean, the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. In simple terms the BMP exists to support the development of a sustainable Blue Economy across the member states of the Union for the Mediterranean.

5. Legal Framework

Euro- Mediterranean Partnership (Barcelona) Process:

Since its initiation during the first Euro-Mediterranean Conference in November 1995, the Barcelona Process serves as the foundational political and legal framework for the creation of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). By signing the Barcelona Declaration, foreign ministers from the European Union and twelve Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries established a formal Euro-Mediterranean Partnership aimed at transforming the region into a common space of peace, stability, security, and shared socio-economic progress. The agreement was structured around three core policy pillars: reinforcing political and security dialogue, constructing a zone of shared prosperity through economic and financial integration, and fostering social, cultural, and human partnerships to encourage civil society engagement. More recently, this enduring partnership has been reinvigorated by the "Pact for the Mediterranean," which focuses on accelerating the green and digital transitions,

¹⁶ "WTO | Regional Trade Agreements" 2026

¹⁷ "EU-Canada Comprehensive and Economic Trade Agreement | Access2Markets" 2026

¹⁸ Union for the Mediterranean. "Blue Mediterranean Partnership." *Union for the Mediterranean - UfM*, 16 June 2025, ufmsecretariat.org/blue-mediterranean-partnership/

deepening trade integration, and collaboratively managing migration and security to address the region's contemporary geopolitical and environmental challenges¹⁹.

UfM Roadmap for Action²⁰:

The UfM Roadmap for Action, adopted in January 2017, is a comprehensive strategic framework for the UfM's activities to boost regional cooperation and regional integration in the Euro-Mediterranean region. At its core, the Roadmap confirms a strong engagement in trans-Mediterranean connectivity, with a particular focus on the development and integration of regional transportation, energy, and digital infrastructure. Additionally, a specialized approach to Migration and Development is to be implemented, with a strong focus on key social priorities such as youth employability, education, and socio-economic empowerment of women. To this end, and in order to make such ambitious objectives a reality, a Progress Report on Regional Integration was mandated by the Roadmap with the aim of monitoring economic and social trends, assessing regional integration progress over time with specific indicators, and contributing to evidence-based policymaking in the entire Mediterranean region.

Regional Convention on Pan-Euro-Mediterranean Preferential Rules of Origin:

The Regional Convention on Pan-Euro-Mediterranean preferential rules of origin (PEM Convention), initiated in 2011, is a unifying instrument intended to lay out the framework for the establishment of common rules of origin and cumulation between the European Union and its 25 Contracting Parties. Replacing the existing complicated and disorganized framework of 60 bilateral protocols, the convention is intended to ease trade, integrate supply chains, and adapt more easily to changing market conditions. Its membership is expansive, encompassing the EU and 25 contracting parties from the broader Euro-Mediterranean region. A central operational mechanism of the convention is the facilitation of diagonal cumulation of materials originating in one participating country to be

¹⁹ European Commission , "EU and Southern Mediterranean Partners Launch the Pact for the Mediterranean in Barcelona," European Commission - European Commission, 2025, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/da/ip_25_2838

²⁰ *UfM Roadmap for Action*. 23 Jan. 2017, ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/UfM-Roadmap-for-action-2017.pdf

incorporated into products manufactured in another without losing their preferential originating status when exported to a third country, provided that Free Trade Agreements are in place between all involved parties²¹. To further modernize and simplify these international trade processes, a revised version officially came into effect in 2025, following a transitional period of bilateral applications. This revised framework introduces more business-friendly measures and highly flexible full cumulation rules governing approximately 60% of the EU's preferential trade²².

Regional Transport Action Plan:

Ratified in the second UfM Ministerial Conference on Transport in February 2023, the Regional Transport Action Plan (RTAP 2021-2027) is a transport strategy that is expected to build an integrated, multimodal, sustainable, and resilient transport infrastructure in the Euro-Mediterranean region in pursuit of a higher degree of economic and regional integration. The RTAP includes 28 concrete actions that will direct the activities of UfM Member States in all areas of the transport sector by identifying specific performance indicators and milestones for the upcoming years. The essence of this strategic document is to ensure the validation and implementation of the Trans-Mediterranean Transport Network (TMN-T) as the external dimension of Europe's TEN-T, using this network as a common programming basis for mobilizing cross-border infrastructure finance from sources such as the European Investment Bank (EIB). In tandem with physical infrastructure development, the RTAP strongly mandates "soft" infrastructure upgrades through regulatory convergence and the harmonization of national transport legislation with the EU and international standards, emphasizing accession to key treaties governing safety, border facilitation, and environmental protection. Furthermore, the framework proactively addresses contemporary global challenges by accelerating the green and digital transitions; it mainly promotes the

²¹ European Commission , "Pan-Euro-Mediterranean Convention (PEM) | Access2Markets," [trade.ec.europa.eu](https://trade.ec.europa.eu/access-to-markets/en/content/pan-euro-mediterranean-convention-pem), <https://trade.ec.europa.eu/access-to-markets/en/content/pan-euro-mediterranean-convention-pem>.

²² European Commission , "The Pan-Euro-Mediterranean Cumulation and the PEM Convention," Taxation and Customs Union, December 19, 2024, https://taxation-customs.ec.europa.eu/customs/international-affairs/pan-euro-mediterranean-cumulation-and-pem-convention_en.

decarbonization of transport through alternative marine fuels and electric urban mobility, the widespread deployment of Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) and Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS), and the vital enhancement of climate resilience and women's empowerment across the regional transport sector.²³

European Neighbourhood Policy:

The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) refers to the framework that aims to bring the European Union and its neighbors in the East and South closer together, directly complementing and building upon the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. After its review in 2015, the ENP shifted its policy focus towards regional stabilization, security, migration management, and economic resilience. To translate these ambitions into action, the EU and its neighboring countries mutually agreed on bilateral Action Plans based on joint ownership and reciprocal commitments, which serve to support national reform programs across political, economic, social, and institutional fields, while facilitating the partners' participation in the EU internal market and the gradual establishment of a free trade area. The implementation of these sweeping internal reform agendas is heavily supported by the European Commission through dedicated funding, currently the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI - Global Europe). Through such financial instruments and trans-national initiatives, such as but not limited to Cross Border Cooperation (CBC/NEXT MED) programs, the ENP is actively engaging in funding joint projects to address challenges such as climate change, youth unemployment, etc., thus creating a linkage between the EU and its neighbors to build a prosperous, stable, and highly interconnected macro-region²⁴.

Urban Projects Finance Initiative- Economic Resilience Initiative:

²³ Union for the Mediterranean, "Regional Transport Action Plan (RTAP 2021-2027) Mid-Term Review (Cover Page) 2," https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/RTAP-Mid-Term-review_EN_Final.pdf

²⁴ Maya Sion-Tzidkiyahu, "The EU's Cross Border Cooperation Program in the Mediterranean (CBC Med/next MED) - Mitvim," Mitvim, May 3, 2023, <https://mitvim.org.il/en/publication/the-eus-cross-border-cooperation-program-in-the-mediterranean-cbc-med-next-med-potential-for-israel-and-neighbouring-countries/>.

The Urban Projects Finance Initiative – Economic Resilience Initiative (UPFI-ERI) is an innovative financial and technical assistance framework designed to support sustainable urban development projects across the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean and the Western Balkans. Originally launched as UPFI, the initiative is funded by the European Commission and co-managed by the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) under the auspices of the Union for the Mediterranean, and was later expanded through a 4.5 million EUR allocation under the EIB's Economic Resilience Initiative. It functions by providing project promoters with dedicated grants for technical assistance, feasibility studies, and capacity building, ensuring that ambitious regional projects become highly bankable and meet the rigorous investment standards of European financial institutions²⁵. Through the acceleration of project preparation and mobilization of international finance for the upgrade of vital infrastructure, including water, social, and commercial infrastructure, the UPFI-ERI seeks to promote economic resilience, poverty reduction, sustainable employment creation, and urban upgrading in response to rising demographic and climatic challenges.

2040 Urban Development Action Plan:

The UfM Strategic Urban Development Action Plan 2040, which was adopted during the 3rd UfM Ministerial Conference on Sustainable Urban Development in May 2023, is a comprehensive and long-term framework aiming to address the distinct demographic and environmental challenges of the Euro-Mediterranean region, due to its rapid urbanization and continuous augmentation of temperature rates. Built on a foundation of science-led, evidence-based, and inclusive planning, the plan operates through six integrated strategic actions: coordinating National Urban Policies (NUPs) and Integrated City Development Strategies (ICDSs), educating and strengthening local planning capacity, fostering participatory governance and citizen engagement, connecting and protecting urban

²⁵ Union for the Mediterranean, “THE UfM STRATEGIC URBAN DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN 2040 for Sustainable, Resilient, and Inclusive Cities and Communities in the Mediterranean,” July 1, 2021, https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/UfM_Strategic_Urban_Development_Action_Plan_2040.pdf.

infrastructures to ensure climate and disaster resilience, implementing strategic projects across nine thematic axes (such as affordable housing and port-city regeneration), and establishing a rigorous, results-based monitoring system. By strongly promoting nature-based solutions, the sustainable reuse of historic urban landscapes, and the socio-economic inclusion of vulnerable populations, the Action Plan aims to transform the region's coastal and inland cities into sustainable, safe, and equitable communities that leave no one behind²⁶.

6. Main Discussion

6.1 The infrastructure gap and the promotion of urban development in Northern and Southern Mediterranean Countries

6.1.1 Infrastructure Disparity and Relevant Strategic Solutions

Even though the Euro-Mediterranean region stands at a critical crossroads, both from the economic and the geographic aspect, it is also highly fragmented due to a prevailing gap in infrastructure and investments between Northern and Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries. While the Northern countries have access to highly developed and connected transport systems, the transport systems in the Middle East and North Africa are lacking advanced infrastructure²⁷, remaining highly dependent on road transport systems. This disparity significantly reduces the overall performance of regional supply chains and limits the ability of local small and medium-sized enterprises to participate in global markets. Currently, these regions are characterized by a high level of reliance on road infrastructure for cargo movement, resulting in congestion and high costs, while this sector contributes to environmental degradation, with UfM countries observing a 40% increase in their emissions since 1990. Moreover, the infrastructure in the region is prone to climate change effects, due

²⁶ Union for the Mediterranean, “UfM Urban Agenda: UfM Strategic Urban Development Action Plan 2040,” Union for the Mediterranean, August 28, 2024, <https://u.fmsecretariat.org/urban-agenda/>.

²⁷ OECD. *Regional Integration in the Union for the Mediterranean*. OECD, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1787/325884b3-en>

to the fact that the Mediterranean basin is warming 20% faster than the global average. This has exposed coastal infrastructure to alarming sea-level rise, extreme weather events, and catastrophic flooding, necessitating immediate capital mobilization²⁸. In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, it would cost approximately 106 billion USD annually, or around 7% of the GDP, to maintain existing infrastructure and develop new infrastructure over the next decade²⁹. However, stringent Foreign Direct Investment restrictions, particularly in maritime, rail, and aviation sectors, along with the dominance of state-owned enterprises, frequently crowd out necessary private sector investments. Consequently, the UfM's strategy requires not only physical hard infrastructure development but also the implementation of soft infrastructure. This entails the harmonization of national transport legislation with EU and international standards to ensure regulatory convergence. For land transport, this specifically requires compliance with key international agreements, such as the Vienna Convention on Road Traffic and the TIR Convention, which are essential for streamlining customs transit and fostering a vibrant, frictionless corridor connecting Europe, Africa, and Asia³⁰.

To resolve this discrepancy, the UfM focuses on the Trans-Mediterranean Transport Network (TMN-T), an essential planning tool that identifies core multimodal corridors for regional connectivity, providing a gateway to funding from the European Investment Bank and the Global Gateway program of the EU. This program has already provided billions of euros to the region, which has been used to implement transformative projects such as the development of the Adriatic-Ionian Motorway in the Western Balkans. Once established, the TMN-T could provide a connection between the European market and inner Sub-Saharan Africa/Asia, providing a gateway to broaden intercontinental trade through a transition from a single-mode, road-based transport system to a highly integrated multimodal transport system.

²⁸ Daily Sabah. "Mediterranean Region Warming 20% Faster than Rest of Globe." *Daily Sabah*, 22 Oct. 2020, www.dailysabah.com/life/environment/mediterranean-region-warming-20-faster-than-rest-of-globe?utm_source

²⁹ *Regional Integration in the Union for the Mediterranean PROGRESS REPORT*. 2021, www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2021/05/regional-integration-in-the-union-for-the-mediterranean_674bb40b/325884b3-en.pdf

³⁰ UNECE, "TIR | UNECE," [unece.org](http://unece.org/transport/tir), 1975, [https://unece.org/transport/tir](http://unece.org/transport/tir).

More specifically, multimodal integration relies on inconspicuously connecting maritime routes, railways, and inland logistics platforms to optimize cargo routing, diminish transit times, and effectively lower carbon emissions. Given that ports and maritime transport handle over 80% of global trade volumes, the sea remains the backbone of Mediterranean commerce³¹. Furthermore, the TMN-T aggressively promotes the Motorways of the Sea concept, establishing and revitalizing direct, high-frequency maritime shipping lines between Northern and Southern Mediterranean ports to transform the sea into a fluid, frictionless highway. However, the efficiency of these maritime highways relies entirely on hinterland connectivity. Thus the risk arises for the economic advantage of a quick and reliable maritime transport to be lost due to a bottleneck caused by inadequate mainland road infrastructure³². Thus the risk arises for the economic advantage of a quick and reliable maritime transport to be lost due to a bottleneck caused by inadequate mainland road infrastructure. Therefore, the RTAP strongly encourages countries to prioritize the expansion of port-to-rail connections and the establishment of inland dry ports. The implementation of Intelligent Transport Systems, digitalization of supply chains, and Maritime National Single Windows have proven to be very effective in ensuring the lack of bureaucratic delays in the flow of goods and the synchronization of said flow across borders³³. Projects like PORTNET in Morocco and Nafeza in Egypt streamline the flow of goods across these nations, increasing the resilience of their internal trade networks and reducing delays. Furthermore, RTAP promotes the transformation of ports into sustainable energy hubs, providing renewable energy and hydrogen to vessels. This transition is critically aligned with the designation of the Mediterranean Sea as an Emission Control Area (MedECA) by 2025, which enforces stricter limits on sulfur emissions to enhance environmental protection across regional maritime

³¹ OECD, "Regional Integration in the Union for the Mediterranean 2025," September 12, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1787/6422396e-en>.

³² European Commission, "Euro-Mediterranean Transport Partnership (EUROMED) - European Commission," transport.ec.europa.eu, n.d., https://transport.ec.europa.eu/transport-themes/international-relations/european-neighbourhood-policy/euro-mediterranean-transport-partnership-euromed_en.

³³ Union for the Mediterranean, "TransLogMed: Navigating New Horizons and Connecting Continents," Union for the Mediterranean - UfM, August 28, 2025, <https://ufmsecretariat.org/human-story/translogmed/>.

corridors³⁴. Beyond the harmonization of transport legislation and 'soft' infrastructure upgrades, the actual realization of physical corridors requires innovative financing models. Within this context, Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) serve as a critical bridge, allowing the Union to overcome traditional financial barriers by leveraging private sector capital and expertise to develop sustainable regional networks.

6.1.2. Public -Private Partnership (PPPs)

In the case of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), the role of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) has been highlighted as a key instrument to mobilize investments, to overcome the traditional barriers to finance, and to bridge the significant gap in infrastructure development in the Euro-Mediterranean area. By entering into long-term contracts in which the private sector provides and finances public infrastructure projects in exchange for any potential risks, PPPs have been identified as a viable option to attract investments in countries that lack capital markets. In addition to traditional sources of finance in the form of Foreign Direct Investments (FDI), the UfM strongly emphasizes the deployment of PPPs across various strategic sectors, including the provision of affordable housing, water and environmental management, sustainable transport and logistics and renewable energy and climate-resilient infrastructure. Despite their transformative potential, the infrastructure for PPPs in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has historically remained weak or geographically concentrated in a few proactive nations, which have recently begun updating their PPP laws and establishing dedicated agencies to attract investors. To enhance the efficacy of these partnerships, the UfM actively advocates for streamlining PPP regulatory schemes, enhancing cross-institutional capacity and communication, and embedding climate-specific incentives and resilience measures directly into existing PPP frameworks. Ultimately, the UfM guidelines stress that for PPPs to foster sustainable, cross-border development and properly mitigate

³⁴ Union for the Mediterranean, “10th UfM Regional Platform on Trade, Investment and Industry,” Union for the Mediterranean - UfM, 2025, <https://ufmsecretariat.org/event/10th-ufm-regional-platform-on-trade-investment-and-industry/>.

investment risks, they must be affordable, offer clear value for money, and be fully integrated into national budget processes with complete transparency³⁵.

6.1.3 Smart Coastal Cities: Integrating Digital Infrastructure and Climate Resilience

In today's rapidly evolving economy, with a huge percentage of the world's trade flowing through maritime routes, a strain has been put on coastal and port cities to handle the pressure of constant goods movement. Up until recently, the answer was to expand the city and use the extra space to create more infrastructure. However, as the pressure keeps growing, so does the need for space, and in today's congested land, this is not always possible. Meanwhile, the rapid industrialization has led to a decrease in the quality of life for the citizens, a factor of which is climate change happening due to said industrialization. Therefore, it is now more crucial than ever to create cities that use effective city planning, both in terms of climate resilience, in order to improve the quality of life, as well as in terms of the management of the flow of goods.

To begin with, the effectiveness of management of the flow of goods in the modern world is inadvertently linked to the upgrade of the digital capabilities of the coastal cities and ports. Member states of the Union for the Mediterranean have been at the forefront of the evolution regarding the digitalization of coastal infrastructure. Ports like the ones in Spain and Morocco have already started implementing projects and initiatives like the 5G Smart Port Initiative, co-funded by the European Union's Connecting Europe Facility and offering a variety of advantages like portwide surveillance and remote training of new employees, or the PORTNET Single Window platform³⁶, which connects all key stakeholders from customs agencies to transport companies within a single platform, active in every Moroccan port.

The rapid digitalization of ports and coastal cities, however, needs to be accompanied by certain ecological considerations regarding climate resilience. It is of the utmost importance that the flow of goods does not offset the climate in these regions, and towards that end,

³⁵ Union for the Mediterranean, "Annual Report 2023," n.d.,

https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Annual-Report-2023_Digital.pdf.

³⁶ Morocco PORTNET. "PortNet Business Solutions - PortNet Business Solutions - PortNet." *PortNet Business Solutions*, 2025, www.portnet.ma/en/web/portnet-business-solutions/trade-single-window

considerable measures have been taken. Examples include the port of Barcelona, where smart environmental monitoring systems, including air-quality sensors, have been implemented in order to detect pollution spikes, monitor ship emissions, and help optimize the energy use of the port³⁷. Another example is the port of Genoa, where the use of infrastructure simulations and predictive modeling systems has allowed the port authorities to identify climate vulnerabilities before any damage occurs, thus ensuring the resilience of the port³⁸.

6.2 Maritime Trade and International Interconnectivity

6.2.1 UfM cooperation with international stakeholders

The Mediterranean region has historically been the epicenter of commerce. This phenomenon carries itself into present times and highlights the immense geostrategic power of the region. The Union for the Mediterranean, considering this advantage, has taken major steps towards fostering concrete alliances with other regional and international organizations and thus, creating a safe and secure trading and economic environment for the free movement of goods and services, investments, and private enterprises. Primarily, the Union for the Mediterranean complements the role and the responsibility of the European Union under the directorate of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP)³⁹, a concrete political and economic construct based on the values of free trade and Euro-Mediterranean cooperation. The partnership focuses on three main pillars: Secure and Free Trade, Sustainable Development and Economic Prosperity. From the fossil fuel crisis caused by the Russo-Ukrainian war to the current tension in Gaza and the Middle East, this partnership aims to promote infrastructural cohesion and facilitate customs services and tariffs. Additionally, the Union for the Mediterranean collaborates with the European Maritime Safety Agency⁴⁰

³⁷Port of Barcelona. "Air Quality | Port de Barcelona." *Port de Barcelona*, 10 Dec. 2025, www.portdebarcelona.cat/en/sustainability/environmental-sustainability/environmental-actions/air/air-quality

³⁸ Pourmohammad-Zia, Nadia, and van Koningsveld. "Climate-Resilient Ports and Waterborne Transport Systems: Current Status and Future Prospects." *ArXiv.org*, 2025, arxiv.org/abs/2508.19387

³⁹"Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the EU." 2026. EEAS. 2026. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/union-mediterranean-ufm-and-eu_en.

⁴⁰Communications. 2024. "Mission Statements." Europa.eu. 2024. <https://emsa.europa.eu/about/mission-statements.html>.

further expanding its international profile. Under this fruitful cooperation, the Union is partaking in multiple international forums with regional and international stakeholders such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO), to discuss regional issues from a more technical and policy making point of view⁴¹. Within these fora the European Commission is also present via the Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries. Project implementation and Maritime Governance are the key pillars of UfM's cooperation with the Commission and are facilitated via secure economic and trading dialogue through the WestMed initiative⁴², a regulatory framework which promotes trading and port policies. The technicality of this initiative has led to major economic growth to the region and the creation of three Technical Groups which are working with the Union for the Mediterranean on project management and the implementation of regional policies⁴³. Those include the establishment of regional forums with shipowners and port authorities, the modernization of technological means and dialogue with maritime institutions. Mediterranean trading policies are also established via the Regional Integrations in the Union for the Mediterranean Progress Report made by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Union for the Mediterranean in 2025⁴⁴. This report addresses trade, logistics, finance, and regional economic cooperation. Starting from 1972 to 2018 Exports of goods and services in relation to the world's gross domestic product (GDP) in the Mediterranean region have been significantly re-establishing trade as the engine of economic growth for the Union, now almost 35% of UfM's GDP comes from trade⁴⁵.

⁴¹ "Launch of the Study on Governance Models of Mediterranean Ports." 2025. Union for the Mediterranean - UfM. 2025. <https://ufmsecretariat.org/event/launch-study-governance-models-mediterranean-ports/>.

⁴² Communications. 2024. "Mission Statements." Europa.eu. 2024. <https://emsa.europa.eu/about/mission-statements.html>.

⁴³ "WestMED Maritime Clusters Alliance - WestMED." 2026. WestMED. January 16, 2026. <https://westmed-initiative.ec.europa.eu/westmed-maritime-clusters-alliance/>.

⁴⁴ "Regional Integration in the Union for the Mediterranean 2025 Progress Report." n.d. https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2025/09/regional-integration-in-the-union-for-the-mediterranean-2025_90fc8135/6422396e-en.pdf.

⁴⁵ "Trade: Regional Integration in the Union for the Mediterranean." OECD, 27 May 2021, www.oecd.org/en/publications/regional-integration-in-the-union-for-the-mediterranean_325884b3-en/full-report/component-6.html?utm_source

6.2.2 Regional States and national initiatives on international cooperation

The UfM acts as a mediator of international commerce routes and gains an overall steady increase of shares in exports to other countries. Morocco and Türkiye are the leading economies benefited by this cooperation, With Türkiye being the actor behind 0,34% of the gross exports behind the European Union and the Union for the Mediterranean⁴⁶. Additionally, Morocco⁴⁷ strongly supports the exchange of services notably finance, telecommunications, education and tourism⁴⁸. The last main pillar of UfM's international trading profile is energy, the Union promotes regional cooperation to national energy networks notably for liquified natural gas trade (LNG). Such a case is prominent between Greece, Cyprus and Israel with the creation of the The Eastern Mediterranean Interconnecting Pipeline (EastMed), an international project aiming to ensure direct interconnection between Eastern Mediterranean gas fields via Greece and Cyprus and through the Poseidon Pipeline, bolstering energy security for continental Europe due to the diversification of sources. Even though the Union for the Mediterranean is not actively contributing to the EastMed project, it promotes best practices via the TransLogMED initiative and the sustainability of trade, a goal established by the Blue Mediterranean Partnership Network⁴⁹. Another turning point of the UfM's energy profile is the "MEDUSA" project, a result of cooperation supported by the European Investment Bank⁵⁰. It refers to a high capacity optical-fiber submarine cable connecting Southern Europe to North Africa. With a total budget of 40 million euro, it aims to modernise critical information communications technology and advance the Union for the Mediterranean's technological profile. The last critical aspect is Public-to-Private cooperation. Government officials as well as private stakeholders come together under the UfM Workshop on Rules of Origin, organised by the Union for the Mediterranean with the support of the

⁴⁶ "Türkiye." 2026. OECD. 2026. <https://www.oecd.org/en/countries/turkiye.html>.

⁴⁷ OECD Investment Policy Reviews: Morocco 2024 (Abridged Version). 2024. OECD Investment Policy Reviews. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/bc0c1f25-en>.

⁴⁸ "South East Europe." 2026. OECD. 2026. <https://www.oecd.org/en/regions/south-east-europe.html>.

⁴⁹ UfM Secretariat. "TransLogMED." *Union for the Mediterranean - UfM*, 13 Feb. 2026, ufmsecretariat.org/project/translogmed-2/?utm_source

⁵⁰ Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations. "The EU and EIB Global Team-up to Upgrade Digital Connectivity to the Southern Neighbourhood." *Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood*, 24 Nov. 2022, enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/eu-and-eib-global-team-upgrade-digital-connectivity-southern-neighbourhood-2022-11-24_en

German Development Cooperation (GIZ)⁵¹ in order to address key issues of the region. These workshops are targeted to both Government officials as well as private sector representatives in the form of seminars and training.

6.2.3 The TransLog MED project

While large-scale energy interconnections like EastMed and MEDUSA address the region's long-term strategic autonomy, the daily operational efficiency of Euro-Mediterranean trade relies on the modernization of transport logistics. To bridge these practical gaps in the regional supply chain, the Union for the Mediterranean promotes targeted project implementations, most notably through the TransLogMED initiative. The TransLogMED project is a Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)-labelled initiative aimed at linking two continents by creating more efficient, sustainable, and environmentally friendly intermodal transport solutions in the Euro-Mediterranean region. The project was launched in 2017 to support the earlier LOGISMED-TA project. The five-year project targets the logistics industry to improve regional integration, professional performance, employment, and gender equality. The project team also offers certified training and seminar sessions directly on boats and ships moving between North and South Mediterranean destinations. The project focuses on intermodal transport solutions with the purpose of building robust transport chains, promoting door-to-door logistics services, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The project directly equips professionals with skills to identify transport chain challenges and promote innovative practices in their regional entrepreneurial environments⁵².

6.3 Addressing Economic and Trade Security in the Mediterranean Region

6.3.1 Post-Pandemic Logistics and Regional Free Trade Agreements

The trade and investment landscape in the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) has shifted in response to the COVID-19 crisis, from an emphasis on liberalized expansion to one of strategic resilience and health security. The region has historically been marked by an uneven balance

⁵¹ "UfM Workshops on Rules of Origin for Public and Private Trade Professionals in Morocco." Union for the Mediterranean - UfM. October 4, 2023. <https://ufmsecretariat.org/ufm-workshops-rules-of-origin-rabat/>.

⁵² Union for the Mediterranean, "TransLogMed: Navigating New Horizons and Connecting Continents," Union for the Mediterranean - UfM, August 28, 2025, <https://ufmsecretariat.org/human-story/translogmed/>.

in trade, where intra-regional "South-South" trade makes up only a mere 1% of total trade volume, while trade with the European Union dominates an impressive 90% of total trade in the region⁵³. In response, the UfM has embarked on an unprecedented period of strategic reflection, which has now culminated in the adoption of the Vision Statement 2025 at the 10th Regional Forum in Barcelona in November 2025, which aims to improve the operational capacity of the UfM against economic fallout and climate change⁵⁴.

The pandemic necessitated a total reevaluation of logistics across the Mediterranean basin, proving that health crises directly disrupt global trade and that supply chain security is inextricably linked to the physical and digital robustness of maritime infrastructure. Post-pandemic recovery is driven by both digital and green transformation, with this shift being characterized by the acceleration of digital administrative processes for enhanced transparency in investment approvals, through mechanisms such as the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), in order to fund reforms to effectively combat the aforementioned challenges.

Ultimately, to successfully engage with UfM trade and investment policies, a holistic approach that integrates health security, environmental responsibility, and digital innovation into a single, cohesive strategy is required. The need has arisen for the creation of a more centralized and uniformed framework for best practices in order to take advantage of the geographical and cultural closeness of the Union for the Mediterranean and in turn create a more cohesive economic ecosystem⁵⁵.

The analysis of regional Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) in the context of promoting trade security in the Southern Mediterranean region constitutes a strategic evolution in the UfM, integrating factors of economic liberalization with the imperatives of geopolitical stability.

⁵³ OECD. "Navigating beyond COVID-19 RECOVERY in the MENA REGION," July 2022. <https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Navigating-beyond-COVID-19.pdf>.

⁵⁴ Union for the Mediterranean, "10th UfM Regional Platform on Trade, Investment and Industry," Union for the Mediterranean - UfM, 2025, <https://ufmsecretariat.org/event/10th-ufm-regional-platform-on-trade-investment-and-industry/>.

⁵⁵ Union for the Mediterranean, "UfM Study Visit on International Trade and Investment Policy," Union for the Mediterranean - UfM, 2026, <https://ufmsecretariat.org/event/ufm-study-visit-international-trade-investment-policy-wto-unctad-itc/>.

This strategic evolution was initially characterized by the signing of Association Agreements between the European Union and Southern Mediterranean Countries with developing Economies such as Tunisia, Morocco and Lebanon. These agreements, which have created asymmetric free trade areas for manufactured goods, must now address current economic and security challenges such as non-tariff measures, environmental issues, and the relationship between economic issues and regional security.

An integral part of this regional trade architecture is the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area (EMFTA), a project that has been under construction since the Barcelona Declaration of 1995, targeting the creation of a free trade zone through Association Agreements. This is supplemented by horizontal FTAs among the Mediterranean partners, including the Agadir Agreement.

The evaluation of existing trade frameworks reveals that traditional FTAs, while successful in lowering import tariffs, are often insufficient for addressing modern trade security concerns. A major challenge lies in addressing Non-Tariff Measures (NTMs), which often create much higher trade barriers than tariffs in the form of complex import procedures, technical standards, and sanitary measures. These invisible trade barriers prevent the attainment of economic gains and limit the effectiveness of regional integration. To enhance trade security, stakeholders advocate for a comprehensive strategy that includes reducing NTMs, harmonizing regulations, and simplifying customs procedures across the Southern Neighbourhood. Furthermore, as trade becomes increasingly intertwined with national security and geopolitical interests, creating frameworks for security cooperation alongside economic agreements is essential for building the mutual trust and regional stability required for sustainable trade relations⁵⁶.

Looking towards the future, the modernization and adaptation of existing agreements are paramount for fostering resilient and sustainable economies. Additionally, a sectoral approach could facilitate quicker progress in critical areas like energy cooperation or access

⁵⁶ Union for the Mediterranean Secretariat, "Joint Statement of the 11th Union for the Mediterranean Trade Ministers Conference," November 10, 2020, <https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/UFM-Trade-FINAL-Joint-Statement.pdf>.

to critical minerals, where ad hoc agreements are already beginning to take shape. In addition to this, the implementation of the Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument also seeks to facilitate regional integration through financial cooperation and the development of trans-regional mechanisms, despite the low levels of regional integration observed. By establishing a unified strategy that responds effectively to regional dynamics, the UfM and its member states can create a more conducive environment for investment and cooperation. However, it is ultimately upon these regional free trade agreements to successfully navigate these complex economic relationships and utilize the unique advantages that each Mediterranean partner has to offer in promoting stability and economic strength.

6.3.2 Blue Economy: Institutionalizing Ecological Finance and Green Energy transitions

The re-evaluation of the Blue Mediterranean Partnership (BMP) inextricably links ecological preservation to financial stability. Such an initiative is a significant response to the above-mentioned stress factors and is directed towards institutionalizing innovative blue finance as a solution for energy transition and maritime supply chain security in the region. A significant part of the above-mentioned strategy is the alignment of investment practices with the United Nations SDG 14, with a focus on the preservation of marine ecosystems and sustainable use of the oceans in a socially inclusive manner for youth and women⁵⁷.

An important component of BMP is the development of strong financial instruments that are capable of mobilizing large-scale investments in the blue economies of the Mediterranean. To mobilize the massive investments required for ecological transformation, the partnership utilizes a multi-donor fund facilitated by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). This mechanism leverages additional finance from the European Commission via the Neighbourhood Investment Platform and European Fund for Sustainable

⁵⁷ Union for the Mediterranean, “Towards a Sustainable Blue Economy in the Mediterranean Region 2024 Edition,” October 31, 2024, <https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/UfM-SBE-report-2024-English-version-fin.pdf>.

Development + (EFSD+), targeting project implementation in beneficiary countries such as Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco.⁵⁸

The Blue Mediterranean Partnership framework also focuses on the maritime sector in regards with regional energy transitions, even more so as the Southern Mediterranean Countries attempt to use green hydrogen as a primary alternative source of fuel. Morocco has already started a strategic roadmap to ensure a significant share of the world hydrogen market by 2030, while Egypt has already announced its intention to develop a new portfolio of diversified energy sources in the production of hydrogen, as announced after the COP 27 conference⁵⁹. Nevertheless, the regional development of marine renewable energy, including offshore wind and marine renewable energy, has faced a slower pace in the Mediterranean region due to regional conditions and infrastructure limitations, making it essential to put a new emphasis on the national strategies and policy frameworks in the region.

In addition to energy, the maritime supply chain is being modernized with a focus on sustainability and technological innovation to ensure it can withstand geopolitical fluctuations. Transitioning to circular economic practices is essential for mitigating the high material intensity of maritime activities, which includes developing sustainable manufacturing processes and utilizing novel materials for marine infrastructure. The partnership supports the adoption of smart digital technologies for improving operational efficiency and for increasing resistance to environmental challenges.

The reevaluation of the Blue Mediterranean Partnership framework has yielded strategic recommendations that highlight the need of managing the growth of the blue economy, which is expected to grow by 3% annually until 2050. This management should be achieved through the enhancement of institutional capabilities and the development of more sophisticated performance indicators. Towards that end the Mediterranean Sustainable Development Strategy for 2026-2035 aims to institutionalize green finance principles and the

⁵⁸ Union for the Mediterranean, “Investing in a Sustainable Blue Economy in the Mediterranean,” Union for the Mediterranean - UfM, June 22, 2022, <https://ufmsecretariat.org/ufm-blue-finance-conference/>.

⁵⁹ International Association of Oil & Gas Producers, “The Mediterranean: An Energy and Decarbonization Opportunity for Europe,” October 2025, <https://iogpeurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/The-Mediterranean-an-energy-and-decarbonization-opportunity-for-Europe-UPDATED.pdf>.

creation of accountability mechanisms, thus ensuring the development of national policies aligned with the Unions Agenda. A key factor of this procedure is the Blue Growth Book, a project aimed at arming key stakeholders with the knowledge required for said growth⁶⁰.

6.4 Key Stakeholders

The European Union

Among the most important and reliable strategic partners of the Union for the Mediterranean is the European Union. More specifically with a big percentage of the Southern Members of the European Union also being coastal states and member states of the Union for the Mediterranean, the European Union has an important role within the UfM's Agenda formation. The EU holds also the role of a key funding⁶¹ source for UfM's initiatives and projects such as the Urban Projects Finance Initiative – Economic Resilience Initiative (UPFI-ERI) funded mostly by the European Investment Bank.

Greece

Greece due to its strategic position at the crossroads between Europe, Asia and Northern Africa has had a great impact on global profile as a global harbour and a historical centre of commerce in the Mediterranean sea. Through foreign investment the Port of Piraeus has become one of the most important trade hubs in the Mediterranean, thus strengthening the position of Greece in the global trade map. As the fourth largest port of Europe, Piraeus is playing a key role as a mediator between the European markets and the Chinese industrial epicenter, thus, establishing a new “Silk Road”⁶².

⁶⁰ Union for the Mediterranean, “Towards a Sustainable Blue Economy in the Mediterranean Region 2024 Edition,” October 31, 2024, <https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/UfM-SBE-report-2024-English-version-fin.pdf>.

⁶¹ European Union External Action. “Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the EU | EEAS.” www.eeas.europa.eu, 7 Mar. 2023, www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/union-mediterranean-ufm-and-eu_en

⁶² Marinakis, Theo. 2025. “Greece China Economic Partnership through Belt Road Initiative Creates Strategic Mediterranean Gateway for Asian Trade.” *Buying & Selling Homes in Greece*. May 21, 2025. <https://sellingandbuyingahome.com/2025/05/21/greece-china-economic-relations-belt-and-road-initiative-impact/#strategic-partnership>.

This is evident as the Chinese state-owned giant COSCO⁶³, since 2008 is operating two out of three terminals of the port. Additionally, in 2016, it acquired a majority stake in the Piraeus Port Authority for €1.5 billion, pledging a further €550 million in investments to modernize the port and transform it into a logistics hub for Europe.⁶⁴

Egypt

As one of the main geostrategic corridors of international trade and interconnectivity, the Suez Canal is a key player in the Union's approach to external and economic choices. A trading passage which since its creation has been heavily influential for the global economic sphere.

The Union for the Mediterranean's approach on the Suez Canal and Egypt in general is already set by the TransLog framework as it was nationalized in 1956. The framework focuses on the security of trade, as the region is heavily affected by political turmoil, it indulges into sustainability and environmental aspects of trade. In addition, the Suez Canal administration in collaboration with the Egyptian government have agreed to set regional greener policies and notably with new systems commissioned by Antipollution Egypt, a subsidiary of the Greek group V Group. The project includes waste reception infrastructure where ships can dispose of waste legally and safely. The new service is in line with the International Maritime Organization and the MARPOL convention.

7. Conclusion

The ambition to develop the Mediterranean into a global hub is not merely a matter of global expansion, but a pressing necessity for regional stability and growth. In order to achieve this vision, there are three main interconnected sectors that shall be addressed during this year's meeting; maritime connectivity and trade, infrastructure and urban development, and economic and trade security.

⁶³ Bali, Kaki. 2022. "In Greece's Largest Port of Piraeus, China Is the Boss." Dw.com. Deutsche Welle. October 30, 2022. <https://www.dw.com/en/greece-in-the-port-of-piraeus-china-is-the-boss/a-63581221>.

⁶⁴ Mylonaki, Johanna. 2025. "China in Greece: The Story of Piraeus and beyond – Chinaobservers." Chinaobservers. November 26, 2025. <https://chinaobservers.eu/china-in-greece-the-story-of-piraeus-and-beyond/>.

It is worth mentioning that the transition of the Mediterranean into a corridor of global trade requires moving beyond traditional shipping methods through integrated and multimodal systems. However, this potential success is dependent on technical modernization, such as the digitalization of ports and the implementation of related projects such as the aforementioned TransLogMED. Additionally, in the case of infrastructure development, the infrastructure gap between Northern and Southern Mediterranean countries remains a significant hurdle. Bridging this gap calls for innovative financing through multiple initiatives like PPPs and UPFI-ERI. Accompanied by the initiatives proposed in the 2040 Urban Development Action Plan, the UfM provides a comprehensive roadmap to harmonize port-city connections and tackle speculative housing investments that stifle regional labor mobility. Moreover, in a post-pandemic world marked with numerous geopolitical shifts, security is defined, but not limited to, supply chain resilience and energy diversification. Building economic resilience relies heavily on the modernization of Regional FTAs and the crucial reduction of NTMs. In the light of all this, cooperative initiatives like the Trans- Mediterranean Transport Network and the shift of focus on blue finance demonstrate the importance of economic and trade security in the region.

In this context, the Union for the Mediterranean serves as the vital platform to address such complex challenges, respecting the principles of international dialogue and multilateral cooperation. The success of this committee lies in the Minister's ability to look beyond national interests and actively engage in fruitful and productive dialogue, in order to propose policies that will transform the region into a resilient, prosperous and interconnected global hub.

8. Points to be Addressed

1. How can the UfM member states better align their national policies with international standards, in order to effectively participate in the construction and function of a modern Trans-Mediterranean Transport Network?

2. What intra-UfM frameworks are needed to foster cheaper and more cohesive trade (free trade agreements, cohesive port administration)?
3. How can the Port-City connection be enhanced with the goal of preventing traffic and fostering climate resilience?
4. How can the UfM Member states boost trade between North and South and enhance South-South cooperation?
5. What guidelines or best practices should the UfM adopt in order to ensure that port expansion projects actively contribute to the sustainable urban development and quality of life of their host coastal cities, rather than causing urban congestion and environmental degradation?
6. What mechanisms can the UfM establish to accelerate port digitization without leaving technologically developing member states behind?
7. How can the Union for the Mediterranean foster better economic policies through the creation of new partnerships?
8. How can the UfM modernize its maritime logistics and implement economic practices to ensure supply chain resilience against future global shocks?

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