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

Rhodes MRC 2026 High-School Edition

Study Guide

for

the Union for the Mediterranean

**Topic Area: "Connecting the Mediterranean: Enhancing Transport, Regional Development,
and Sustainable Infrastructure"**

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1. Welcoming Letter

Dear Ministers,

It is our honor to welcome you to the Union for the Mediterranean at Rhodes MRC HSED 2026. As members of the Board, we are more than excited to guide you through this year's topic: *Connecting the Mediterranean: Enhancing Transport, Regional Development, and Sustainable Infrastructure*.

As Ministers, your role is to explore, discuss, and propose strategies to enhance cooperation and efficiency in the Mediterranean. Understanding your country's policy, interests, and initiatives is of vital importance for your contribution to the discussion. During the conference, you will engage in debates, present your ideas, and most importantly, collaborate in order to reach useful solutions. Therefore, we urge you to thoroughly read the Study Guide as well as the Rules of Procedure in order for you to be as prepared as possible. Additionally, we encourage you to conduct your own thorough research, both on the topic and on your country's policy.

Above all, we hope that your experience at Rhodes MRC will be an unforgettable one. An experience where you will not only gain knowledge, but also meet amazing people, form strong friendships, and create memories that will last forever. Lastly, we would like to remind you that as members of the board, we are here to assist you and guide you through every step of your experience, including your preparation for the conference, so do not hesitate to contact us!

We are looking forward to meeting you, and we hope that we can make this experience an unforgettable one.

Best Regards,

Vasiliki Antimachiti, Co-President - European Union

Dimitrios Papadimitriou-Varoumas, Co-President - Jordan

2. Introduction to the Committee

The Union for the Mediterranean is an intergovernmental institution that consists of 43 member states (Syria's status as a member state has been suspended due to the civil war) and Libya (under observer status). The roots of the institution date back to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EuroMed), also known as the Barcelona process, founded in 1995, with the purpose of achieving stability and development in the Mediterranean through political, economic, and social cooperation.



To upgrade this partnership, the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean in 2008 established the UfM formally. The UfM incorporated and expanded the objectives of the Barcelona Declaration (1995), aiming to create an area of peace, stability, security, and shared economic prosperity, with full respect for democratic principles, human rights, and fundamental freedoms, as well as promoting understanding between cultures in the Euro-Mediterranean region.¹

The action of the UfM extends across six sectors: Economic Development & Employment, Energy & Climate Action, Water, Environment & Blue Economy, Higher Education & Research, Social & Civil Affairs, Transport & Urban Development.²

Furthermore, the UfM Secretariat was created in Barcelona in 2010 and is responsible for identifying, developing, promoting, and coordinating technical projects in areas such as energy, water, environmental protection, research, empowerment of women, and business development. The EU, the European Investment Bank, and other international and regional stakeholders have undertaken the financing of the UfM's actions.

¹ 'What We Do', *Union for the Mediterranean - UfM* (blog), <https://ufmsecretariat.org/what-we-do/>.

² Jessica Dacey, 'Divisions Could Hamper New Cooperation Drive', *SWI Swissinfo.Ch* (blog), 14 July 2008, <https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/life-aging/divisions-could-hamper-new-cooperation-drive/6799816>.

Since 2012, it has been decided that the Presidency of the Union for the Mediterranean should be dual and exercised by the European Union and Jordan. The Co-Presidency constitutes the political arm of the UfM.³

3. Introduction to the Topic Area

The Mediterranean is more than a sea. It is a bridge between continents, linking Europe, Africa, and Asia. For thousands of years, it has served as one of humanity's great transit corridors, carrying goods, raw materials, and people across its waters. Few waterways have shaped civilizations, economies, and political alliances quite like it, and its influence has always extended far beyond its own shores.

That role has only grown more demanding. Today, the appetite for goods and raw materials is greater than ever, and the infrastructure supporting Mediterranean trade is straining to keep up. A modernized, forward-looking transport strategy is no longer optional. It is overdue.⁴

Part of that strategy must involve moving beyond an exclusive reliance on shipping. Rail connections and advanced ground-based transport could sit alongside maritime routes, adding capacity, improving resilience, and opening new economic corridors for communities, particularly landlocked and peripheral ones, that the current system largely bypasses.⁵

The most pressing problem, however, is one of fairness. There is a stark gap in transport infrastructure between the northern and southern shores of the basin, and that gap is holding back development on both sides. Compounding this are real security vulnerabilities and the environmental toll of outdated, polluting systems concentrated in the region's less wealthy nations.⁶

The stakes are high. The Mediterranean remains the backbone of trade between some of the world's most dynamic regions, and that position carries responsibility. Bridging this divide,

³ 'History', *Union for the Mediterranean - UfM* (blog), <https://ufmsecretariat.org/who-we-are/history/>.

⁴ OECD. Regional integration in the union for the mediterranean 2025 | OECD. Accessed May 19, 2026. https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/2025/09/regional-integration-in-the-union-for-the-mediterranean-2025_90fc8135.html.

⁵ Bibri, Simon Elias, and John Krogstie. "The Emerging Data-Driven Smart City and Its Innovative Applied Solutions for Sustainability: The Cases of London and Barcelona - Energy Informatics." SpringerLink, June 26, 2020. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s42162-020-00108-6>.

⁶ Tu, Wenwen et al. "Inequality in Infrastructure Access and Its Association with Health Disparities." *Nature Human Behaviour* (2025). <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41562-025-02208-3>

with urgency, solidarity, and a genuine long-term vision, is not just a regional priority. It is a global one.⁷

4. Key-words and Definitions

Sustainable Infrastructure

Infrastructure that has been designed in ways that minimize environmental impact, that delivers long-term economic, social, and environmental (ESE) benefits.⁸

Urban Mobility

The movement of people within urban areas through public transport, private vehicles, cycling, walking, and emerging smart mobility systems.⁹

Intelligent Transport Systems

A technology that aims to provide services relating to different modes of transport and traffic management and enable users to be better informed and make safer, more coordinated, and "smarter" use of transport networks.¹⁰

Core-Periphery Model

A model describing the unequal distribution of economic development and accessibility, where "core" regions benefit from greater infrastructure and investment compared to less-developed "peripheral" regions.¹¹

⁷ UfM. "UFM Ministers Endorse a New Regional Transport Action Plan to Boost Connectivity in the Euro-Mediterranean Region." UfM, February 10, 2023. <https://ufmsecretariat.org/2nd-ministerial-conference-transport-2023/>.

⁸ The World Bank, "Sustainable Infrastructure," Global Infrastructure Hub, n.d., <https://www.gihub.org/sustainable-infrastructure/>.

⁹ "Urban Transport," Mobility and Transport, March 18, 2026, https://transport.ec.europa.eu/transport-themes/urban-transport_en?prefLang=el.

¹⁰ Adnan Mahmood et al., "Trust on Wheels: Towards Secure and Resource Efficient IoV Networks," *Computing* 104, no. 6 (January 30, 2022): 1337–58, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00607-021-01040-7>.

¹¹ Magdalena Klimczuk-Kochańska and Andrzej Klimczuk, "Core-Periphery Model," in *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Global Security Studies* (Palgrave, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-74336-3>.

Multimodal Transport

The integration of multiple forms of transportation, such as rail, road, maritime, and air transport, into a unified logistics or mobility system.¹²

Green Transition

The economy-wide shift away from activities with high environmental impacts and natural resource dependence, toward practices that respect planetary boundaries and promote long-term sustainability, resilience, and societal well-being globally.¹³

5. Legal Framework

The Paris Agreement, under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

The Paris Agreement, adopted in 2015 under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, is one of the most important global legal documents, concerning not just the environment but also transportation, infrastructure, and development. The Paris Agreement, which 195 parties adopted, legally obliges member states to hold “the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels” and pursue efforts “to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.” Through these commitments, the Paris Agreement encourages all UN member states to invest in cleaner urban mobility, low-emission rail systems, and sustainable maritime transport, making the green transition an essential dimension of regional connectivity.¹⁴

The Transports Internationaux Routiers Convention

The "TIR" Transports Internationaux Routiers Convention, adopted in 1975 under the framework of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, in 1975 is equally important for promoting connectivity in the Mediterranean region. The TIR Convention was

¹² “Logistics and Multimodal Transport,” Mobility and Transport, November 7, 2023, https://transport.ec.europa.eu/transport-themes/logistics-and-multimodal-transport_en?utm.

¹³ *Environment at a Glance Indicators, Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development eBooks*, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1787/ac4b8b89-en>.

¹⁴ United Nations. “Paris Agreement.” 12 December 2015.

established as a means of simplifying the customs process and facilitating the movement of goods across the borders of different nations. As a result, the TIR Convention allows for improved shipping flows and trade between countries within the Mediterranean Area, as it contributes to smoother circulation and improved commercial exchanges. As such, it demonstrates that improving connectivity requires investment in physical infrastructure and substantial improvement of the legal and procedural interoperability between neighboring countries, especially in the Mediterranean region.¹⁵

The European Green Deal

Complementing this framework is the European Green Deal, adopted by the European Union in 2019, together with its Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy. These initiatives aim to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 through the decarbonisation and digitalisation of transport systems. Particular emphasis is placed on expanding rail connectivity, promoting intelligent urban mobility, reducing road congestion, and encouraging the use of cleaner fuels in maritime and road transport. Consequently, the European Green Deal has redefined transport policy not merely as a matter of mobility, but as a key instrument for sustainable growth and environmental resilience, elements that are increasingly central to Mediterranean infrastructure discussions.¹⁶

The Barcelona Declaration

At a Mediterranean level, the Barcelona Declaration, adopted in 1995 within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, laid the political foundation for closer cooperation between European and Southern Mediterranean states. Among its broader objectives of shared prosperity and regional stability, the Declaration recognized economic cooperation and infrastructural integration as crucial tools for reducing development disparities across the region. It therefore introduced the principle that transport links and commercial accessibility are fundamental for deeper Mediterranean interdependence.¹⁷

¹⁵ "TIR," [www.iru.org](https://www.iru.org/what-we-do/facilitating-trade-and-transit/tir), n.d., <https://www.iru.org/what-we-do/facilitating-trade-and-transit/tir>.

¹⁶ "The European Green Deal," European Commission, n.d., https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en.

¹⁷ European Union, "Barcelona Declaration and Euro-Mediterranean partnership," n.d., <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/barcelona-declaration-and-euro-mediterranean-partnership.html>.

The Joint Declaration of the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean

Building upon this initiative, the Joint Declaration of the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean, adopted in 2008, formally established the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) as the main platform for Euro-Mediterranean regional cooperation. Unlike previous dialogue-oriented frameworks, the UfM placed stronger emphasis on practical, sector-based projects, with transport, logistics, and infrastructure modernization emerging as concrete areas of common action. This institutional shift was particularly important, as it acknowledged that fragmented infrastructure and weak interregional links remain among the primary obstacles to balanced Mediterranean development.¹⁸

6. Main discussion of the Topic

6.1. Connectivity Challenges and Infrastructure Imbalances in the Mediterranean



One of the most persistent barriers to regional integration lies in the region's uneven capacity to sustain meaningful cross-border connectivity. The Mediterranean, which links Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East, remains marked by several socio-economic, political, institutional, and infrastructural

divisions that result in regional inequality and uneven development.

A primary obstacle is the economic disparity among the northern, the southern and eastern Mediterranean: while countries in the North Mediterranean live in affluence, countries in the south and east are often characterized by high levels of poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy.¹⁹ These disparities are further intensified by demographic divergence: the southern

¹⁸ Union for The Mediterranean, "Joint Declaration of the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean," Union for the Mediterranean - UfM, February 7, 2013, <https://ufmsecretariat.org/joint-declaration-of-the-paris-summit-for-the-mediterranean/>.

¹⁹ Katia Adamo and Paolo Garonna, "Euro-Mediterranean Integration and Cooperation: Prospects and Challenges," UNECE(UNECE Annual Report Economic Essays, January 2009), https://unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/oes/nutshell/2009/9_EuroMediterranean.pdf.

Mediterranean is experiencing rapid population growth and increasing urban concentration, while many northern states are experiencing low birth rates.²⁰ This creates imbalances, making it difficult to design shared regional infrastructure strategies for all UfM states. At the same time, connectivity in the UfM follows a "core-periphery" model where central European urban centers enjoy high accessibility, while peripheral regions, especially in the Balkans and the South Mediterranean, suffer from low accessibility, which means higher travel times.²¹ Cross-border integration is also limited by the Mediterranean's broader political and security environment: wars, political instability, terrorism, and organized crime are just some of the issues that act as obstacles to connectivity and integration, as they frequently paralyze international dialogues and partnerships, especially in regions such as the Middle East.²²

In addition, the Mediterranean suffers from limited physical interconnections between national systems. In many cases, existing infrastructure was developed according to domestic priorities rather than regional planning, resulting in disconnected corridors, weak logistics chains, and underdeveloped inland connections, especially in Southern and Eastern Mediterranean states. This means that transport networks that were designed over 50 years ago and were based on national self-sufficiency nowadays make connectivity between states difficult. As a result, even though physical infrastructure exists, it is often not fully functional, especially on a regional level.²³

Beyond infrastructure, connectivity is also limited by the limited effectiveness of regional cooperation. While the Union for the Mediterranean provides an important platform for dialogue and cooperation, implementation is often difficult due to different transport standards and administrative capacity among member states. As a result, many regional transport initiatives are never implemented, or they have significant delays. Strengthening UfM frameworks and enhancing coordination is a significant step in order to improve the region's capacity to translate political commitments into operational transport integration.

²⁰ Poudineh, Rahmatallah, and Alessandro Rubino. "Business Model for Cross-border Interconnections in the Mediterranean Basin," June 1, 2016. <https://doi.org/10.26889/9781784670597>.

²¹ Rui Alexandre Castanho et al., "Accessibility and Connectivity – Movement Between Cities, as a Critical Factor to Achieve Success on Cross-border Cooperation (CBC) Projects. A European Analysis," *Sustainable Cities and Society* 32 (April 3, 2017): 181–90, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scs.2017.03.026>.

²² Adamo and Garonna, "Euro-Mediterranean Integration and Cooperation: Prospects and Challenges."

²³ Poudineh and Rubino, "Business Model for Cross-Border Interconnections in the Mediterranean Basin."

6.2 Safety, Sustainability, and the Green Transition

6.2.1 Urban Mobility and Smart Transport Systems

The Mediterranean is defined by its deep historical roots, featuring exceptionally preserved cities that date back to antiquity and the Middle Ages. This creates a complex urban planning challenge: optimizing modern urban mobility requires innovative solutions that maintain the city's functionality without compromising its protected historical character.

A notable example is the Thessaloniki Metro; the project's six-year delay highlights that for heritage-dense cities, large-scale engineering is rarely a linear process. The long lead times create significant "opportunity costs," as a city remains trapped in a state of stagnant congestion while awaiting the delayed completion of a high-cost asset.²⁴



Therefore, the Mediterranean faces a significant infrastructure paradox. Much of its road network was originally designed for far lower levels of traffic and is now ill-suited to modern transport demands. However, expanding road capacity is often not feasible, as doing so would require the demolition or alteration of historic buildings that are central to the region's cultural heritage. As car ownership continues to grow, demand increasingly exceeds the fixed capacity of these streets, resulting in persistent and unsustainable congestion. A structural barrier for developing member-states is the high cost associated with baseline data collection. Because data-driven insights are the essential prerequisite for all traffic optimization, the lack

²⁴ Qiuping Wang and Hao Sun, "Traffic Structure Optimization in Historic Districts Based on Green Transportation and Sustainable Development Concept," Wiley Online Library, January 27, 2019, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1155/2019/9196263>.

of funding for initial monitoring creates a “planning paralysis.” Without the financial means to establish this foundational knowledge, cities are unable to take the critical first steps toward diagnosing their traffic inefficiencies and implementing targeted solutions.²⁵

Ultimately, Mediterranean cities must move beyond the constraints of traditional “hard” infrastructure by adopting data-driven, scalable digital solutions. These interventions can support incremental urban modernization while preserving the irreplaceable cultural heritage that defines the region.^{26 27}

6.2.2 Road Networks and Road Safety

The Eastern Mediterranean Region records around 125,000 road deaths every year, with more than a third of victims being pedestrians and cyclists. The region carries the second-highest road traffic death rate in the world, accounting for 11% of all global road fatalities.²⁸

The Union for the Mediterranean was established on the principle that shared challenges require regional cooperation. Therefore, its transport agenda seeks to promote the gradual development of an integrated, efficient, and resilient transport network across the Euro-Mediterranean region, with road safety as a key priority. However, disparities in infrastructure quality, enforcement capacity, and emergency response systems between many southern and eastern Mediterranean countries and their European counterparts continue to contribute to significant differences in road safety outcomes.²⁹

The UfM has recognized that road fatalities remain a shared challenge across the region, requiring greater coordination and collaboration among member states. A 2024 agreement between the Union and the International Road Federation committed both parties to exchanging data, coordinating activities, and implementing joint initiatives focused on road safety, decarbonization, and digitalization. While progress is being made, institutional

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Simon Elias Bibri and John Krogstie, “The Emerging Data-Driven Smart City and Its Innovative Applied Solutions for Sustainability: The Cases of London and Barcelona - Energy.

²⁸ Rahul Goel, “Effectiveness of Road Safety Interventions: An Evidence and Gap Map - Goel - 2024 - Campbell Systematic Reviews - Wiley Online Library,” ed. Geetam Tiwari et al., Wiley Online Library, January 3, 2024, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/cl2.1367>.

²⁹ Ibid

cooperation can only deliver meaningful results when it is translated into action on the ground, improving conditions for roads, drivers, and communities across member states.³⁰

6.2.3 Rail Connectivity and the Need for Modernization

The Union for the Mediterranean faces a rail integration crisis at the heart of its broader transport fragmentation. While urban congestion and road safety disparities remain pressing concerns, the failure to build a coherent regional rail network most severely undermines the UfM's connectivity ambitions. Mediterranean rail systems continue operating as isolated national units, separated by incompatible track gauges, divergent signaling protocols, and misaligned regulatory frameworks. These technical barriers make seamless cross-border passenger and freight movement practically impossible, systematically redirecting cargo toward road alternatives despite



European interoperability having been a stated policy goal since the early 1990s.³¹

The consequences extend beyond logistics. UfM countries currently account for 13.4% of global transport emissions, a figure 40% higher than in 1990, with regulatory fragmentation and difficulties mobilizing capital constraining the shift toward more sustainable multimodal infrastructure.³²

The problem however appears more rather than technical. Railway data across the region is stored in isolated, incompatible databases, creating knowledge gaps, inconsistent definitions, and accessibility barriers that impede evidence-based policymaking. Meanwhile, signaling

³⁰ International Road Foundation and Union For the Mediterranean, "IRF and UFM Join Forces to Advance Sustainable Road Transport across the Euro-Mediterranean Region," International Road Federation, October 14, 2024

³¹ Bontekoning, Y.M, C Macharis, and J.J Trip. 2004. "Is a New Applied Transportation Research Field Emerging?—a Review of Intermodal Rail–Truck Freight Transport Literature." *Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice* 38 (1): 1–34. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tra.2003.06.001>.

³² Josep Vicent Boira and Matteo Berzi. 2023. "Liberalization, Trans-European Corridors and EU Funds: A New Scenario in the Relationship between Rail Networks and Mediterranean Cities." *Land* 12 (11): 1986–86. <https://doi.org/10.3390/land12111986>.

deployment timelines diverge dramatically between member states, creating technical interoperability gaps that affect documentation, terminal capacity, and operational procedures across corridors.³³

Until the UfM establishes enforceable interoperability agreements and jointly administered funding mechanisms, the Mediterranean rail network will remain a fragmented collection of national systems rather than the unified corridor the region urgently needs.³⁴

6.3 Past Actions and Current Developments

A major recent development within the UfM has been the endorsement of the UfM Regional Transport Action Plan (RTAP) 2021-2027 in 2023, which came to succeed the previous 2014–2020 framework.³⁵ The RTAP sets out 28 specific actions to achieve sustainable, smart, and inclusive mobility, focusing on road safety and the modernization of rail systems. At the same time, the UfM is actively working on the Trans-Mediterranean Transport Network (TMN-T), aiming to create a map of major strategic corridors that connect the Mediterranean region through ports, roads, and railways, an initiative that can promote future infrastructure investment.³⁶

In the maritime sector, the Motorways of the Sea, a project designed to optimize and strengthen the trade connections among the ports of the Mediterranean area by means of



improvements to the commercial connections of public and private operators in the maritime transport and logistics sector from the countries of the north-western Mediterranean shores (Spain, France and Italy) and the south-eastern Mediterranean

shores (Lebanon, Egypt and Cyprus).³⁷ This has been accompanied by increased attention to smart port modernization, digital customs procedures, and safety harmonization, supported

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Josep Vicent Boira and Matteo Berzi. 2023. "Liberalization, Trans-European Corridors and EU Funds: A New Scenario in the Relationship between Rail Networks and Mediterranean Cities." *Land* 12 (11): 1986–86. <https://doi.org/10.3390/land12111986>.

³⁵ Union for the Mediterranean. "REGIONAL TRANSPORT ACTION PLAN FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION 2021-2027." *Ufmsecretariat*, February 9, 2023. https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/RTAP-2021-2027_final_EN.pdf.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

by bodies such as the European Maritime Safety Agency and the Mediterranean Memorandum of Understanding. One notable example is the rapid expansion of the Tanger Med port complex in Morocco, which showcases the potential of end-to-end digitalization, using AI, blockchain, and drones to drastically reduce container dwell times.³⁸

Beyond projects that promote physical infrastructure development, the UfM has also made efforts to improve professional performance and administrative capacity through initiatives such as TransLogMED. The TransLogMED project, which was established in 2018, provides training for over 1.000 transport and logistics professionals across seven Mediterranean countries, aiming to address operational inefficiencies that often affect regional integration.³⁹

6.4 Key Stakeholders

The issue of transport connectivity in the Mediterranean concerns a great number of actors at a regional, international, and domestic level. Given the geographic and strategic significance of the Mediterranean Basin as an international hub for trade and transportation of energy sources, migration routes, and regional economic cooperation, many states, organisations, and private actors have an interest in the development and implementation of transportation-related policies and infrastructure projects.

Among these influential parties are the Northern Mediterranean countries, particularly EU Member States such as France, Italy, Spain, and Greece. Due to the fact that Northern-Mediterranean countries currently have advanced transportation infrastructure, well-developed commercial port systems, and greater economic means, they play a major role in the overall development and implementation of regional connectivity initiatives. At the same time, they are among the strongest supporters of the promotion of sustainable mobility, the decarbonization of transportation systems, and the implementation of green-transition policies.⁴⁰

³⁸ Mahmoud Arbouch, "Securing the Future of Global Trade in the Mediterranean Basin: A Cooperative Policy Framework for Tanger Med and Algeiras Ports : EuroMeSCo – Euro-Mediterranean Research, Dialogue, Advocacy," December 2025, <https://www.euromesco.net/publication/securing-the-future-of-global-trade-in-the-mediterranean-basin-a-cooperative-policy-framework-for-tanger-med-and-algeiras-ports/>.

³⁹ Union for the Mediterranean, "TransLogMED - Union for the Mediterranean - UfM," Union for the Mediterranean - UfM, February 13, 2026, <https://ufmsecretariat.org/project/translogmed-2/>.

⁴⁰ Union for the Mediterranean, "The Union for the Mediterranean and the European Investment Bank Partner for Trainings in Mediterranean Universities," Union for the Mediterranean - UfM, April 14, 2023, <https://ufmsecretariat.org/ufm-eib-trainings-mediterranean-universities/>.crossroads

Equally important to the issue of sustainability in transportation and infrastructure development within the Mediterranean Region are the countries located in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean, which consist mainly of Morocco, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Jordan, and Türkiye. These states are directly affected by infrastructure inequalities, rapid urbanisation, and ultimately limited transport interconnectivity. At the same time, they occupy strategically important geographic positions that connect Europe with Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, making them essential actors in regional transport and trade networks.⁴¹

When it comes to international organizations, the Union for the Mediterranean is the main platform for dialogue and coordination in the region, while the European Union remains a key actor, with its financial support, regulatory initiatives, and strategies to promote sustainable development in transport. Likewise, organizations, such as the World Bank, the European Investment Bank, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, provide funding for infrastructure projects, develop investment frameworks for various types of investments, and offer technical assistance for project development.⁴²

Moreover, the private sector has a significant impact on the transport and infrastructure sector: various actors such as shipping companies, logistics providers, railway operators, construction and technology companies contribute to the development of transport corridors and smart mobility systems and to improvements in port infrastructure throughout the Mediterranean. As a result, a growing number of public-private partnerships have emerged within the region as a means to work together to implement digitalisation initiatives, employ green technologies, and develop large-scale infrastructure projects.

Lastly, civil society organizations, local communities, environmental organizations, and academic institutions are also significant stakeholders in this issue. Due to the impact of transport development on social and environmental issues, many of these actors advocate for sustainable urban design, the protection of the environment, road safety, and equal access to infrastructure projects among Mediterranean populations.⁴³

⁴¹ ibid

⁴² ibid

⁴³ ibid

7. Conclusion

Historically, the Mediterranean has served as a junction between the three continents of Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. From ancient years until now, the Mediterranean region has connected cultures, allowed trade, and served as a crossroads between continents. Today, the development of infrastructure and transport connectivity in the Mediterranean region is necessary in order to achieve an economic and cooperative future for the region. As examined, the Mediterranean faces several significant challenges, with existing or rising issues such as unequal infrastructure development, the fragmentation of transport networks, political instability, and environmental pressures. These factors limit regional integration and hinder the creation of efficient and accessible transport systems across the Mediterranean.

At the same time, due to the increasing urgency of climate change and the need for sustainable development, the Mediterranean and European transportation policy has been transformed into a broader issue of environmental resilience, technological advancement, and social cohesion. Moving toward a smart mobility system, modern high-speed rail, more secure road infrastructure, and low-emission sea transport are now all dependent on a coordinated effort by Mediterranean Countries. The UfM Regional Transport Action Plan, Trans-Mediterranean Transport Network, and sustainable mobility strategies are all examples of Mediterranean countries' desire for greater interconnectivity and environmental sustainability; however, more effective implementation and investment mechanisms are still to be established.

8. Points to be Addressed

1. How can the UfM address the infrastructure gap between Northern Mediterranean states and Southern/Eastern Mediterranean states?
2. What investments and regulatory reforms are needed to create a more integrated Trans-Mediterranean rail network?
3. How can transport systems contribute to climate goals while supporting economic growth and regional development?

4. How can Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) and smart mobility solutions reduce congestion and improve urban transport efficiency?
5. How can maritime, rail, road, and air transport be better integrated into efficient multimodal transport corridors?
6. How can digitalization, administrative cooperation, and public-private partnerships improve the implementation, financing, and sustainability of transport infrastructure projects across the Mediterranean region?

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Bontekoning, Y.M, C Macharis, and J.J Trip. 2004. "Is a New Applied Transportation Research Field Emerging?—a Review of Intermodal Rail–Truck Freight Transport Literature." *Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice* 38 (1): 1–34. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tra.2003.06.001>.

Bibri, Simon Elias, and John Krogstie. "The Emerging Data–Driven Smart City and Its Innovative Applied Solutions for Sustainability: The Cases of London and Barcelona - Energy Informatics." SpringerLink, June 26, 2020. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s42162-020-00108-6>.

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