

Single integrated market in North Africa

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Presented by Junge Mitte, Switzerland

Supported by NN.GG Spain, KNL Finland, GDC San Marino, JU Germany, TOP tým Czech Republic, MIERT Romania, MSi Slovenia, JFG Ireland, JG SVP Italy, ONNED Greece, CSJ Luxembourg, Giovani PATT Italy, MHDZ Croatia, JSD Portugal, BM Ukraine, Youth Forces Union of VMRO-DPMNE, KDMS Slovakia

Recognizing:

- Intra-regional trade in North Africa remains low compared to other regions of the world. This lack of trade is at the same time a symptom and a trigger of economic, social, and political instability in the region, potentially resulting in serious issues of various nature for Europe.
- Beyond political factors, a major brake on trade among North African countries is the presence of different regulations, customs barriers, and infrastructure problems, which limit development opportunities and create disparities and frictions between nations.
- Local initiatives (e.g. the Arab Maghreb Union) did not manage to reach major concrete successes, mainly due to political tensions between member states.¹
- The Middle East and North African youth unemployment rate averages reached 24.4 percent in 2023, almost double the global average.²

Acknowledging:

- Political and economic cooperation between the countries would help prevent conflict and improve internal stability. Common policies regarding security, environment and economic development could reduce instability factors.
- Investment in regional infrastructure (transport, communication, energy) could reduce costs and increase the efficiency of interregional trade, with direct benefits for the economy and social cohesion in the entire region.
- The EU engages with multiple initiatives to promote inter-regional trade in North Africa considering the region's importance in both economic and migration terms.
- The EU-Morocco Free Trade Agreement or the EU-Tunisia Association Agreement support development, cooperation and ensure a stable environment.³

¹Zoubir, Y. (2022) *The Maghreb in International Relations*. In: *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*. Oxford University Press. Available at: <https://oxfordre.com/internationalstudies/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.001.0001/acrefore-9780190846626-e-616?p=emailACVOXpyiHU7qo&d=/10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.001.0001/acrefore-9780190846626-e-61> (Accessed: 18 January 2025)

²International Labour Organization (ILO). (2024) *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024: Middle East and North Africa*. International Labour Organization. Available at: <https://www.ilo.org/publications/employment-trends-youth-middle-east-and-north-africa> (Accessed: 16 January 2025)

³European Commission. (n.d.) *EU-Morocco Trade Relations*. Available at: https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/morocco_en (Accessed: 17 January 2025)

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- The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the EU-Morocco Association Agreement aim to promote free trade, political cooperation and improved economic relations.
 - With the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP), the EU provides economic and technical assistance to North African countries, encouraging economic reform and trade liberalization.
 - The EU is already funding SME cooperation initiatives, such as through the Business and Investment Environment in the MENA region (BIE), which promotes cooperation among small and medium-sized enterprises in Mediterranean countries, with the aim of improving competitiveness and fostering trade.⁴

49 **YEPP calls on:**

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- the EU Commission to negotiate a free trade agreement with North African countries, with the future opportunity and hope to enlarge this new economic network to the whole Mediterranean Sea.
 - the EU Commission to actively engage in dialogue and mediation with its North African partners, aiming to ensure peace, stability, prosperity for the region and, indirectly, for Europe itself.
 - the EU Commission to consider further steps towards liberalising trade relations with North African countries, including through customs reform and simplification.
 - the EU Commission to promote projects of regional interest in the MENA area such as trans-African highways or power grids connecting multiple countries.

⁴**European Commission.** (2023) *Overview of EU Instruments to Support Internationalisation of European Business*. Available at: <https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-07/overview%20of%20EU%20instruments%20to%20support%20internationalisation%20of%20European%20Business.pdf> (Accessed: 18 January 2025)