

**ASSOCIATION
BETWEEN
THE EUROPEAN UNION
AND EGYPT**

The Association Council

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COUNCIL on the EU-Egypt Partnership Priorities 2021–2027

EU-Egypt Partnership Priorities 2021-2027

I. Introduction

These **Partnership Priorities** aim to address common challenges facing the EU and Egypt, to promote joint interests, to guarantee long-term stability and sustainable development on both sides of the Mediterranean and to reinforce the cooperation and realise the untapped potential of the relationship. They pay particular attention to reinforcing cooperation guided by Egypt's "Sustainable Development Strategy Vision 2030" and the revised European Neighbourhood Policy spelt out in the new EU Agenda for the Mediterranean¹ and its Economic and Investment Plan for the Southern Neighbours², the European Green Deal and the Council Conclusions on a renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood of 16 April 2021³, and to alleviating the adverse socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic including a green, digital, resilient, and inclusive recovery. The EU-Egypt Association Agreement sets the general framework for the cooperation and the Partnership Priorities. The Partnership Priorities are guided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development⁴, the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Climate Agreement and a shared commitment to the universal values of democracy, the rule of law and the respect of human rights. Moreover, they are aligned with the aspiration stated in the **European Council** conclusions of 10-11 December 2020⁵ for a democratic, more stable, greener and more prosperous Southern Neighbourhood as a strategic priority for the EU.

II. Priorities

The Partnership Priorities should contribute to meeting the aspirations of the people of both sides of the Mediterranean, particularly in ensuring inclusive sustainable development, social justice, decent job opportunities, economic prosperity and substantially improved living conditions. Key aspects of these goals are inclusive growth, underpinned by innovation, effective and participatory governance, governed by the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms, including social and labour rights, women's empowerment with a view to achieve gender equality, and the rights of the child. The priorities also take into account the respective roles of the EU and Egypt as international players and aim to enhance both their bilateral cooperation and their regional and

¹ JOIN(2021) 2 final

² SWD(2021) 23 final

³ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/news_corner/news/new-agenda-mediterranean-council-approves-conclusions-renewed-partnership-southern_en

⁴ [UN Resolution 70/1 Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)

⁵ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/47296/1011-12-20-euco-conclusions-en.pdf>

international cooperation. Better connectivity between the EU and Egypt, with particular attention to smart mobility, automated and electronic mobility, digitalisation and green economy, will be important tools offering new opportunities of cooperation in this context. The implementation of the flagship initiatives of the Economic and Investment Plan of the New Agenda for the Mediterranean including through Team Europe initiatives will contribute to delivering on the Partnership Priorities. These constitute an important part of the EU cooperation with Egypt and help to protect our Mediterranean common interests and goods.

The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged the national healthcare systems and impacted deeply the economy and society. The EU and Egypt will cooperate closely on long-term socio-economic recovery, and sustainable development. Both parties aim to maximize the benefits for the recovery of economies post-COVID-19 and alleviate potential repercussions.

As such, the following overarching priorities will guide the partnership:

1. Egypt's Sustainable Modern Economy and Social Development

The EU and Egypt as key partners will cooperate in advancing socio-economic goals set out in Egypt's "Sustainable Development Strategy – Vision 2030", with particular attention to sustainable development needs.

a) Strengthen resilience, build prosperity and support the transformation to digital and green economy

Egypt is committed to attaining long-term socio-economic sustainability through, *inter alia*, creating a more conducive environment for **inclusive growth and generating decent and productive jobs**, particularly for youth and women, including by encouraging integration of the informal sector into the formal economy. For long-term economic sustainability, this will include measures that can generate a larger fiscal space to better implement its sustainable development strategy, further reform of subsidies and taxation, strengthening the role of the **private sector** and **enhancing the business climate** to attract more foreign direct investment, including through a more open and sustainable trade policy, supporting key infrastructure projects such as the development of an efficient, reliable and sustainable transport system. Given the importance of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) development for sustainable and inclusive growth, this sector will continue to play a central role in EU co-operation with Egypt. Furthermore, the EU will support Egypt's efforts towards **public administration reform and good governance**, including through promoting high

quality statistics and taking into account the digital revolution and the related new business and societal models.

The EU will continue to play an important role in supporting the business environment and sustainable economic growth including through concrete flagship initiatives in priority sectors, such as: the development of sustainable transport modes, public transport infrastructure and corroborating Egypt's transition to electric mobility. In keeping with Egypt's realization of its Sustainable Development Strategy 2030, the EU will extend its support to Egypt's transition to a green economy, including the sustainable development of the agricultural and water sectors. In that context, the EU will also support the enhancement of the digital infrastructure and in particular universal access to enhanced, affordable and secure networks as well as raising awareness and exchanging information and knowledge on cybersecurity threats.

Recognising the importance of research and innovation for the progress of their societies, the EU and Egypt will further cooperate across sectors in research and innovation and in advancing digital technologies, including artificial intelligence and cybersecurity while protecting the right to privacy. In this context, Egypt and the EU highlighted their interest in intensifying cooperation in a number of relevant research and higher education activities, including in the framework of Horizon Europe, Erasmus+, PRIMA and the Union for the Mediterranean Regional Platform for Research and Innovation.

Given Egypt's invaluable and diverse heritage, and the significant contribution of the cultural and tourism sector to the country's economic development, Gross Domestic Product (GDP), employment, foreign exchange reserves and society more broadly, a particular emphasis will be placed on the **link between culture, cultural heritage preservation and economic development**. The EU and Egypt will cooperate, inter alia, on identifying ways to protect and preserve cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, and propose relevant joint cooperation actions in this field. In order to address the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the tourism sector in Egypt, the EU and Egypt will work together to enhance opportunities in this field.

b) Trade and investment

The EU and Egypt are important **trading partners**. The two sides will jointly identify suitable approaches to enhance bilateral trade and investment relations, improve competitiveness and ensure accessibility of goods and services to the respective markets in accordance with World Trade Organization (WTO) regulations and the EU-Egypt Association Agreement and Egypt's further integration into regional and global value chains.

The EU and Egypt will work closely to provide shared common practical proposals in order to assist Egypt in increasing its competitiveness and market transparency, **strengthening the existing trade and investment relationship**, and ensuring that the trade and competition provisions of the EU-Egypt Association Agreement are respected in full, and the Agreement implemented in a manner that enables it to reach its full potential. To better protect the health and safety of consumers, the EU will support the transformation of sustainable food systems, as well as the development of effective consumer safety frameworks, taking into account the WTO regulations, internationally agreed sanitary and phytosanitary standards and relevant EU rules and principles. Both sides will work closely to attract and enhance European investments, in particular by means of enabling a conducive environment for investment and consider opportunities such as the Suez Canal Economic Zone, a more open and sustainable trade policy and the improvement of the regulatory framework.

The EU will support Egypt's policies in promoting e-commerce, digital trade, competition regulation and in enhancing its investment potential by improving the business climate and the development of the Egyptian Green Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Strategy.

c) Social development and social justice

The EU supports Egypt's endeavour to promote and reform social development and social justice, and meaningful, inclusive social dialogue, and to address the social and demographic challenges linked to rapid population growth, including water scarcity and food security vulnerability. This includes boosting the country's human resources, in particular youth, women and children. The EU will support Egypt's efforts to foster the economic and social **protection of persons in vulnerable situations** in Egypt, particularly those exposed to potential negative impacts of economic reforms and the fallouts of external shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic through comprehensive **social safety nets and targeted social protection programmes aligned with the targets of the Decent life (Haya Karima) initiative and Takaful and Karama programmes**. Special attention will be given to the promotion of women empowerment and the role of women and girls in society and the economy as reflected in the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Women 2030. Moreover, the EU and Egypt will continue to promote inclusive **rural and urban socio/economic development**, as well as to improve the delivery of basic services, support modern quality **education**, also with a view to ensuring connection to labour market demands, enhancing digital skills and literacy of the population, technical and vocational training, and **health care systems**.

The EU and Egypt will cooperate in the health sector with a view to reducing the pressure COVID-19 is placing on health services, and on vaccines also with a view to supporting Egypt's ambitions to become a regional hub for production and export to Africa and the Middle East. The EU will share its experience in establishing an inclusive health care coverage and improved health care.

d) Energy, environment and climate action

The EU and Egypt will cooperate in the **diversification of energy sources and the transition towards a low-emissions economy**, with a particular focus on **renewable energy sources, energy efficiency** actions, and a gradual shift towards low carbon and sustainable transport modes on-land and in maritime shipping and civil aviation. The EU will, upon request from the Egyptian government, support its efforts to update its integrated energy strategy that aims at satisfying the country's sustainable development requirements and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. **Strengthening the energy and climate dialogue** between the EU and Egypt will contribute to the identification of key areas of cooperation. This could include supporting Egypt's efforts towards becoming an energy hub in the region with focus on renewable energy, ongoing cooperation in the framework of the East Med Gas Forum, and the implementation of mutually beneficial energy projects, including interconnection projects between Egypt and the EU.

The EU and Egypt will also work together on joint research, sharing experience and best practice, technology transfers and promoting sub-regional (intra-Mediterranean) cooperation, with due regard to preserve the Mediterranean marine ecosystems.

The EU and Egypt will enhance cooperation to promote the ecotourism concept, including the protection of bio-diversity in Egypt, and the Mediterranean Sea, particularly in management of nature reserves and restore degraded natural resources.

The EU and Egypt will cooperate in the promotion of **action on climate** and the **environment to achieve sustainable development** in line with their commitments under the UNFCCC, the Paris Agreement and the Glasgow Climate decisions. The EU will support the implementation of Egypt's **Nationally Determined Contributions** in the fields of mitigation and adaptation including through climate finance. Furthermore, the EU and Egypt will cooperate towards achieving the goals identified in, *inter alia*, the 2030 Development Agenda and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

The EU will support Egypt's efforts in fostering its green transition, creating green growth and jobs, optimising the potential and use of its energy sources, diversifying further its energy mix through

renewable energy, and energy efficiency, strengthening governance and setting environmentally-friendly development pathways.

The EU will support Egypt in promoting sustainable finance, including green bonds, in adopting the environmental sustainability standards in its domestic investment portfolio, as well as enhancing its capabilities to produce and export renewable energy in the form of electricity and renewable hydrogen in particular.

In view of the threat posed by water scarcity at national and regional levels, the EU will support Egypt in **water resources management** as well as other areas of common interest such as **biodiversity conservation, sanitation, solid waste management**, including the abatement of industrial pollutants, chemicals and hazard waste management, and combating desertification and land degradation. Egypt and the EU are also exploring the opportunities provided for in the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) for cooperation on climate, environment and blue economy.

The EU and Egypt will strengthen cooperation in order to transition to sustainable food systems, including sustainable management of agriculture, fisheries, and preservation of natural production factors to strengthen food security.

2. Partners in Foreign Policy

a) Stabilising the common neighbourhood and beyond

The conflicts and crises in the Mediterranean region constitute a key obstacle to political stability and sustainable development. Joint efforts by the EU and Egypt to prevent and resolve conflicts, promote security cooperation, mitigate the consequences of conflicts and address their root causes are therefore paramount priorities in order to protect our people and allow them to thrive. The partnership between the EU and Egypt is important for the stability and prosperity of the Mediterranean, the Middle East and Africa and cooperation between the EU and Egypt will continue to aim to contribute to the resolution of conflicts, to build peace, deepen regional economic integration, and to tackle political and economic challenges in these regions.

Given the strategic orientation of the partnership, the EU and Egypt are committed to reinforcing cooperation in foreign policy at the bilateral, regional and international organisations levels, notably in the UN and multilateral fora, including the Union for the Mediterranean as well as with the League of Arab States (LAS) and the African Union of which Egypt is a member. EU and Egypt are committed to cooperate also in the framework of yearly Ministerial meetings between the EU and

Southern Partners as proposed in the Council Conclusions on a renewed Partnership with the Southern Neighbourhood - A New Agenda for the Mediterranean. Priorities include renewed efforts to support Israelis and the Palestinians in reaching a settlement in the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) building on the EU's and Egypt's key role in this context. In the Eastern Mediterranean, Egypt and the EU and its Member States, *inter alia* will enhance regional cooperation in accordance with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Egypt and the EU will work jointly on the implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular on the MEPP, Libya and Syria. Moreover, Egypt hosts the African Union Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development Centre and the headquarters of the LAS, with which the EU will continue to deepen and broaden cooperation. Further, the EU and Egypt will seek greater cooperation in the multilateral sphere and on major regional and international challenges that affect both sides including climate action.

In light of Egypt's key role in global development and its further ambitions therein, one of the goals of the EU-Egypt cooperation will be to broaden the EU-Egypt partnership in the wider region, including in Africa, in fields of mutual interest and through initiatives such as the Aswan Forum for Sustainable Peace and Development. Reaching an international agreement as soon as possible in line with the 2015 Declaration of Principles and international law on the issue of the Ethiopian Dam is a top priority to the EU and Egypt in order to protect Egypt's water security, promote peace and stability in the wider region. An international agreement based on a negotiated arrangement will contribute to turn this dispute into an opportunity to attract foreign investments and increase stability for the countries of the region and millions of people. The EU stands ready to support the African Union-led process in cooperation with international partners, including the EU, and to play a more active role, if useful and desirable to all parties, putting forward its experience in the management of shared water resources according to international law. Moreover, the EU and Egypt support proposals to develop inter-regional cooperation, including trilateral cooperation in Africa.

b) Cooperating in crisis management and response

The EU and Egypt will step up cooperation and consultations and the exchange of experience in crisis management and prevention, both bilaterally and regionally, including through the Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding (CCCCPA), to address the complex challenges to peace, stability and development arising from conflict, climate change, natural disasters and epidemics, including through COVAX, in their common neighbourhood and beyond. Work on climate resilience and adaptation will be enhanced, including investing in

preventative measures and reinforcing cooperation on civil protection and disaster risk management.

3. Enhancing stability

The EU and Egypt share the objective of stability in their societies and wider region. Human rights, civil, political, economic, social, labour and cultural rights, as set out in international human rights law, the Treaty on European Union, and the principles of democracy enshrined in the Egyptian Constitution, are essential to the stability of both parties, and are a common value and constitute the cornerstone of a modern democratic state. Egypt and the EU reiterate their commitment to further promoting democracy, fundamental freedoms and human rights, gender equality and equal opportunities as constitutional rights of all their citizens, in line with their international obligations as the basis for long term stability and security. Egypt took important steps by lifting the State of Emergency in 2021 and issuing Egypt's National Strategy on Human Rights (2021-2026). The National Strategy, with its four focus areas, reaffirms Egypt's national objective to realise all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights to achieve stability, progress and sustainable development in the country. In this context, the EU will provide support to Egypt in implementing these rights and objectives.

a) Good Governance and a modern, democratic state

Egypt and the EU reiterate their commitment to ensuring accountability, the rule of law, the full respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms and responding to the demands of their citizens. These commitments guide the EU's further support to Egypt's efforts towards **enhancing the capacity of state institutions** for effective **public sector reform**, advancing the capacity of **law enforcement institutions in ensuring security for all**. In line with international law and best practices, the EU and Egypt will enhance cooperation in **modernising the justice sector**, and in capacity building, particularly in applying modern technology, combating corruption, fraud, money laundering and tackling the recovery of proceeds from crimes. The EU and Egypt will also consider developing judicial cooperation on criminal and civil matters and negotiating cooperation agreements between Egypt and EU law enforcement agencies. The EU and Egypt will also cooperate to ensure a high level of protection of personal data in line with international data protection standards.

Parliamentary cooperation between the EU and Egypt, including through structured exchanges between parliamentary committees and groups, will reinforce coordination and promote mutual understanding. The EU will also support Egypt's efforts in planning and delivery of public services

at all levels, as well as in further ensuring equality in economic, social and political opportunities and to promote social integration for all.

b) Security and terrorism

Security is a shared objective. **Terrorism** and violent extremism conducive to terrorism threaten the social fabric of nations across both sides of the Mediterranean. They pose a major threat to the security and well-being of our citizens. Combating these threats represents a common goal of the EU and Egypt who can cooperate through a comprehensive approach. This would address the root causes of terrorism with full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, in order to successfully **counter and prevent radicalisation** and promote socio-economic development. The EU and Egypt agree on the necessity to cooperate together to support interfaith dialogue, in order to consolidate the principles of human fraternity, maximising the common foundations of a culture of peace while rejecting violence amongst people, and promote religious tolerance and protect freedom of religion or belief. The EU and Egypt remain committed to cooperating in fighting extremism and any form of discrimination, including Islamophobia, racism and xenophobia.

The EU and Egypt will enhance operational cooperation in areas relating to security and counter-terrorism, including aviation security and protective security as well as the capacity to prevent and fight trans-national organised crime such as migrant smuggling, human trafficking including child trafficking, trafficking of cultural goods and restitution of illicitly trafficked cultural properties in line with international law, the illicit drugs trade, financing of terrorism and money laundering.

Both parties agree to strengthen their cooperation in the area of the implementation of the UN Programme of Action on Combating Illicit trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, including through exchanging experiences, training and other capacity building activities.

c) Migration and mobility

The EU and Egypt underline the importance of continuing to work together to jointly address in an efficient and effective manner the challenges of irregular migration, as well as all other aspects of migration and mobility, including **legal migration**, in line with EU and Member State competencies, through comprehensive, tailor-made and mutually beneficial partnerships, and in the spirit of the political declaration of the Valletta Summit and the Joint Valletta Action Plan, as well as taking note of the European Commission's Communication on the New Pact on Migration and Asylum⁶.

The EU will continue to support the Egyptian government's efforts to strengthen its **migration and**

⁶ COM(2020) 609 final

asylum governance framework and mobilise financing under the relevant instruments in a timely manner. Welcoming and building on Egypt's positive results in the handling of irregular migratory flows, the EU will continue to support Egypt's efforts to prevent and combat irregular migration, to strengthen border management as well as to combat trafficking and smuggling of human beings, including identifying and assisting victims of trafficking.

The EU and Egypt are committed to the protection of the rights of migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees, in full respect of human rights law and refugee law. The EU will seek to support and strengthen Egyptian capacity to safeguard these rights, to provide protection, in line with international standards, and access to basic services, such as health and education, including for refugees, migrants and asylum-seekers. The EU will seek to enhance its cooperation with Egypt on voluntary resettlement. The EU and Egypt will foster and facilitate cooperation on identification, return, including on assisted voluntary return, readmission and sustainable reintegration of irregular migrants to their country of origin. The EU and Egypt will explore areas of cooperation on border management.

This will go hand in hand with cooperation in addressing and combating root causes of irregular migration and forced displacement from third countries, in particular conflict and instability, underdevelopment, poverty, and unemployment – and also working on eliminating negative impacts of climate change and drought. This will be based, *inter alia*, on developing socio-economic opportunities, especially improved perspectives for young people, through job-creation initiatives in the context of the COVID-19 recovery.

Orderly, safe, regular and responsible **mobility** of persons, including for educational purposes while avoiding brain drain, can contribute to the development of skills and knowledge which could in turn contribute to the development of Egypt. It can also build sustainable bridges between a high skilled labour force in the EU and Egypt in line with EU and Member State competences.

III. Principles of cooperation

Promoting the human factor and people-to-people contacts will reinforce the links, thereby consolidate the partnership, between the EU and Egypt. Mutual accountability and responsibility towards the European and Egyptian people are an essential aspect of the Partnership Priorities.

Issues of common interest should also be tackled through a **stronger regional and sub-regional (South-South) cooperation**. In this respect, the EU and Egypt will work together within the framework of the UfM and through the Anna Lindh Foundation, particularly on cross-cultural dialogue.

The culture of dialogue has proven to be a valuable tool in developing mutual respect. **Deepening the dialogue** on issues such as democracy, human rights, socio-economic development, trade, investment and regional and international issues of shared interest will be essential. Dialogue will also provide the means to substantiate the partnership and to take stock of its depth and achievements.

In line with the Egyptian government's priorities, a focus on **youth** –on which the long-term stability of our societies lies –and on **women** is a cross-cutting issue throughout in the Partnership Priorities. A key objective is to empower and equip them with the legal and practical tools to assume their due role in society through their active participation in the economy and the governance of their country. The EU and Egypt will continue to exchange experience on fighting discrimination and violence against women and promoting gender equality, as well as in promoting inclusion and providing opportunities for the young.

The EU and Egypt agree that **civil society** is an important and potent contributor to the implementation of their partnership priorities and to transparent, participatory governance of a modern, democratic state and can support the sustainable development process in Egypt. They will work with civil society in contributing effectively in the economic, political and social development process in accordance with the Egyptian Constitution and the respective national legislation.

IV. Conclusion

In the spirit of co-ownership, the EU and Egypt jointly defined these Partnership Priorities. In correlation with the review of the Agenda for the Mediterranean and of the Council Conclusions, in 2024 a mid-term review is foreseen, to evaluate the impact of and, when necessary, to adapt the Partnership Priorities. The Association Committee and Association Council will remain the key bodies that will carry out the overall assessment of the implementation of the Partnership Priorities on an annual basis.