EUROPEAN
COMMISSION

Brussels, 29.10.2026
COM(2026) 588 final

REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL

2026 Annual Report on the implementation of the European Union's External Action Instruments in 2025

{SWD(2026) 324 final}

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FOREWORD

2025 was a year characterised by profound and often unpredictable changes around the world. Citizens increasingly felt the fallout from ongoing wars in the neighbourhood. Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine continued to spill over into the European Union with the increase of hybrid campaigns activities aimed at undermining European security. The increasingly volatile context continued to require the European Union to take greater responsibility for its security and defence, proactively defend its interests around the world, and step up work to address global challenges, protect human rights and strengthen multilateralism.

The EU has steadily shifted its approach towards creating mutually beneficial partnerships of equals, with a double imperative of building resilience and autonomy internationally and at home. A key tool for this work is the Global Gateway strategy. Through Global Gateway, the EU is able to concentrate its resources where they can make the biggest sustainable development difference, while protecting the Union's interests. The impact has been tangible both in terms of the quantity and quality of initiatives undertaken.

To maximise the EU's impact in the world and make the best use of use EU resources and skills, EU institutions, EU Member States and financial institutions have fully embraced the concept of working together as "Team Europe". This approach is now an integral and central part of the external action toolbox, be it under Global Gateway, in fragile contexts, via humanitarian assistance and civil protection or in multilateral engagement. The EU's network of Delegations continues to play a key role in ensuring a strong and coherent presence on the ground, working closely with EU Member States and European financial institutions in a "Team Europe" approach.

EU external action throughout 2025 can be divided into four mutually reinforcing pillars: defending peace and security, promoting enlargement, safeguarding prosperity and economic security and resilience, and reinforcing multilateralism and global solidarity. The EU's external action instruments continued to combine a fast, flexible and integrated way to respond to crises and geopolitical shocks, with the highest standards for sound financial management.

This report outlines the EU's and its Members States' work across all four pillars, including work to strengthen partnerships, in line with our European values, as well as our actions in many areas from poverty eradication and sustainable development, to free trade, security, peace and stability, migration, promoting human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment, protecting democracy and the rule of law, and alleviating suffering. EU initiatives also supported partner countries in tackling climate change and protecting biodiversity, illustrating the EU's continued efforts to honour its global commitments.

The European Union is at its strongest when we pull together. Along with our comprehensive portfolio of projects and external instruments, continuing to develop and deliver solid and sustainable results with a “Team Europe” approach is therefore essential.



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GLOBAL COMMITMENTS

The EU response to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine

Russia's full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine continued to cause human suffering, widespread displacement and large-scale destruction of critical civilian and energy infrastructure, while undermining the European and global security order and aggravating food, energy and economic vulnerabilities well beyond the region.

By the end of 2025, the European Union (EU) and its Member States have provided combined support to Ukraine totalling approximately EUR 193.3 billion, including EUR 69.3 billion in military support, over EUR 103.3 billion in financial, economic and humanitarian support, EUR 3.7 billion from proceeds linked to immobilised Russian assets, and EUR 17 billion to assist people fleeing the war.

A central pillar of the EU's response in 2025 was the Ukraine Facility, a dedicated instrument of up to EUR 50 billion to provide predictable and flexible support for Ukraine's recovery, reconstruction and modernisation combining reform-linked grants and loans with an investment arm, the Ukraine Investment Framework, with EUR 9.5 billion of EU support and aiming to mobilise up to EUR 40 billion in public and private investment. By late 2025, up to EUR 6.9 billion had been allocated under this framework to programmes supporting small businesses, war-affected communities, critical infrastructure and green and digital transitions.

In 2025, following up on the commitments by G7 leaders and based on a proposal by the Commission, the EU adopted and disbursed a financial assistance package consisting of an exceptional macro-financial assistance loan of EUR 18.1 billion. As part of the package, a loan cooperation mechanism is financed by extraordinary revenues stemming from immobilised Russian sovereign assets. In addition, in December 2025, the EU Member States agreed to provide a loan to Ukraine of EUR 90 billion for 2026 and 2027, based on EU borrowing backed by the EU budget headroom.

Throughout 2025, the EU adopted further packages of restrictive measures (sanctions) to curtail Russia's ability to wage its war and to weaken its economic base, for example by restricting Russia's access to battlefield technologies and limiting Russia's energy revenues.

At the same time, sanctions and measures to reduce dependence on Russian fossil fuels formed another key strand of the EU's response, with the EU's REPowerEU roadmap and related legislation sharply reducing Russian imports to the EU.

Ukraine remained the largest operation ever under the EU Civil Protection Mechanism with the Emergency Response Coordination Centre handling 39 updated requests for assistance from Ukraine. In 2025 alone, the EU provided a total of EUR 220 million in humanitarian aid to alleviate the suffering of the Ukrainian people. The Temporary Protection Directive for people fleeing the war was extended until March 2027.

The EU: a global actor

In 2025, the EU operated in an increasingly tense and complex international environment marked by war near its borders, escalating regional conflicts, disruptions on trade routes, intensifying geopolitical and geoeconomic competition, and deepening climate and environmental crises. Democratic backsliding, international law violations, including human rights and international humanitarian law violations, disinformation and foreign information manipulation and interference, and growing

pressure on the multilateral system and the rules-based international order further undermined global stability.

The EU's response to world developments in 2025 rested on four mutually reinforcing pillars: defending peace and security, promoting enlargement, safeguarding prosperity and resilience through sustainable and secure economic ties, and reinforcing multilateralism and global solidarity. Lasting peace, security and prosperity depends on an effective rules-based international order.

In 2025, the EU further advanced the implementation of its security and defence agenda, through an integrated approach to multi-faceted security and defence challenges, by maintaining strong military support for Ukraine, reinforcing its role through Common Security and Defence Policy missions and the European Peace Facility, boosting resilience to hybrid and cyber threats, and strengthening security and defence partnerships.

The Union acknowledged that interdependence is increasingly weaponised and in 2025 sought to reduce critical dependencies while preserving open and rules-based trade. The EU outlined a more proactive and efficient approach to strengthen its economic security[(1)]. Reflecting the growing centrality of economic security and resilience in external action, the EU has advanced an economic foreign policy that links competitiveness, security and partnerships; reinforcing its trade and partnership agenda with key regions and like-minded partners worldwide. The Global Gateway strategy became an essential framework to translate this agenda.

The EU reinforced its commitment to multilateralism, global solidarity and the protection of human rights and humanitarian principles working to defend and adapt the multilateral system, building on the UN Charter, the 2030 Agenda and the United Nations (UN) "Pact for the Future". In 2025, the EU actively supported the UN Secretary-General's UN80 Initiative, an opportunity to strengthen the effectiveness, cost-efficiency and coherence of the UN and ensure its ability to deliver across its three pillars of peace and security, human rights, and development.

In 2025, the EU further elevated the ocean as a strategic priority of its external action, including by defending the integrity of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea as the legal framework for all ocean activities. At the third UN Ocean Conference, the EU tabled more than 50 voluntary commitments worth nearly EUR 1 billion, to help mobilise the international community to accelerate ocean action, notably towards the entry into force of the High Seas Treaty.

During 2025, the EU and its Member States collectively remained the largest provider of official development assistance (ODA) with EUR 82.5 billion, representing 48% of global ODA[(2)] based on preliminary OECD data. However, data shows a significant global decrease in total ODA, mainly driven by severe US disengagement.

Efforts to more closely coordinate EU external and cohesion funding took a significant step forward with the launch of the first calls for projects to tackle challenges shared by EU outermost regions, OCTs and non-EU countries participating in INTERREG programmes.

[1] JOIN(2025) 977

[2] Global ODA is defined here as including the ODA reported by the EU collective and all other donor countries.

Global Gateway

The EU further scaled up Global Gateway, its worldwide investment strategy for building mutually beneficial partnerships and mobilising public and private resources to bridge the global investment gap and support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

By 2025, the EU, its Member States and European financial institutions had mobilised over EUR 306 billion in Global Gateway investments, well ahead of the 2027 target of EUR 300 billion. Throughout 2025, the "Team Europe" approach remained central to implementation, to ensure coordinated delivery of high-impact investment packages.

The Global Gateway Investment Hub[3] for Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Asia-Pacific region was launched in October 2025 as the central platform to streamline and amplify private sector involvement, allowing EU companies to submit investment proposals via Team Nationals[4] in EU Member States. The Global Gateway Business Advisory Group continued to strengthen cooperation with the European private sector.

In Northern Africa and the Middle East, the Pact for the Mediterranean, adopted in October 2025, provides the new political framework for Global Gateway in the region. In 2025, EUR 662 million in investments were approved, expected to mobilise over EUR 7 billion in investments, bringing total expected mobilisation to EUR 30 billion in the Southern Mediterranean between 2021 and 2025. In the Western Balkans, Türkiye, and Eastern Neighbourhood region nearly EUR 40 billion in expected investments were mobilised between 2021 and 2025.

Humanitarian assistance

In 2025, EU humanitarian aid and civil protection responded to an exceptionally high level of global needs. The EU is a principled donor guided by the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence. Together, the EU and its Member States provides the largest share of global humanitarian funding (34% in 2025), with the EU allocating more than EUR 2.57 billion in 2025 for needs-based humanitarian assistance in 110 countries, alongside over EUR 245 million for the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) and related capacities.

The global hunger crisis remains critical. To respond to worldwide hunger, around EUR 600 million was allocated to humanitarian food and nutrition assistance, in a context where 295 million people faced acute food insecurity and where famine has been confirmed in Gaza and Sudan.

The main drivers of today's humanitarian crisis are conflict, insecurity and the impact of climate change. In today's armed conflicts, violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) remain widespread. Thus, in 2025 the European Commission continued to fund and advocate for a better enabling environment for principled humanitarian aid in the context of increasing violations of IHL and growing impediments to principled humanitarian access.

The European Humanitarian Response Capacity, rebranded as ReliefEU, provided strategic logistical support through humanitarian air bridge operations, stockpiling, warehousing and transport services. In 2025, ReliefEU has provided humanitarian aid in crises and conflict-affected areas including Gaza, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Myanmar, in close cooperation with humanitarian

[3] https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/investment-hub_en

[4] Domestic whole-of-government coordination mechanisms for the engagement with the private sector.

partners and the UCPM. In 2025, over EUR 110 million was allocated to ReliefEU operations, delivering a total of 6 780 metric tonnes of aid and responding to 20 crises in 18 countries.

The external aspects of civil protection are an integral part of the EU's response to emergencies, complementing humanitarian aid and development cooperation by providing rapid, coordinated assistance in the event of natural and human-induced disasters across the globe. The UCPM was activated, for example, in response to the Ebola outbreak in Democratic Republic of the Congo, severe floods in Cabo Verde and the 7.7-magnitude earthquake in Myanmar in March 2025.

THEMATIC OVERVIEW

Human development

Poverty eradication continued to be central to the Commission's work. Currently, around 10.3% of the world's population lives below the extreme poverty line of USD 3 per day. Between 2021 and 2024, 8.1% of EU-financed ODA (over EUR 26.6 billion) directly supported SDG 1 on eradicating poverty.

Humanitarian health action remained essential to protect lives and preserve development gains. In 2025, the EU allocated around EUR 400 million to humanitarian health, a record level, with a focus on strengthening health systems and epidemic preparedness, advancing basic and universal health coverage, including women's health, while responding to a tightening global health financing environment and rising needs in fragile and conflict-affected countries.

The EU consolidated its role as a leading global supporter of promoting quality education as a human right and a driver of sustainable development, supporting actions in some 70 partner countries. Erasmus+ contributed to capacity building and skills development, through cooperation projects with higher-education institutions, vocational education and youth organisations (EUR 177.1 million in 2025) and through higher education staff and student mobility scholarships (EUR 260.9 million).

In 2025, the EU further consolidated gender equality as a cross-cutting priority in its external action, in line with the EU Gender Action Plan III[5], including as an example through the mainstreaming of the "*for women, by women*" approach across all EU-funded basic needs and livelihoods programmes in Afghanistan, ensuring that aid reaches women effectively and that they play a meaningful role in the delivery process.

Almost half of the global population lack access to safely managed sanitation services. During 2025, the EU continued to support sustainable water, sanitation and hygiene activities, in line with the European Water Resilience Strategy[6] adopted in 2025, including long-term Global Gateway investments in around 50 countries, with the private sector mobilised, and via humanitarian assistance in crises.

Clean transition and climate resilience

In line with the Paris Agreement, the European Green Deal[7] and the Global Gateway strategy[8], the EU continued to support partner countries to increase sustainable energy access, decarbonise and adapt to climate change. External action focused on scaling up renewable energy generation, improving energy efficiency and enhancing regional energy connectivity, while avoiding the creation or reinforcement of dependencies, as well as supporting climate resilience and disaster risk reduction.

The implementation of the Africa–Europe Green Energy Initiative continued to deliver. The EU, along with South Africa, also led a year-long campaign[9] to mobilise investment for renewable energy in Africa resulting in EUR 15.5 billion, including EUR 15.1 billion from Team Europe.

[5] JOIN(2020) 17 ; https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-01/join-2020-17-final_en.pdf
[6] COM(2025) 280 ; https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52025DC0280
[7] The European Green Deal - European Commission
[8] JOIN/2021/30 ; https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52021JC0030
[9] https://commission.europa.eu/topics/international-partnerships/global-gateway/energy-africa_en

The EU continued to promote circular and resource efficient urban economies. In 2025, circular economy actions were supported through global initiatives in over 40 countries and via regional and national initiatives in more than 80 additional countries in Africa, Asia and LAC, contributing to more sustainable production and consumption patterns. The focus shifted from policy dialogue to reforms, partnerships and investments that help partner countries reduce resource pressures, create quality jobs and strengthen value chains, while enabling resilient economic relations with the EU.

The EU stepped up action on sustainable and deforestation-free value chains. Through DESIRA+ and related agrifood programmes, it supported value chains in cocoa, coffee, cashew and "forgotten crops", linking smallholders to markets, improving soils and promoting agroforestry.

In critical raw materials (CRM), the EU supported sustainable, secure and resilient supply chains, including projects contributing to the CRM Act's benchmarks[10] on sourcing, processing, recycling and diversification, and operationalised a dedicated CRM facility to connect projects with off-takers and financiers.

The EU and its Member States play a leading role in international climate finance as the world's largest provider of climate finance to developing countries. For example, EFSD+ guarantees and blending supported climate investment, including through Climate Investor Funds, with at least 50 mitigation and adaptation infrastructure projects under way. The EU Sustainable Finance Advisory Hub supported the development of green bond frameworks to help mobilise private capital for climate-aligned investments.

Digitalisation, science, technology, innovation and infrastructure

In the second half of 2025, the EU started the implementation of the Joint Communication on an International Digital Strategy for the EU[11], adopted in June 2025, that sets out a comprehensive vision for mutually beneficial digital transformation, underpinned by an integrated EU Tech Business Offer that combines secure connectivity, trustworthy artificial intelligence (AI), cybersecurity, space-based services, trusted digital infrastructure and digital public infrastructure.

Across regions, digital projects under the Global Gateway digital pillar supported and mobilised international research and innovation ecosystems and stakeholders, while dedicated hubs and platforms supported knowledge sharing and technical expertise, such as the EU–LAC high-performance computing network.

Sustainable transport remained a core focus of the EU's external action, supporting greener and more resilient connectivity. Along the 12 African priority corridors, the Trans-Caspian Transport Corridor, the India–Middle East–Europe Corridor, and in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as in the Eastern (e.g. Solidarity Lanes connecting Ukraine and Moldova to the EU) and Southern Neighbourhood regions, various investments span the rail, road, maritime transport, urban mobility, logistics infrastructure and aviation sectors.

Global Gateway also helps decarbonise global transport through targeted green investments and initiatives such as the Sustainable Aviation Fuels flagship (with activities across Africa and India), the Global Maritime Technology Cooperation Centres and the Green Shipping Corridors and Hubs

[10] OJ L, 2024/1252, 3.5.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1252/oj
[11] JOIN(2025) 140 of 5 June 2025 ; https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/joint-communication-international-digital-strategy-eu

initiative, which support partner countries in implementing the International Maritime Organisation and the International Civil Aviation Organization climate objectives.

An Early-Stage Investment Mechanism was launched to provide grants to EU companies in the early stages of sustainable transport, urban development, energy and AI projects, helping de-risk innovation and crowd in further finance.

At multilateral level, the EU advanced the implementation of the UN Global Digital Compact and engaged openly and constructively in the Global Dialogue on AI Governance. The World Summit on the Information Society 20-year review was a major milestone for global digital governance.

Sustainable growth and jobs

In 2025, the EU fostered sustainable and inclusive economic growth, improving the business environment and mobilising private investment for quality jobs through the Global Gateway strategy and the European Financial Architecture for Development. External actions combined policy dialogue, budget support and risk sharing instruments with targeted measures for skills, value chains and responsible business conduct.

Engagement with the European private sector was scaled up. In addition to the Global Gateway Investment Hub and Global Gateway Business Advisory Group, EU Business Fora facilitated networking and deal-making between European companies and partner country governments.

In 2025, 20 new EFSD+[(12)] guarantees were signed with various Development Finance Institutions, for a total guarantee amount exceeding EUR 3 billion, and deployment started with 63 operations signed in 2025. Blending operations approved in 2025 are expected to generate around EUR 18 billion of investments.

Education and skills programmes (including opportunity-driven vocational education and training (VET) and higher education) were increasingly aligning with sectors prioritised under Global Gateway, such as six new opportunity-driven VET projects launched in multiple African countries to match training with labour-market needs.

Systematic use of the Gender, Disability and Inequality markers helped ensure that investments take account of distributional impacts, promote women's economic empowerment, inclusion and connect underserved communities.

Migration and forced displacement

Across regions, the EU reinforced its human-rights based approach to migration, adopting internal guidelines and tailored procedures to improve the design, identification, formulation and monitoring of migration actions and the handling of alleged violations. The EU increasingly used its funds to promote its migration objectives with partner countries. The EU engaged in dialogues on strategic partnerships with key partners covering all aspects of migration and forced displacement, supported by EU funding, in line with the European Asylum and Migration Management Strategy[(13)].

Thanks to the strengthening of our migration partnerships, irregular crossings at the EU's external borders fell to around 179 000 in 2025, a quarter less than in 2024, and the number of asylum

[12] The European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus.

[13] European Asylum and Migration Management Strategy, COM(2026) 45 final.

applications in the Union also decreased in 2025 by around 19% compared to 2024, partly reflecting enhanced cooperation with partner countries. For example, building on the migration partnership with Mauritania adopted in 2024, all actions in the EUR 210 million support package were implemented, significantly reinforcing Mauritania's capacity to manage migration and forced displacement and to create economic opportunities in affected regions. These funds were mobilised also as part of the NDICI's flexible initiative approach, which is proving again to be key for encouraging cooperation on migration.

The EU also intensified work against migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings. A global action on the financial and digital dimensions of migrant smuggling contributed to the Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling and formed part of a EUR 78 million funding package announced in December 2025.

About 5.8 million migrants, refugees, internally displaced people (IDPs) and host-community members were protected or assisted with EU support under the current multiannual financial framework 2021-2027.

In 2025, around 15% of the humanitarian aid budget was dedicated to protection with a strong focus on refugees and IDPs in crises such as Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan, Syria, Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa. In 2025, about 87% of humanitarian aid funding was allocated to projects addressing needs of forcibly displaced people. The EU remained committed to support resettlement and humanitarian admission and continued to support the Emergency Transfer Mechanism in Rwanda and the Refugee Support Facility in Türkiye.

Democratic Governance and Human Rights, Peace and Security

In addition to many bilateral and regional interventions, the NDICI–Global Europe thematic programme on peace, stability and conflict prevention continued to address conflict prevention and peacebuilding and to tackle global and trans regional threats[14]. By end of 2025, 78 actions on conflict prevention, peacebuilding and crisis preparedness were ongoing. An additional 18 new actions addressed global peace and security concerns, and 14 new actions on global threats were adopted.

Counter terrorism and prevention of violent extremism were strengthened through instruments such as the EU–UN Global Terrorist Threat Facility[15], which delivered targeted support packages to Iraq, Uzbekistan, Nigeria and Somalia, amongst others, and through work on multilateral judicial cooperation with the League of Arab States.

Election support and observation play a key role in promoting peaceful, inclusive and credible electoral processes. In 2025, full election observation missions were deployed to Bolivia, Ecuador, Guyana, Honduras, Kosovo*, Malawi and The Philippines; election expert missions to Kosovo, Iraq and Surinam; and follow-up missions to Colombia, Guatemala, Kenya, Lesotho, Maldives, Nigeria and Timor-Leste, helping to strengthen democratic institutions, build public confidence in electoral processes and deter fraud, intimidation and violence.

In fragile and conflict-affected settings, the EU maintained a flexible and agile engagement, working closely with local partners, civil-society organisations, youth and women's organisations to build

[14] https://science4peace.jrc.ec.europa.eu/#/Home/CET/Map

[15] https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/en/EU-UN-Global-Terrorism-Threats-Facility

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

resilience and promote peace, preferably in a “Team Europe” approach. Global initiatives to protect civic space, such as the “EU System for an Enabling Environment”, monitored trends and built civil-society capacities in 80 countries.

The EU reinforced its overall security and defence approach including through initiatives such as Readiness 2030 and the SAFE instrument. The European Peace Facility remained central to the EU’s security response, while maintaining that expenditures with military or defence implications are financed outside the EU budget. Common Security and Defence Policy missions and operations, in addition to rapid crisis response tools, were organised across regions to address the immediate and longer-term consequences of conflicts, including in the Middle East, Africa and the neighbourhood. In 2025, EU’s cooperation with partners was strengthened by concluding Security and Defence Partnerships with the United Kingdom and Canada.

GLOBAL REACH

Sub-Saharan Africa

In 2025, the EU and Africa further consolidated their strategic partnership covering trade, investment, peace and security, green transition and digital transformation. The Joint Vision for 2030[16] continued to guide cooperation, with the Global Gateway Africa–Europe Investment Package at its core, alongside work on peace, security and governance, migration and mobility, and effective multilateralism. The third EU–African Union (AU) ministerial meeting and the seventh AU–EU Summit, held in 2025 together with the AU–EU Business Forum and Civil Society Organisations–Youth Forum, marked the 25th anniversary of the partnership. The EU and the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States stepped up their political cooperation and continued working towards the implementation of the Samoa Agreement.

In 2025, the EU remained Africa's leading trade, investment, peace and security partner, provider of ODA, and a leading humanitarian donor. EU trade with the continent reached EUR 360 billion, representing 33% of Africa's total trade. EU foreign direct investment stock totalled EUR 250 billion. By the end of 2025 EU's support to African countries through the European Peace Facility totalled EUR 400 million.

Support for the operationalisation of the African Continental Free Trade Area increased through assistance on trade facilitation, customs and standards. The Africa–Europe Green Energy Initiative and the "Scaling up renewables in Africa" campaign expanded work on renewable energy and regional electricity integration, including grid upgrades and solar and wind investments. The NaturAfrica programme continued across six priority habitat regions, while Team Europe Initiatives on transboundary water management and circular economy helped partner countries adapt to climate change, improve water security and WASH systems.

In 2025, both the Lobito and Douala–N'Djamena corridors, two Global Gateway flagships, demonstrated that infrastructure can support broader economic development and resilience, especially in landlocked and vulnerable areas. On-going implementation is successful thanks to strong African ownership and coordinated actions among the EU, African partners, financial institutions and private investors.

Humanitarian assistance complemented these efforts: in 2025, the EU responded to the world's largest displacement crisis in Sudan (over 10 million IDPs), allocating over EUR 273 million in response to the crisis (including over EUR 161 million in Sudan alone), and EUR 157 million in the Horn of Africa to address drought, food insecurity and displacement. The EU has also stayed engaged in Central Sahel, addressing forced displacement, and in the Great Lakes region, providing healthcare in the face of epidemics and armed violence.

Asia and the Pacific

In 2025, the EU's engagement with East Asia, South-East Asia and South Asia continued to deepen, consolidating the comprehensive regional approach set out in the EU's Strategy for the Indo-Pacific[17], including by advancing energy connectivity and Just Energy Transition Partnerships.

[16] https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/54412/final_declaration-en.pdf
[17] https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eu-indo-pacific-strategy_en

The Global Gateway flagship "Energy Connectivity in South Asia" demonstrates how the EU links sustainable growth, green transition and regional integration by supporting the development of a cross-border electricity market.

A key Global Gateway milestone was the signing of the EU–Africa–India Digital Corridor Blue Raman[18], which will reinforce resilient submarine cable connectivity and a secure, diversified global data architecture. The EU also adopted a EUR 42 million initiative to strengthen the use of Copernicus data in Asia Pacific, supporting evidence-based decision making on climate and spatial planning.

At the first EU–Central Asia Summit in April 2025, the EU announced a EUR 12 billion Team Europe Global Gateway investment package, accompanied by a Declaration of Intent on CRM, targeting sustainable transport, green energy, digital connectivity and water, resulting in eight new contracts to improve multimodal links between Central Asia and Europe.

At the first EU-Pacific Business Forum in Fiji, the EU announced nearly EUR 300 million in Global Gateway investments for climate resilience, sustainable growth, transport, digital connectivity, water, renewable energy, and trade development across the Pacific, positioning the Green-Blue Alliance[19] as a flagship for the region.

The EU provided more EUR 163 million in lifesaving assistance in Afghanistan in 2025, as well as delivering 390 tonnes of medical and nutritional items to alleviate the needs of the Afghani people.

The Americas and the Caribbean

The fourth Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC)–EU Summit took place in November 2025 in Colombia, alongside Civil Society and Business Forums. Leaders reaffirmed the strategic importance of the EU–CELAC partnership and set priorities, including under the EU–LAC Global Gateway Investment Agenda (GGIA). Despite a challenging geopolitical context, the EU and CELAC adopted a Joint Declaration and two complementary declarations on citizen security and care, underscoring their shared commitment to multilateralism, trade and investment, the green and digital transitions, social inclusion, and cooperation on security, justice, and the fight against transnational organised crime.

By 2025, GGIA implementation included more than 80 projects confirming the EU's position as a leading investor in LAC and showcasing the strength of the "Team Europe" approach. Flagship initiatives include regional electricity integration, the Condosat satellite-connectivity initiative, and the EU–LAC supercomputing network for AI. Since May 2025, the EU holds permanent observer status in the Latin American and Caribbean Energy Organisation[20] to advance jointly on clean energy transition and sustainable policies.

Cooperation between the EU and Caribbean partners also deepened within the framework of the Samoa Agreement and its Caribbean Protocol, anchoring political dialogue and development cooperation in a renewed, long-term partnership.

In the Caribbean, the Global Gateway Sargassum Initiative developed national roadmaps for sargassum valorisation, turning an environmental challenge into a significant economic opportunity.

[18] https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/global-gateway/eu-africa-india-digital-corridor_en
[19] https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/global-gateway/green-blue-alliance-pacific_en
[20] https://www.olade.org/en/

Cooperation with the US focused on engagement with different categories and levels of stakeholders beyond federal authorities via public diplomacy, city to city and education outreach actions. Engagement with Canada positioned the EU as a trusted and reliable partner in key priorities sectors such as trade, digital and defence and security. Cooperation with both countries were also centred around Arctic matters (Arctic Urban Regional Cooperation and Youth engagement).

In and around Venezuela, where 58.6% of the population faces extreme poverty, the EU acted as the leading humanitarian donor in 2025, providing over EUR 52 million.

A new humanitarian stockpile was established in Barbados to reinforce the EU's rapid response capability for tropical cyclones, floods and earthquakes in the Caribbean and neighbouring regions.

EU Enlargement (Western Balkans, Türkiye, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova, Georgia)

The 2025 Enlargement Package, adopted in November, confirmed that momentum for enlargement remained high on the EU agenda and that the accession of new Member States was increasingly within reach, provided that partners deliver on fundamental reforms.

The Western Balkans saw steady progress on the fundamentals of the accession process across most partners, with Montenegro and Albania moving closer to the objective of completing negotiations. For Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, the screening process (technical examination of the EU *acquis*) closed in 2025, and the Commission assessed that the fundamentals, internal market and external relations clusters were ready to be opened. Georgia formally remains a candidate country, but recent actions of the Georgian authorities have *de facto* halted the accession process. Türkiye remained a partner of strategic importance and a candidate country despite accession negotiations remaining at a standstill.

The Commission developed "eAccession", an innovative AI tool, to help candidate countries accelerate regulatory approximation while saving time and resources.

The EU continued to support regional economic integration, including through the modernisation of payment systems and the inclusion by the European Payments Council of Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia in the SEPA schemes in October 2025, significantly reducing transaction times and costs for citizens and businesses.

The Ukraine Facility and the Growth Plans for the Western Balkans and the Republic of Moldova, illustrate how the EU combines political commitment, financial support and conditionality to accelerate convergence with the EU. The Facilities consist of EUR 6 billion in grants and loans for the Western Balkans and EUR 1.9 billion for Moldova, with funding linked to implementation of jointly agreed Reform Agendas and gradual integration into selected areas of the Single Market. By the end of 2025, Reform Agendas have been adopted for all partners, and the prefinancing has been disbursed to Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Moldova.

Partners' full alignment with the Common Security and Defence Policy and Common Foreign and Security Policy, including EU restrictive measures, was promoted and the EU responded to partners' requests to strengthen their resilience and security against hybrid and other threats.

The EU maintained substantial support for refugees in Türkiye, committing EUR 1.3 billion in support to refugees under the budget for 2025-2027, while a new "visa cascade" system was introduced in 2025 to facilitate travel for bona fide Turkish travellers in the Schengen area.

European Neighbourhood

European Neighbourhood East

In the Eastern Neighbourhood, marked by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the EU continued to engage with partner countries of the region either on bilateral or on regional basis (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine). The Eastern Partnership continued to provide a well-established and efficient framework of cooperation to all participants. With Belarus, the EU maintained its policy of pressure on the authorities while supporting citizens, civil society and independent media.

The programme "Support to Advanced Learning and Training (SALT I-III)" assists Belarusian students, lecturers and researchers forced to flee the regime. It is a strategically important initiative for preserving Belarus' intellectual potential.

The Global Gateway strategy and the 2025-2027 multiannual action plans for the Eastern Neighbourhood remained key for supporting resilience, connectivity and socio-economic development. The newly approved multiannual action plans (excluding assistance for Ukraine) totalled EUR 668.2 million in commitments.

A new strategic approach to the Black Sea region[21] was adopted in May, and a Connectivity Agenda was endorsed in October, which links Europe with Central Asia through the Black Sea region, Türkiye and the South Caucasus and provides an important basis for closer cooperation with South Caucasus partners on sustainable transport, energy and digital links.

European Neighbourhood South and the Middle East/Gulf region

A prosperous, connected, resilient, peaceful and stable North Africa, Middle East and Gulf region is in the strategic interest of the EU.

In 2025, the EU equipped itself with new tools, notably the Pact for the Mediterranean[22] and the launch of a number of Strategic and Comprehensive Partnerships, to deliver more coherent, impact-oriented action across the region. A dedicated Commission Directorate-General for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf became fully operational as the hub for the Commission's relations with 19 partner countries.

The war in Gaza continued to generate a severe humanitarian crisis, widespread destruction and increased instability across the Middle East. The EU convened the first Palestine Donor Group meeting in November 2025, while tabling a comprehensive programme for Palestine's recovery and resilience for 2025-2027 and proposing restrictive measures in response to actions undermining the two-state solution.

The EU remains the biggest international donor and provider of humanitarian aid to Palestinians, having allocated a total of EUR 220 million in emergency humanitarian support in 2025. In addition to funding, the EU maintained operational support through air bridge flights, medical evacuations and road cargo actions.

[21] https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_25_1348
[22] JOIN(2025) 26 of 16 October 2025 https://north-africa-middle-east-gulf.ec.europa.eu/joint-communication-pact-mediterranean_en

In the Gulf, Strategic Partnership Agreements were offered to all six Gulf Cooperation Council members; by the end of 2025, five had responded positively and negotiations had been launched with the United Arab Emirates and Qatar.

The Medusa Submarine Cable System is a transformative project for regional and international telecommunications, which will provide resilient, high-capacity connectivity routes between Europe and North Africa.

Overseas countries and territories (OCTs)

The 13 OCTs are non-sovereign entities that maintain special constitutional links to Denmark, France, and the Netherlands and form an integral part of the wider European family. The territories embrace an increasingly strategic role for the EU, bringing assets such as vast exclusive economic zones, and access to important natural resources, including CRM, and key maritime zones and sea routes.

The Decision on the Overseas Association including Greenland (DOAG) earmarks EUR 500 million to support OCTs' economic and social development, and address climate change and biodiversity loss for 2021-2027. The Commission proposed an amendment to the DOAG, which entails doubling the funds allocated to the OCTs to EUR 999 million for the period 2028-2034.

In 2025, relations with Greenland continued to expand and intensify in a context of heightened international interest for the Arctic, covering areas like CRM, renewable energy, connectivity, in addition to education and fisheries. The EU-Greenland partnership was marked by two policy dialogues, high-level visits and the inaugural EU-Greenland Week in November in Brussels.

2025 was the final year of implementation of the first Action Plan of French Polynesia's Water Policy (2021-2030). Results achieved included an increase in the number of municipalities distributing drinking water, continued actions to secure water catchment areas, and the strengthening of sector governance through a fully operational technical committee. A second Action Plan is scheduled to cover the period 2026-2030.