



Council of the
European Union

Brussels, 24 November 2023
(OR. en)

15986/23

DEVGEN 218	DIGIT 280
FIN 1246	COLAC 155
ACP 125	COEST 639
RELEX 1390	SAN 700
MIGR 418	GENDER 210
SUSTDEV 154	CLIMA 597
COHOM 223	ENER 640
COAFR 422	MAMA 176
COASI 208	

COVER NOTE

From: Secretary-General of the European Commission, signed by Ms Martine DEPREZ, Director

date of receipt: 21 November 2023

To: Ms Thérèse BLANCHET, Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union

No. Cion doc.: COM(2023) 717 final

Subject: REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL
2023 Annual Report on the implementation of the European Union's External Action Instruments in 2022

Delegations will find attached document COM(2023) 717 final.

Encl.: COM(2023) 717 final



Brussels, 21.11.2023
COM(2023) 717 final

**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND
THE COUNCIL**

2023 Annual Report

**on the implementation of the European Union's External Action Instruments
in 2022**

{SWD(2023) 357 final}

Table of Contents

GLOBAL COMMITMENTS	1
Introduction	1
The EU response to Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine	2
EU: a strong global actor	3
Global Gateway	4
Fostering sustainable development	5
GLOBAL PRIORITIES	5
Human development	5
Green Deal	6
Digitalisation, science, technology and innovation	7
Sustainable growth and jobs	8
Migration and forced displacement	8
Governance, peace, security and human rights	9
GLOBAL REACH	9
Sub-Saharan Africa	9
Asia and the Pacific	9
The Americas and the Caribbean	10
European Neighbourhood	11
Western Balkans and Türkiye	12
Overseas countries and territories (OCTs)	12

GLOBAL COMMITMENTS

Introduction

In 2022, as the world continued to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, the international community had to face a new crisis with Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and its consequences. Russia's aggression created a major humanitarian emergency, an increase in global food prices further exacerbating global food insecurity, and a prolonged energy crisis.

The EU, through its external action instruments and international partnerships, responded to the war's impact by stepping up its political, humanitarian and financial support to Ukraine and neighbouring countries, while also strengthening its support to other partners, especially the least developed and most vulnerable.

This report outlines key elements in the EU's financial support for international partnerships, humanitarian aid, foreign policy and enlargement in 2022. Under the multiannual financial framework for 2021-2027, a single instrument, the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument-Global Europe (NDICI-Global Europe), integrates most former external financing instruments and is complemented by a few targeted instruments such as humanitarian aid and the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III)¹.

2022 saw the start of the implementation of the **EU's Global Gateway** strategy² to boost sustainable connectivity through infrastructure investment around the world in five priority areas, based on a 'Team Europe' approach.³ Under this strategy, European and African Unions adopted the Africa-Europe investment package⁴.

As part of Global Gateway, the EU continued to implement **Economic and Investment Plans** for the Neighbourhood and enlargement regions, focused on small and medium-sized companies and the green and digital transition in the Eastern Partnership region, and on green transition, climate change resilience, connectivity and support for the private sector in the Southern Neighbourhood.

The EU continued to provide **humanitarian aid** to alleviate the suffering of millions of the most vulnerable people across the world. In 2022, the EU set up the **European Humanitarian Response Capacity** to step up immediate capacity for humanitarian response to sudden natural and human-induced disasters.

The EU's enlargement assistance supported rural development and investment in key areas such as transport, energy security, and the digital and green transitions. In June, the European Council recognised that the future of **Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia** lies within the EU, and granted candidate status to **Ukraine and Moldova**.

¹ For details, see the Staff Working Document part I, Introduction, accompanying this Annual Report.

² https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/global-gateway_en

³ Combining resources of the EU with those of EU Member States and European development finance institutions.

⁴ See p.4

The EU continued its support for **democratisation and human rights**, deploying six election observation missions (Colombia, Kenya, Lebanon, Lesotho, São Tomé and Príncipe and Timor Leste) and conducting follow-up missions in eight countries.

The EU reaffirmed its commitment to **global security**, and the European Peace Facility supported peace in partner countries and regions such as Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, Moldova and the Western Balkans.

The EU continued to support countries in overcoming the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and launched a new **global health strategy**⁵ to improve global health security and deliver better health for all. The EU also responded to other localised epidemics, such as the new Ebola and cholera outbreaks and the monkeypox emergency.

In 2022, EU and Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) advanced towards the signature of the **'post-Cotonou' Agreement**⁶. In the interim, the Cotonou Partnership Agreement was extended to mid-2023.

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

The EU's response to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine was united, determined, and immediate. The 27 Member States and their partners around the world **condemned the unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression**, acting swiftly to isolate Russia politically and economically. The EU also condemned the reported violations of international humanitarian law.

Demonstrating its unwavering backing for Ukraine, the EU stepped up political, humanitarian, and financial support for the country. During 2022, in close coordination with the G7 and other partners, the EU adopted nine packages of unprecedented sanctions against persons and entities responsible for the invasion, targeting key Russian financial, energy and transport sectors and state-owned enterprises, and resulting in about EUR 24.1 billion worth of assets frozen in the EU.

The **Temporary Protection Directive** was activated for the first time to provide immediate protection to almost 4 million people forced to flee Ukraine (in addition to over 6.6 million displaced within Ukraine itself). Human trafficking was largely prevented by the implementation of an EU common anti-trafficking plan to protect those arriving in the EU.

Taking a 'Team Europe' approach, the EU, its Member States and financial institutions **mobilised EUR 18.9 billion**⁷ in financial assistance, budget support and humanitarian aid. EUR 3.1 billion in military support was also mobilised through the European Peace Facility and an EU military assistance mission for the Ukrainian armed forces was set up with a budget of over EUR 100 million. Following Ukraine's activation of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism in February, more than 80 000 tonnes of in-kind assistance were delivered in 2022, worth an estimated EUR 502 million.

EUR 330 million in grant funding **supported emergency response** in fields such as housing and critical infrastructure repairs, including under the EU-Ukraine Solidarity Lanes, resilient digital transformation

⁵ https://health.ec.europa.eu/internationalcooperation/global-health_en

⁶ https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/european-development-policy/acp-eu-partnership_en

⁷ Excluding the share of EBRD support not directly covered by EU guarantees.

and cybersecurity, and countering disinformation. Other EU programmes, worth nearly EUR 200 million, were also repurposed to address the war's consequences.

Total disbursements of EU assistance amounted to EUR 10.1 billion⁸, of which EUR 7.2 billion in macro-financial assistance and EUR 686 million in budget support.

Nuclear safety was a major concern due to Russia's irresponsible behaviour in and around Ukraine's nuclear facilities. The Commission mobilised the European Instrument for International Nuclear Safety Cooperation to urgently address the destruction caused, particularly in the Chernobyl exclusion zone. EU support included EUR 5 million for bilateral assistance to restore monitoring capabilities and a EUR 5 million contribution to the International Chernobyl Cooperation Account for the reconstruction of nuclear-safety-related infrastructure. An additional EUR 3.4 million supported the International Atomic Energy Agency, including their presence at critical nuclear sites in Ukraine.

The Russian blockade of Ukrainian exports and destruction of crops intensified the global food crisis. The number of people acutely **food-insecure** reached a record level of around 258 million in 2022⁹.

Using a comprehensive 'Team Europe' approach, the EU stepped up its support for **food security** and supported the most affected countries in Africa, the Middle East, Caribbean and Pacific, including through the facilitation of Ukrainian exports via the EU-Ukraine Solidarity Lanes. This unified response to global food insecurity should mobilise around EUR 18 billion in 2021-2024, of which EUR 8.3 billion from the EU Institutions and around EUR 9.6 billion from Member States. In 2022, the EU Institutions disbursed around EUR 2.6 billion to fight global food insecurity, including around EUR 1 billion in humanitarian food assistance¹⁰.

The EU also stepped-up efforts to address global fertiliser shortages highlighted in the Communication on Fertilisers published in November¹¹.

EU: a strong global actor

In a year of increasing uncertainty, the EU remained a driving force for multilateralism and an effective responder to global challenges, pursuing an ambitious Neighbourhood policy, promoting solidarity and developing comprehensive partnerships to secure and promote peace, stability, democracy and human rights.

EU Member States also reaffirmed their commitment to take greater responsibility for European security and defence, in close cooperation with international partners, to protect common interests and values.

⁸ Without taking into account repurposing toward conflict-related actions.

⁹ <https://www.fsinplatform.org/global-report-food-crises-2023>

¹⁰ This amount includes humanitarian assistance for food, nutrition and livelihood support, as well as 50 % of the humanitarian multi-purpose cash programmes (percentage of multi-purpose cash transfers estimated to be spent on food items, based on a study conducted by the Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) in 2023).

¹¹ [COM\(2022\) 590 final/2 of 9 November 2022](#).

The EU and its 27 Member States, in a ‘Team Europe’ approach, collectively remain the largest provider of official development assistance (ODA) with EUR 92.8 billion in 2022¹², accounting for 43 % of global ODA¹³ (representing 0.59 % of gross national income).

The EU and its Member States stepped up assistance to partner countries, making sure that support for Ukraine does not come at the expense of the rest of the world.

The first **EU-United Nations (UN) High-Level Dialogue** led by President von der Leyen and UN Secretary-General Guterres took place in July. It confirmed our shared common objectives and the value of working together to address global challenges.

The EU mobilised EUR 2.6 billion in humanitarian aid to help address the pressing needs of affected populations around the world. The EU, Member States, EIB and EBRD, in a ‘Team Europe’ approach, remain a key global humanitarian donor, including to ‘forgotten emergencies’ like the Sahel famine.

The EU and its Member States continued to lead on international **COVID-19 solidarity** with 502.2 million vaccine doses shared with partner countries. Of these, 422 million doses were shared through COVAX and 80.2 million doses bilaterally.

Implementation of the Global Gateway initiative on **manufacturing and access to vaccines, medicines and health technologies in Africa** progressed quickly and an initiative to support similar efforts in Latin America and the Caribbean was announced.

The EU and its Member States also continued to lead global efforts to tackle climate change and environmental challenges, and the EU remains the world’s largest provider of public international climate finance with EUR 5.340 billion over the 2021-2022 period.

Global Gateway

Throughout 2022, the Commission, working closely with other actors in a ‘Team Europe’ approach, continued to implement the **Global Gateway strategy**¹⁴ with the launch of major Global Gateway investment packages and Team Europe initiatives.

The first meeting of the **Global Gateway Board**, took place on 11 December, chaired by President von der Leyen and bringing together Member States’ Ministers of Foreign Affairs.

As an important step towards mobilising the planned EUR 300 billion in investment by 2027, the Commission signed a guarantee agreement worth EUR 26.725 billion with the European Investment Bank for public investment under the **European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+)**. In addition, the Commission allocated EUR 8.45 billion¹⁵ in financial guarantees covering private sector investments assigned under EFSD+ to support 56 proposed investment programmes in the Western Balkans and Türkiye, in the Neighbourhood regions and Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin American, Asia and

¹² Based on preliminary 2022 data from OECD, published in spring 2023.

¹³ Global ODA is defined here as including ODA reported by the EU collective and all other donor countries.

¹⁴ https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/global-gateway_en

¹⁵ The Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) allocated EUR 6.05 billion and the Directorate-General for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) EUR 2.4 billion.

the Pacific. These private-sector guarantees could generate investment worth more than EUR 67 billion.

Key investments in this first year of implementation include boosting digital connectivity between the EU and its partners, increasing renewable energy production and energy security of supply, access to finance for small and medium-sized enterprises, and expanding access to and manufacturing capacity for vaccines, medicines and health technologies.

As the first deliverable of Global Gateway, the sixth EU-African Union (AU) Summit on 17-18 February announced an **Africa-Europe investment package**, that will mobilise investment worth at least EUR 150 billion by 2027, including EUR 28 billion in grants.

In the Neighbourhood and enlargement regions, three regional Economic and Investment Plans are helping to implement Global Gateway with 84 flagship projects mobilising up to EUR 77 billion of investment by 2027. Large-scale infrastructure projects are implemented across the Western Balkans and the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhoods, such as the railway corridor VIII between North Macedonia and Bulgaria, the Black Sea undersea electricity cable between Georgia and Romania, and the Medusa submarine optical fibre cable connecting Northern Africa with Spain, France, Italy, Cyprus and Portugal.

Fostering sustainable development

The EU's priorities for development actions – human development; Green Deal; sustainable growth and decent jobs; digitalisation; inequalities, migration; and governance, peace and security – support international partners to achieve the UN **Sustainable Development Goals**.

The EU and its Member States consolidated their commitment to achieving them including through the roll-out of the **Global Gateway** strategy, which contributes to all Sustainable Development Goals through its investment priorities.

In 2022 the Commission actively integrated the Sustainable Development Goals into the **EU's Better Regulation Framework**¹⁶.

GLOBAL PRIORITIES

Human development

Unprecedented challenges, including conflict, climate change, health pandemics and the silent global crisis in education, have reversed progress on human development and increased inequalities in recent years. In 2022, the EU redoubled efforts in its various fields of action.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for better prevention, preparedness and response to cope with future health crises. A new **EU global health strategy**¹⁷ was launched on 30 November, as part of the Global Gateway strategy, highlighting the importance of functional, inclusive health systems and the need to address health security preparedness, while improving equitable access to

¹⁶ https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/planning-and-proposing-law/better-regulation_en

¹⁷ https://health.ec.europa.eu/internationalcooperation/global-health_en

vaccines, medicines and medical technologies, and boosting the capacity to produce them. In 2022, the EU pledged EUR 715 million¹⁸ to the Global Fund.

The Commission continued **social protection interventions** in 10 countries and, through two global facilities, focused on systems building, digitalisation and registry, and specific social protection schemes for women and informal workers.

In line with its Gender Action Plan III, the EU continued to promote gender-responsive humanitarian action and **gender equality**. It highlighted issues relating to women, peace and security in relevant multilateral and regional fora and in bilateral dialogues. Enhancing gender mainstreaming continued, also through Common Security and Defence Policy missions and operations.

The EU continued to protect children and children's rights around the globe, including children in armed conflicts. In doing so, it met its commitments under the EU strategy on the rights of the child for 2021-2024¹⁹.

Representing over 1.8 billion individuals, young people are key agents of change, helping to shape more resilient, inclusive and prosperous societies globally. In October, the Commission adopted the first ever **Youth Action Plan in the EU's external relations**²⁰ to engage, empower and connect young people globally.

Launched in May, the regional '**Jobs through trade and investment**' **Team Europe initiative** in the Southern Neighbourhood supports a holistic approach to job creation by bringing together initiatives that link trade, investment, and entrepreneurship with job creation and human capital development.

Education continued to be a key area in EU external relations. The EU worked towards ensuring the right to education for every child, including children and young people affected by conflicts, crises and humanitarian emergencies. The EU allocated 10 % of its humanitarian aid budget to education in emergency contexts. The EU was recognised as a **global champion for education** at the EU's Transforming Education Summit in September.

EU investment focused on teachers, **more equitable and inclusive education systems**, and on skills that will enable partner countries to make the most of the digital and green transitions.

Green Deal

At the 27th conference of the parties to the UN Framework Convention on **Climate Change** (UNFCCC COP27), the EU presented major initiatives to support partner countries mitigate and respond to climate change. Together with the African Union, Denmark, Germany, France and the Netherlands, it launched the Team Europe initiative on climate change adaptation and resilience in Africa, bringing together existing and new climate change adaptation programmes worth over EUR 1 billion.

To help phase out coal, the EU, with its G7 partners, signed **Just Energy Transition Partnerships** (JETP) with Indonesia and Vietnam and made progress on the implementation of the JETP with South Africa.

¹⁸ For the period 2023-2025.

¹⁹ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/rights-child/eu-strategy-rights-child-and-european-child-guarantee_en

²⁰ https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/youth/youth-action-plan_en

With Germany, the EU also launched a global platform for coal regions to support just economic transition through knowledge sharing and networking.

By the end of 2022, the EU had provided 29 partner countries technical support to design, update and implement nationally determined contributions and National Adaptation Plans. Through its climate and energy dialogues, the EU engaged with the US, India, China and other major emitters, on energy transition policies, best practices and green technologies to accelerate the development of renewable energy and promote energy efficiency.

The EU was also actively engaged in multilateral fora to push for a global energy transition aligned with the Paris Agreement objectives. It supported the development of a global hydrogen market. Bilateral non-binding agreements were signed in 2022 with Ukraine, Egypt, Japan, Namibia, and Kazakhstan to develop the demand for renewable hydrogen or contribute to **renewable energy and hydrogen production**.

The Biodiversity COP15 in December adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. The EU reconfirmed its commitment to providing EUR 7 billion in support of **biodiversity** as part of its external cooperation.

The Commission adopted a new **EU agenda for international ocean governance**²¹ reflecting the priorities set under the European Green Deal.

The EU also stepped up its engagement with partner countries to support **sustainable consumption and production (SCP)**, notably the circular economy transition, with the implementation of SWITCH to Green, including regional programmes in Asia, Africa, and the Mediterranean.

The Commission launched the **Africa-Europe green energy initiative** to increase renewable energy generation capacity by 300 gigawatts and secure access to affordable, reliable, and sustainable energy.

Following the launch of the Global Methane pledge at COP26, the EU supported the development of the International Methane Emission Observatory, managed by the UN environment programme, for detailed data collection, capacity building and methane emission reduction support actions.

Digitalisation, science, technology and innovation

Under Global Gateway, 2022 saw major progress on digital programmes including in Sub-Saharan Africa with the Data Flagship, the EurAfrica Gateway (international submarine cables) and Regional Fibre Optic Backbones in Africa (regional/cross-border terrestrial links). In addition, the first Global Gateway digital economy package worth EUR 820 million was launched in Nigeria by Executive Vice-President Vestager.

The regional Asia and Pacific branch of the **Digital for Development Hub (D4D Hub)** platform was launched at the Indo-Pacific Forum in February. The Latin America and the Caribbean branch was established through 2022, and the Africa branch continued implement several flagships such as the African Union-EU D4D Hub project and IDEA.

Progress was made towards the launch of an **EU-LAC Digital Alliance**, supported by the D4D Hub, securing funding for the establishment of an EU-LAC digital policy dialogue, expansion of the BELLA

²¹ [JOIN/2022/28 final of 24 June 2022](#).

programme for digital infrastructure, creation of a digital accelerator for business, and implementation of a regional Copernicus programme.

The second phase of the **Global Monitoring for Environment and Security and Africa (GMES&Africa)**, the most significant initiative for Earth observation and global monitoring for environment and security collaboration between Africa and the EU, was successfully initiated.

The Global Gateway Africa-Europe investment package foresees three flagship initiatives with a special focus on science, technology and innovation to support the African Union-EU Innovation Agenda, Regional Centres of Excellence for the green transition, and Earth observation and space technologies.

Sustainable growth and jobs

In 2022, the EU supported sustainable, inclusive growth and the creation of decent jobs in partner countries by facilitating the mobilisation of public and private financing. The *Investing in Sustainable Development Report*²² on implementation of the **Addis Ababa Action Agenda** was published.

The EU expert facility on employment, labour, and social protection (**SOCIEUX+**) extended its operations to Western Balkans countries with EUR 10 million in funding.

The Commission continued to explore **bilateral strategic partnerships on raw materials value chains**, notably with partners in Africa (e.g., Namibia), Latin America, Western Balkans and Central Asia (e.g. Kazakhstan), via Memoranda of Understanding.

In November, the Commission concluded negotiations with the Republic of Angola on a Sustainable Investment Facilitation Agreement that will help attract and expand investments while mainstreaming environment and labour rights commitments.

The *2022 Aid for Trade Progress Report*²³ confirmed that EU aid for trade (Aft) helped partner countries to increase trading capacity and tackle the COVID-19 pandemic. The EU and its Member States continue to be the main providers of global Aft.

Migration and forced displacement

Most migration routes into the EU saw increased numbers in 2022, particularly the central and eastern Mediterranean and the western Balkan routes. Globally, the number of forcibly displaced people reached 100 million for the first time, while Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine resulted in millions of further displacements.

Demonstrating their joint engagement, in December, the EU and its Member States launched two regional flagship Team Europe initiatives to strengthen migration management, notably along the central and western Mediterranean and Atlantic migration routes. In December, the Commission presented an EU action plan to address challenges along the Western Balkans route.

²² European Commission, Directorate-General for International Partnerships, *Investing in sustainable development: progress report 2018-2020*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2022, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2841/156351>

²³ European Commission, Directorate-General for International Partnerships, *EU aid for trade : progress report 2022*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2023, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2841/005862>

In 2022, a further EUR 310 million package was adopted to support the Syrian displaced population inside Syria and refugees and vulnerable host communities in Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon²⁴. Together, the EU and its Member States remain the largest donor in response to this crisis. The **Brussels VI Conference on ‘Supporting the future of Syria and the region’** mobilised pledges totalling EUR 6.4 billion.

Governance, peace, security and human rights

EU action contributed to a stronger Europe in the world by promoting an integrated approach to conflicts and crises, including support for peace and resilience building, **security sector reform and capacity building in support of development and security for development (CBDS)**.

In **Afghanistan**, the EU focused on preventing the collapse of the country, mindful of the potential social and economic repercussions inside and outside Afghanistan. Particular attention was given to women’s and girls’ rights and gender equality. The Forum for Afghan Women Leaders was set up.

The EU continued to uphold and advance human rights and democracy using its multilateral, regional and bilateral tools and engaging with civil society. With the Human Rights and Democracy Network (HRDN), the EU co-organised **the 24th EU-NGO Human Rights Forum**²⁵, which focused on accountability and justice. In addition, the EU renewed and significantly increased its support for the ProtectDefenders.eu mechanism, which in 2022 provided support to more than 6 500 of the most-at-risk human rights defenders.

In 2022, the Commission allocated EUR 170 million to **Yemen**, that remains one of the world’s worst humanitarian crises. Millions of Yemenis are displaced, destitute and malnourished.

GLOBAL REACH

Sub-Saharan Africa

The **sixth EU-African Union Summit** adopted a joint vision for a renewed partnership, complemented by the Global Gateway investment package. The **11th Commission-to-Commission** meeting between the EU and African Union was held on 28 November and covered the whole spectrum of EU-African Union cooperation.

Under the **Youth Mobility for Africa programme**, 36 Erasmus+ capacity building projects were awarded in 31 countries.

The EU and Namibia signed a Memorandum of Understanding in November to establish a strategic partnership on sustainable raw materials value chains and renewable hydrogen.

Asia and the Pacific

The EU hosted the first **EU-ASEAN** (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) **Summit** in Brussels in December, marking 45 years of diplomatic relations. The event launched a new **EU-ASEAN energy dialogue** to support the energy transition and the regional integration of energy systems and Global

²⁴ Including EUR 240 million in humanitarian aid.

²⁵ https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/stop-impunity-%E2%80%93-road-accountability-and-justice_en

Gateway initiatives mobilising EUR 10 billion of investment. In the margins of the summit, partnership and cooperation agreements were signed with **Malaysia** and **Thailand**. EU and ASEAN also signed in October the EU-ASEAN Comprehensive Air Transport Agreement, the first-ever region-to-region aviation agreement.

At the 28th **EU-Japan Summit**, EU and Japan pledged to cooperate to uphold the rules-based international order and agreed the EU's first digital partnership.

In September, the first EU-India Green Hydrogen Forum was organised to support public and private sector engagement on the development of hydrogen to decarbonise the Indian economy.

The EU and its Member States were swift to support **Pakistan** following floods in June which affected millions of people.

In 2022, EU budget support enabled 750 000 out-of-school children to access education through 25 309 learning centres in **Bangladesh**.

The **EU-Central Asia Connectivity Conference** in Samarkand advanced regional connectivity initiatives and discussed the need to identify sustainable, reliable, and efficient transport, digital and energy connections between Europe and Central Asia. The conference also announced the launch of a digital connectivity Global Gateway initiative²⁶.

The partnership between the EU and the **Gulf Cooperation Council** gained new momentum in 2022 with a Joint Council session in February, which endorsed an ambitious five-year joint action programme. In May, the EU adopted a Joint Communication on '*A strategic Partnership with the Gulf*'²⁷.

Engagement on methane emission reduction was also developed in the region through conferences in Turkmenistan, in the Southeast Asian region and in China.

The Americas and the Caribbean

On 27 October, the Foreign Ministers of **Community of Latin American and Caribbean (CELAC) states** and the EU met for the first time since 2018 in Buenos Aires.

In December, the EU and Chile concluded the **EU-Chile Advanced Framework Agreement**, updating the existing bilateral Association Agreement.

On 22 June, President von der Leyen and Pedro Sánchez, Prime Minister of Spain, launched a **new EU-LAC partnership** on local manufacturing of vaccines, medicines and other health technologies, and on strengthening the resilience of health systems.

Venezuela's socio-economic and political crisis continued with over 14 million people estimated to be in need and more than 7 million Venezuelans leaving their country. The EU's contribution to multi-sector relief operations in Venezuela and the wider region supported around 3.1 million vulnerable people.

²⁶ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_22_6963

²⁷ [JOIN\(2022\) 13 final of 18 May 2022](#)

European Neighbourhood

In the Eastern Neighbourhood, 2022 was dominated by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, and a strengthening of relations with the EU's eastern partner countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine). The EU also maintained its increased level of support to the people of Belarus.

In December, Foreign Ministers from EU and Eastern partners countries reaffirmed the relevance of the **Eastern Partnership agenda**, while acknowledging the need to adjust implementation in view of current events.

The EU facilitated peace talks between **Armenia and Azerbaijan** and deployed a common security and defence policy mission to Armenia, the first for a Collective Security Treaty Organisation country. The EU also continued to provide humanitarian assistance to both sides.

The Memorandum of Understanding on energy signed with **Azerbaijan** in July will strengthen the EU's energy security and support Azerbaijan's green transition.

Through strong support for **Belarusian** civil society and independent media, the EU helped preserve civic engagement and free voices in the face of brutal repression by the Lukashenko regime.

The EU provided strong support for Moldova's resilience and stepped-up cooperation on security and defence (including cooperation on hybrid threats, cyber security and fighting disinformation and assistance measures for the Moldovan armed forces under the European Peace Facility). In March, a High-Level Political and Security Dialogue was launched. The EU continued to provide confidence-building measures to encourage conflict settlement efforts.

In **Georgia**, the EU helped reduce the country's vulnerability to hybrid and cyber threats and supported the modernisation of its defence forces via the European Peace Facility. It continued to be actively involved in conflict resolution efforts, for example through the work of the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia and the EU monitoring mission.

At the fourth EU-Southern Neighbourhood Ministerial meeting held in Barcelona on 24 November, the EU and its partners confirmed their commitment to strengthening Mediterranean partnership ties. They also committed to address the most pressing economic, social, environmental and security challenges, focusing on the consequences of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, especially the implications for energy and food security.

In October, the **EU-Morocco Green Partnership** was signed. The EUR 50 million *Énergie Verte* programme aims to boost Morocco's energy transition, while the EUR 115 million *'Terre Verte'* programme supports sustainable development of forestry and agriculture.

In November, the EU and Egypt stepped up their cooperation on the clean energy transition by signing a Memorandum of Understanding on a strategic partnership on renewable hydrogen. A trilateral agreement with Egypt and Israel provides the framework for the delivery of Israeli gas to the EU through Egypt's liquefaction capacity.

Western Balkans and Türkiye

In 2022, the EU remained committed to promoting the European perspective of the region and, in July, opened the negotiation process with **North Macedonia** and **Albania**. It also granted candidate status to **Bosnia and Herzegovina** in December and reached an agreement on visa liberalisation for Kosovo²⁸. On 6 December, the **first EU-Western Balkans Summit** was held in Tirana.

The key policy framework for IPA III funds is still the Economic and Investment Plans and Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, implemented via the **Western Balkans Investment Framework**. In 2022, 40 flagship programmes were approved, expected to leverage EUR 5.7 billion of investment.

A major achievement in November was the swift adoption of an unprecedented EUR 1 billion **energy support package for the Western Balkans** in response to the energy crisis.

Türkiye hosts the largest refugee population in the world. Through two humanitarian flagship programmes, the EU provided cash assistance to nearly 1.5 million people and supported over 800 000 children and their families in accessing education.

Overseas countries and territories (OCTs)

The OCTs maintain special constitutional links with three Member States: Denmark, France and the Netherlands.

The **19th Annual EU-OCT Forum** was hosted by New Caledonia on 22 November. OCTs play an increasingly strategic role for the EU, are important EU ambassadors in their regions and bring with them significant assets, such as vast exclusive economic zones.

In the Caribbean, the **'RESEMBID' Programme** helps all OCTs in the region with resilience building, sustainable energy and marine biodiversity. Biodiversity work has benefited habitats in six OCTs and some 400 000 citizens and residents.

²⁸ 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.