

EUROPEAN UNION

Party Portrait

The European Union is a 28-member state international organization based on economic and political integration. Economic integration has advanced furthest, with a single market and free movement of peoples. The combined economy of the EU is the second largest in the world, in normal terms. The economic, geographic and political diversity of the EU leads to important differences in perspectives on external issues. The EU's current position towards the Middle East is largely shaped by the issue of asylum seekers. It has caused divisions among EU member states over a common response to this issue and Islamic terrorism. Numerous terror attacks have taken place in EU member states, fighters in Syria and Iraq.

Key Interests

- Return to regional stability
- End conflict in Syria and Iraq, ending the flow of asylum seekers from the region
- Prevent further Islamic terror attacks in EU member states
- Two-state solution to the Middle East Peace process
- Maintain the solidarity and common foreign policy in the EU

Sources of Leverage

Economic – The EU has the capacity to grant access to its market and the provision of development assistance, particularly through the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and the establishment of sanctions
Convening Power – The EU has the capacity to initiate diplomatic talks. The EU's Euro-Mediterranean Partnership serves as a forum for regional dialogue.

Regional Strategy

Maintains sanctions against Syria, but divided over military action. Encourages both Israel and the Palestinian Authority to resume bilateral negotiations towards two-state solution. Supports using European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) as framework to develop political and economic relations with Israel and the PA. Lifted all nuclear-related economic and financial sanctions and begun gradual high-level engagement with Iran. Concluded refugee deal with Turkey, Turkey will retain refugees from the region in exchange for payments and an upgrade of EU-Turkey relations.

Powerful Individuals

Donald Tusk (President of the European Council); Jean-Claude Juncker (Head of the European Commission); Federica Mogherini (High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy); European Parliament; EU heads of state and government

Potential Negotiation Moves

Maintain Syrian Sanctions - The EU could maintain a sanctions regime against Syria and disburse development aid. Due to its institutional limitations and the internal divisions of its member states, the EU is unlikely to take further actions
Serve as Discussion Forum - The EU can serve as a discussion forum for its member states on their policies towards the Middle East and act as a multiplier for diplomatic initiatives that are consensual among its members (such as renewed initiatives for Syrian peace talks or humanitarian aid)

Internal Conflicts

The EU's institutions and decision-making processes require unanimous decisions for most foreign policy actions. States retain the ability to act individually outside of the EU context. It has been difficult to achieve common agreement on responses to ongoing crises. One of the main divisions is member states' willingness to take in refugees from the region. Member states are also divided over the decision to intervene in the Syrian conflict militarily.

Memberships

Quartet on the Middle East

Partners

ISRAEL, PALESTINE Civil Society, LEBANON Government, IRAQ State of Law Coalition EGYPT Government, JORDAN, YEMEN Government, DJIBOUTI, SOMALIA Government, SUDAN, SOUTH SUDAN, ALGERIA, MOROCCO Government, EGYPT Government, TURKEY, IRAN, ARAB LEAGUE, GCC, INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Adversaries

SYRIA Government, YEMEN Houthis

Proxy

KURDS of Turkey, KURDS of Iran, KURDS of Iraq, KURDS of Syria

Aid Recipient

TURKEY, SOUTH SUDAN

Allies

TUNISIA, UNITED STATES, HUMANITARIAN ACTORS, HOLY SEE, PALESTINE Fatah, MOROCCO Government

Rivals

RUSSIA

Active Armed Opponents

AQAP, ISIS

External Sponsor

Palestine – Civil Society, Syrian Refugees, Sudan

Aid Donor

N/A