Following the 'Arab Spring' uprising in 2011, the EU rapidly responded to the needs of the Libyan population in close cooperation with the United Nations Support Mission for Libya (UNSMIL). Since then, EU policy towards Libya aims at assisting the country in its efforts towards a democratic, stable and prosperous state through the so-called ‘Berlin Process’ under the auspices of the UN. This involves promoting a democratic transition, strong, transparent and accountable institutions and vibrant civil society. The EU is also actively working to provide protection, assistance and economic alternatives to migrants, refugees and internally displaced people in Libya.

The Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI) is the main instrument for EU’s cooperation with external partners, including Libya, in 2021–2027. In 2021, the EU adopted two programmes aiming at supporting democratic governance, the rule of law, private sector development and sound economic policies (€20 million) and in 2022, two new programmes aiming at supporting health and environment and climate change (€32 million). In the previous 2014–2020 period, the EU provided support to Libya with up to €98 million through the European Neighbourhood Instrument.

EU assists Libya in the area of migration to work towards ensuring the protection of migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees in the country with more than 60% of the portfolio being allocated to protection-related activities, while also reinforcing Libya in the area of border management to increase its ability to save lives at sea.

Libya is the main beneficiary of the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa – North Africa window (EUTF Africa) with a current total of €465 million, out of which the majority goes to the protection and assistance of migrants, refugees and internally displaced people, alongside actions to support municipalities along the migratory routes and to strengthen the integrated border management.

Libya also benefits from EU thematic programmes and instruments such as the NDICI Rapid Response pillar, the NDICI Thematic programme for Human Rights and Democracy, NDICI Thematic programme for Civil Society Organisations.

Examples of results of EU-Libya cooperation on economic development:

- Support to 50 SMEs in competitiveness enhancement has led so far to 750 jobs created/matched.
- SME units, providing financial and non-financial services, were designed, established and trained in 6 commercial banks.
- Business incubators were designed, established and trained in 12 universities, and fab-labs equipped in 6 universities.