

19-21 OCTOBER 2026 UfM ECONOMIC FORUM CAIRO, EGYPT

UfM Regional Workshop on Digital Trade and
E-Commerce in the MENA Region / 19 October 2026



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Concept Note

Regional Workshop on Digital Trade and E-Commerce in the MENA Region

Working Towards a Regional Roadmap for Cooperation and Harmonization to Support Cross-Border Digital Trade and E-commerce

1. Background

Digital trade and e-commerce are key drivers of inclusive economic growth, job creation, and regional integration. In the Southern Neighbourhood- covering Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, and Lebanon- progress towards establishing a cohesive and enabling digital trade ecosystem remains uneven. While several countries have adopted national strategies and regulatory frameworks, important challenges persist. These include fragmented regulatory environments, limited cross-border interoperability, barriers to SME participation in e-commerce, and gaps in digital payments, logistics, and data governance. Addressing these challenges requires enhanced regional cooperation, regulatory convergence, and public-private dialogue.

In this context, the regional project “Digital Trade and E-Commerce in the MENA Region” aims to develop digital trade and e-commerce in the MENA region to enhance business opportunities and foster decent job creation, in cooperation with the public and the private sectors. The regional project is co-funded by the European Union (DG MENA) and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by GIZ and the International Trade Centre (ITC).

The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) is a regional intergovernmental organization comprising 43 countries from Europe and the Mediterranean. Founded in 2008, it promotes regional integration through cooperation in trade, infrastructure, and innovation, among other priority areas identified by the Member States. The UfM focuses on inclusive growth, job creation, and sustainable projects to reduce disparities and foster prosperity across the Mediterranean.

The Digital Trade and E-Commerce in the MENA Region project and the UfM collaborate to reinforce the regional dialogue and enhance the exchange of good practices in the field of digital trade and e-commerce between the countries covered by the project and with other countries of the UfM.



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The UfM will convene its Economic Forum in October 2026 in Cairo. Building on the experience of the annual UfM Trade and Investment Forum, the Economic Forum represents a broader, high-level platform for dialogue on key trends, challenges, and opportunities shaping trade and economic development across the Euro-Mediterranean region. Anchored to the UfM Vision Statement 2025 and aligned with the Pact for the Mediterranean, it will bring together policymakers, private sector actors, and development partners to exchange experiences and smart solutions on pressing regional priorities.

In this context, the UfM, in collaboration with the Digital Trade and E-Commerce in the MENA Region project, will organize a regional workshop on digital trade and e-commerce back-to-back to the Economic Forum. By aligning these two events, stakeholders will be able to engage in both discussions, while also streamlining logistical aspects. Furthermore, ensuring robust participation from key stakeholders and fostering continued dialogue on digital trade at regional level.

2. Objective of the event

The overall objective of the digital trade and e-commerce event is to enhance dialogue, collaboration and coordinated action in the MENA region on digital trade and e-commerce. This will be achieved by fostering alignment on opportunities and challenges among stakeholders, deepening regional collaboration on regulative frameworks, and enabling coordinated action across sectors and participating countries.

Specifically, the event aims to:

- Raise awareness on the opportunities offered by digital trade and e-commerce for both regional and EU-MENA cross-border trade
- Highlight the importance and benefits of harmonizing legal and regulatory frameworks at regional level and in alignment with the EU
- Bring together public and private stakeholders to identify key challenges, while showcasing best practices and success stories
- Build a shared understanding of priority challenges and emerging opportunities shaping digital trade in the region
- Advance dialogue on concrete areas for regional cooperation and legal harmonization
- Identify and validate priority thematic areas to guide the project's future regional interventions and activities

3. Target participants

The event will gather approximately 40 participants, including:



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- Public sector:
 - Focal points of the regional project (i.e. representatives of the ministry of trade)
 - Other representatives of relevant ministries and regulatory authorities (e.g. data protection, digital transformation, customs, etc.)
 - EU representatives
 - Representatives of other UfM member countries
- Private sector:
 - Representatives of e-commerce platforms and online marketplaces
 - Representatives of relevant service providers (e.g. trust services, digital payment, etc.) and logistics companies
 - Business associations representing SMEs and chambers of commerce
- Representatives of the regional programme

The regional project can only cover the costs for representatives coming from the 8 countries covered by the regional project, namely Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia.

4. Thematic focus

In line with priorities identified by the regional project during its inception phase, discussions will focus on:

- Enabling regulatory frameworks for digital trade and e-commerce
- Consumer protection and trust in cross-border transactions
- Data protection and privacy
- Cross-border digital payment

5. Format and methodology

The regional workshop will be interactive and results-oriented, combining:

- High-level opening and keynote interventions
- Group discussions with public and private stakeholders
- Country inputs highlighting national priorities and reforms
- Thematic breakout sessions to identify Key challenges, Priority needs in addition to Opportunities for regional cooperation and convergence
- Plenary discussion to consolidate findings and define next steps



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6. Expected outcomes

- Enhanced understanding of the opportunities and benefits of harmonizing legal frameworks, including the identification of priority areas for harmonization at regional level and/or with the EU
- Strengthened regional cooperation, with improved alignment of national priorities across the participating countries
- Reinforced public-private dialogue, leading to more effective and sustained engagement of private sector stakeholders
- Identification of priority activities / areas for future regional collaboration.



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