



EU-UAE ESSAY COMPETITION 2025  
ACROSS UAE UNIVERSITIES

# TOP 10 ESSAYS

ON THE THEME

How can the European Union and the United Arab Emirates deepen and expand their strategic cooperation in areas of mutual interest?

# Foreword



It is with great pride that we present this collection of essays by the top ten finalists of the EU–UAE Youth Essay Competition 2025, an initiative launched by the **Delegation of the European Union to the United Arab Emirates** to amplify youth voices and foster deeper understanding, cooperation, and innovation in the field of international relations.

Reflecting the EU's commitment to dialogue, partnership, and mutual respect, this competition invited future leaders to explore a vital question:

**How can the European Union and the United Arab Emirates deepen and expand their strategic cooperation in areas of mutual interest?**

The essays showcased here offer original, forward-thinking perspectives, grounded in critical analysis and creative vision, on some of today's most pressing global challenges.

From climate and energy to digital transformation, AI, water governance, and cultural cooperation, the ideas put forth illustrate the depth and diversity of thought among students across the UAE.

This volume features contributions from students at leading institutions including the **Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy, Zayed University, University of Sharjah, Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates University, and the American University of Sharjah.**

We hope these essays spark dialogue, encourage collaboration, and reflect the powerful role youth can play in shaping the future of EU–UAE relations.

We extend our sincere appreciation to the esteemed professors and experts who generously contributed their time and expertise to the evaluation process.

Congratulations to all participants, and especially to the ten young authors featured in this volume.

May your voices continue to inspire, far beyond these pages.

**H.E. Lucie Berger**  
Ambassador  
Delegation of the European Union  
to the United Arab Emirates

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## INTRODUCTION

Strategic interconnectivity and interdependence among nation states and regional blocks are going to affect the geopolitical and economic dynamics of the twenty-first century most progressively. This is why what stands out as the EU-UAE partnership can be viewed as a growing partnership with increased collaboration at levels in terms of trade followed by energy then innovation together with climate action along with security and culture. A new window for enhanced cooperation opens up by the fact that both have the same vision for a sustainable and interconnected future despite different political and cultural histories. The groundwork for this cooperation has already been laid by the Joint Communication of the EU for a Strategic Partnership with the Gulf. This is the time to implement that strategic intention. This paper analyzes how the EU and the UAE can broaden and deepen their strategic cooperation in various areas by providing ingenious and factually based proposals to pursue common objectives.

## HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS OF EU-UAE RELATIONS

The UAE and the EU have held a diplomatic connection since the seventies which has transformed gradually from mere trade tie agreements to intricate collaboration.

The UAE region has become one of the biggest economic partners that the EU has in the Gulf. Moreover, sustainable development together with economic diversification and regional security formed a common ground which served to enhance relations between the countries.

The strategic importance of the UAE as a gateway to the larger Gulf and African continental areas was revealed by the establishment of the EU Delegation in Abu Dhabi in 2013 (**Leal-Arcas, et al., 2024**). The UAE has also continuously positioned itself as a link between East-West cultural nodes. This encourages communication and trade between many cultures over diverse fields. It creates a solid foundation for a growing strategic collaboration based on respect and shared goals.

## ECONOMIC AND TRADE COOPERATION LEADING TO A MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL TRAJECTORY

This is an economic partnership that continues to serve the mutual interest between the EU and UAE. In the last years, commerce among the EU and the UAE amounted to greater than €50 billion.

This makes the UAE the highest export market of the EU in the Arab world. This commerce used to be based on energy products like gas and oil (**Ghafar & Colombo, 2021**). But it has now extended into luxury goods materials and transportation equipment followed by chemicals and services.

There is also synergy in the sectors of innovation and green industries that would be compatible with the strategic autonomy objectives of the EU and hence is attainable through the ambitious 'We the UAE 2031' plan corresponding to the UAE. Both sides should pursue a Free commercial Agreement (FTA) along the lines of the EU-GCC in pursuit of strengthening commercial links. This is where multilateral trade mechanisms do not work in terms of new bilateral alternatives that could be examined. Besides, both parties could partner on smart logistics infrastructures and digital trade agreements for facilitating trade and reducing red tapes (**Salem & Jagadeesan, 2022**). Co-investing in startup ecosystems in respect to fintech and agrotech supporting SMEs and enhancing access to finance could further strengthen economic resilience.

## **ENERGY TRANSITION AND CLIMATE ACTION TOWARD A GREEN FUTURE**

The switch to renewable and sustainable energy is another area to extend cooperation. The UAE has shown innovative leadership in sustainable investments by its commitment to sustainability such projects as Masdar City and its Net Zero by 2050 Strategic Initiative launched this year (**Sanfilippo & Vermeersch, 2024**). The UAE is the host of COP28 in 2023 and the first nation in the area to operate a nuclear power plant in Barakah that promoted a just energy transition.

The EU leads the world in setting an environmental policy with its Fit for 55 objectives and Green Deal. Much overlap is that while the technology and regulatory prowess of the EU could contribute to improving UAE investments and infrastructures. Both could invest together in smart energy grids and green hydrogen generation. This could lay the basis for the start of cooperative research and development (R&D) initiatives into innovation hubs in sustainability using the superior research ecosystem linked to the UAE and the Horizon Europe of the EU (**Sanfilippo & Vermeersch, 2024**). Furthermore, sharing best practices for desertification avoidance and climate adaptation would find their benefits at the regional and international levels.

## **DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND INNOVATION TO BUILD SMART SOCIETIES**

Digital transformations are another important area of mutual interest. The UAE has embraced advanced technologies and e-government systems rapidly. This is by making these technologies almost mainstream. The European Union plans to be a leader in AI along with cybersecurity followed by digital skills and infrastructure by virtue of its Digital Decade 2030 Strategy (**Qasim 4 & Shuhaiber, 2024**). Joint implementation might encompass ethical and safe AI together with resilience of digital infrastructure. In order to harness the digital synergy, the EU and UAE should set up a joint Digital Innovation Forum to coordinate policies and pilot projects in key areas such as cybersecurity and e-health along with smart cities and quantum computing (**Mohammed & Ines, 2024**).

Innovative applications serving both populations while honoring digital rights and privacy are possible with the marriage of the strong regulations and advanced technology of the EU with the strong investment appetite of the UAE. Moreover, the EU would offer the advantages of its expertise in satellite navigation with the Emirates Mars Mission and space legislation for joint cooperation in a sector increasingly of interest to the UAE. These are the ways to allow young people and entrepreneurs in both regions to participate in these innovation ecosystems shall ensure sustainable and inclusive growth.

## SECURITY, STABILITY, AND HUMANITARIAN COOPERATION

Issues of security and regional stability persist as foremost pursuits for both the UAE and EU. The two entities are jointly interested in alleviating geopolitical instability in the MENA region. It covers preventing violent extremism along with any acts of terrorism and maritime insecurity.

The UAE supports humanitarian efforts in Yemen and Syria and vigorously engages in international peacekeeping missions (Krzymowski, 2022). This is while the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) prioritizes preventive diplomacy and multilateral conflict mediation. This is where both parties can further enhance their cooperation through sharing intelligence and agreeing on counter-radicalization efforts. Besides, an EU-UAE Strategic Dialogue on Security and Development could assist in coordinating humanitarian initiatives and diplomatic responses in crisis-stricken regions (Krieg, 2024).

Pre-eminence must also be given to cyber defense and critical infrastructure protection given the emerging threats posed by cyberwarfare and hybrid threats. A framework for collective resilience and cyber readiness exists in the form of the EU Cybersecurity Act and the National Cybersecurity Strategy of the UAE.

## EDUCATION, CULTURE, AND PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE DIPLOMACY

Culture and education prove effective means for the long-term strategic collaboration and understanding of mankind. Both the UAE and the EU see education as a means to social inclusiveness and economic transformation.

The UAE has made enormous investments in international universities and educational technology.

This is while the Erasmus+ program of the EU and programs in the mobility of students have opened many European institutions to students from abroad. In particular, a bridge of knowledge between Europe and the Gulf should be established by furthering avenues of academic exchanges and joint research initiatives in public health and sustainability (Levi, 2025). Promote mutual awareness and institutional relations through the establishment of EU Centers of Excellence in the UAE and UAE studies programs at European institutions. Cultural diplomacy may also unite societies through literary exchanges, museums partnerships and film festivals. Cultural events between the UAE and EU can take place at venues such as the Sharjah Book Fair and the Louvre Abu Dhabi.

These highlights shared values including innovation and creativity. The movement of artists and cultural entrepreneurs will give way to intercultural dialogue and pluralism.

## YOUTH EMPOWERMENT AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

EU-UAE cooperation has a distinctly transformational focus on the empowerment of youth.

This is a group that represents great opportunities as well as responsibilities. More than half of the population of the MENA region is aged less than 25 years. This demographic fact underlines the need to invest in youth as engines of economic growth and social cohesion. The European Union has always given youth participation the highest priority through programs such as Erasmus+ and the EU Youth Dialogue (**Al Mokdad, 2025**).

The UAE has committed to nurturing the potential of its youth through initiatives such as the Emirates Youth Council and the National Youth Agenda as well as various leadership and innovation programs in line with the UAE Centennial 2071 vision. On this basis, the UAE and EU may create joint platforms for the promotion of young activism and digital transformation to promote entrepreneurship. The EU-UAE Youth Council would create a formal avenue for conversation in which young leaders can give feedback into policy formation that affects their own futures. The Council might host innovation summits and exchanges in order to ensure the voices of young people are being injected into sectors (**Krzyszowski, 2022**).

Furthermore, it may look to foster international peer learning through complementary virtual programs including public speaking forums and coding academies. These programs will give youth a sense of purpose while bridging political and cultural divides. This lays the groundwork for a more innovative and inclusive strategic cooperation for the EU and UAE.

## HEALTH, PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS, AND BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the hollowness of national health systems and revealed the necessity for international collaboration in public health. The UAE and the European Union had significant parts to play in addressing the concern. The EU relied on the establishment of partnerships with pharmaceutical companies to become an increasingly important player in the development and distribution of vaccines worldwide apart from supporting the COVAX initiative (**Leal-Arcas, et al., 2024**). The UAE relied more upon geographical advantage and sophisticated logistics to establish an international hub to store and distribute vaccines and medical supplies from there. Furthermore, the possibility remains for future advancement by both entities using increased efforts toward collaborative research and technology-driven solutions. In these areas, personalized medicine can be developed rapidly with more efficient therapies for the treatment of infectious diseases. Both parties would build very strong health infrastructures that would be able to respond very quickly to possible threats should they arise by pooling resources to

support pandemic preparation efforts (Krieg, 2024).

This would be a good possibility for establishing an EU-UAE regional center for health research and innovation out of the UAE. This is being closely connected to leading European universities. It is envisaged that such a center will concentrate on themes like telemedicine inventions and health data analytics in terms of vaccine R&D and strategies for public health sharing.

## POLICY ALIGNMENT AND INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS

Strong structures must also be put in place to maintain and grow this extensive collaboration.

These policies should empower the EU-UAE High-Level Joint Committee to supervise sectoral working groups covering trade and culture.

This institution has already ensured mutual accountability and openness through frequent summits and technical workshops. This strategic conversation may also be enhanced by think tanks along with players from the commercial sector and civil society groups 7 from both lines (Al Mokdad, 2025).

Public-private partnerships could easily be arranged through platforms such as the EU Digital Assembly and GITEX. A thorough agreement linked to partnership that lays out long-term goals and standards in several important sectors may act as a roadmap for the ensuing ten years. It should tie in with the larger EU-GCC Strategic Partnership while focusing on the respective capabilities and goals of both parties.

## CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the UAE and the EU are set in a unique position to develop a wide-ranging and creative partnership. This can serve as a blueprint for regional and international collaboration. Sustainability followed by innovation then education along with security and cross-cultural interaction are interdependent areas in which they are believed to harness enormous unrealized potential.

The two sides will have to invest in the capacity and common values of one another to adequately navigate the uncertain and interdependent opportunities lying ahead. The EU and UAE can develop a strategic partnership that is mutually beneficial and has an international impact. This is by promoting trade together with hastening the green transition then inspiring youth to innovate and cooperate on digital and security issues. The interests followed by ideas and creativity of youth based on the innovators along with foresighted leaders and changemakers must be at the heart of this co-creation.



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In a world marked by profound geopolitical shifts, rapid technological change, and growing environmental pressures, strategic partnerships are more essential than ever. The relationship between the European Union and the United Arab Emirates, two actors of rising global significance, has evolved considerably over the past two decades. Initially based on trade, investment, and energy interests, the partnership now extends into digital innovation, sustainability, education, and multilateral diplomacy. Both sides recognize the need to strengthen cooperation to address complex global challenges and promote a rules-based international order.

The adoption of the Joint Communication for a Strategic Partnership with the Gulf by the European Commission in 2022 marks a turning point in the EU's engagement with the Gulf Cooperation Council states, including the UAE. The document outlines a vision for a broader and more structured relationship, centered on shared interests such as climate action, digital transformation, security, and economic diversification (**European Commission, 2022**). Likewise, the UAE's proactive foreign policy and ambitious domestic reforms, reflected in initiatives such as the UAE Vision 2031 and the National Artificial Intelligence Strategy 2031, demonstrate its commitment to innovation, sustainability, and diplomacy.

With this in mind, the question arises: how

can the European Union and the United Arab Emirates further deepen and expand their strategic cooperation in areas of mutual interest? This essay explores key sectors offering the greatest potential, including economic and trade collaboration, the energy transition, innovation and digital governance, educational and cultural exchanges, and multilateral engagement. Each area presents unique opportunities to consolidate ties and build a resilient, forward-looking partnership.

## **I. STRENGTHENING ECONOMIC AND TRADE PARTNERSHIPS**

Economic cooperation has historically formed the foundation of the European Union and the United Arab Emirates' bilateral relationship. Expanding and modernizing these trade and investment ties remains central to deepening strategic cooperation. The European Union is one of the UAE's largest trading partners, and the UAE serves as a major hub connecting Europe, Asia, and Africa, giving both strong incentives to pursue closer integration.

According to the European Commission, the European Union exported goods worth over 42 billion euros to the UAE in 2022, mainly in sectors such as machinery,

transportation equipment, and chemicals. Meanwhile, the UAE is rapidly diversifying its economy beyond hydrocarbons, with growth in renewable energy, advanced manufacturing, and financial technology. These developments create new opportunities for collaboration that align with both sides' strategic interests.

One priority area is expanding two-way investment. European investors can contribute to the UAE's diversification plans under initiatives such as the "Projects of the 50" and "Operation 300bn," while Emirati investors are increasingly targeting green technologies, infrastructure, and digital innovation in Europe. COP28 demonstrate its commitment to renewable innovation.

The European Union, a leader in green regulation and technology, is a natural partner for advancing the UAE's clean energy goals. Joint projects in hydrogen, offshore wind, and carbon capture technologies offer promising avenues for cooperation.

Sustainable finance also represents an important area for alignment. Developing green bonds, harmonized investment standards, and sustainable finance taxonomies could boost private sector engagement and align with global climate goals. The European Union's sustainable finance framework could serve as a model for UAE financial markets, encouraging international investment and green innovation.

Closer coordination in climate diplomacy would further amplify their global influence. Supporting climate resilience projects in developing countries and adopting shared positions at forums such as COP conferences would reinforce both actors' leadership in global environmental governance.

By aligning their energy and environmental strategies, the European Union and the United Arab Emirates can address a global

challenge while building a forward-looking and resilient strategic partnership.

A modernized investment framework, modelled on recent EU third-country agreements, would provide greater legal certainty and protection for investors.

Trade facilitation and regulatory cooperation are also key. Removing technical barriers to trade, harmonizing standards, and promoting digital trade through e-commerce agreements would strengthen supply chain resilience and enhance market access. Additionally, developing common standards for green investment, inspired by the EU's sustainable finance taxonomy, could align economic growth with climate commitments.

Deepening economic and trade cooperation would not only bring mutual benefits but also build resilience, support diversification, and reinforce the foundations of a dynamic EU-UAE partnership.

## **II. ADVANCING THE ENERGY TRANSITION AND ENVIRONMENTAL COOPERATION**

The urgency of the climate crisis and the need for a sustainable energy transition present both a challenge and an opportunity for deepening cooperation between the European Union and the United Arab Emirates. Both actors have committed to ambitious climate objectives. The European Union's Green Deal targets carbon neutrality by 2050, while the UAE's Net Zero 2050 initiative makes it the first country in the Middle East to commit to such a goal. These parallel ambitions create strong foundations for collaboration in

renewable energy, sustainable finance, and climate diplomacy. Energy remains a cornerstone of EU-UAE relations, but the focus is shifting from hydrocarbons to clean energy solutions. The UAE's investments in solar energy projects such as Noor Abu Dhabi and its leadership in hosting

### III. FOSTERING INNOVATION AND DIGITAL GOVERNANCE

Innovation and digital transformation are critical pillars for the future development of both the European Union and the United Arab Emirates. Recognizing that economic growth, competitiveness, and security increasingly depend on digital capabilities, both actors have prioritized technology and innovation as strategic objectives. Deepening cooperation in digital governance offers not only economic benefits but also an opportunity to promote shared standards, ethical practices, and legal interoperability in an evolving digital world.

The European Union has positioned itself as a leader in digital regulation through instruments such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the Artificial Intelligence Act, and the Cyber Resilience Act (**European Commission, 2021; 2023**). Meanwhile, the UAE has advanced rapidly through initiatives like the Ministry of Artificial Intelligence, the UAE Data Protection Law (**Federal Decree-Law No. 45 of 2021**), Smart Dubai, and the UAE Artificial Intelligence Strategy 2031.

Despite these advances, regulatory divergences remain. To address them, the EU and the UAE could pursue agreements enhancing the interoperability of their data protection frameworks, moving toward

adequacy recognition under the GDPR or sector-specific arrangements. A joint charter on responsible artificial intelligence, drawing from UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of AI (2021), would further align ethical governance, focusing on transparency, human oversight, and non-discrimination. Promoting innovation ecosystems through collaborative research, startup support, and academic partnerships in fields such as artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, biotechnology, and fintech would deepen engagement. Facilitating talent exchanges and cross-border investments would strengthen economic ties and trust. By fostering innovation and aligning digital governance frameworks, the European Union and the United Arab Emirates can reinforce their positions as global leaders shaping a secure, ethical, and prosperous digital future.

### IV. ENHANCING EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES

Education and cultural diplomacy are vital for building long-term strategic partnerships. Strengthening ties between the European Union and the United Arab Emirates through these channels would enhance mutual understanding and create a resilient, people-centered relationship capable of adapting to future global challenges.

Both the European Union and the UAE have invested significantly in education and human capital.

Programs such as Erasmus+ and the UAE's education reforms under Vision 2031 provide strong platforms for expanding academic mobility, research collaboration, and youth engagement.

Increasing scholarship opportunities, dual-degree programs, and student exchanges, particularly in fields such as renewable energy, law, and digital innovation, would encourage cross-cultural learning and foster future leaders familiar with both European and Emirati perspectives.

In addition to academic cooperation, promoting cultural exchanges would contribute to a deeper mutual understanding. Joint initiatives in arts, language promotion, heritage conservation, and intercultural dialogue could serve as powerful tools for strengthening soft power. The European Union's experience with cultural diplomacy, combined with the UAE's role as a regional hub for culture and multiculturalism, offers multiple opportunities for collaboration.

Furthermore, partnerships between universities, think tanks, and research institutions would facilitate dialogue on shared global challenges such as sustainability and digital transformation. By investing in education and culture, the European Union and the United Arab Emirates can ensure that their partnership is not only driven by economic and political interests but also rooted in values of inclusivity, mutual respect, and shared prosperity.

## **V. PROMOTING MULTILATERAL COOPERATION AND GLOBAL STABILITY**

In a fragmented international system, cooperation at the multilateral level is essential for addressing transnational challenges such as climate change, security threats, humanitarian crises, and global economic instability.

The European Union and the United Arab Emirates, as influential regional and international actors, can strengthen their partnership by enhancing coordination within global institutions and frameworks.

The European Union has long advocated for multilateralism through bodies such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organization. Similarly, the UAE has demonstrated growing commitment to international engagement, including its 2022–2023 membership in the United Nations Security Council and its leadership in humanitarian and climate initiatives.

Building closer alignment in international forums would allow the European Union and the UAE to amplify their influence. Joint initiatives supporting international humanitarian law, the Sustainable Development Goals, cybersecurity norms, and global health security represent tangible areas for cooperation. Coordinating positions at major events such as COP summits, WTO negotiations, and the Internet Governance Forum would further strengthen their global roles.

Partnerships could also extend to capacity-building initiatives in developing countries, particularly in Africa and Asia, where both actors are expanding their engagement. Working together, they can contribute to stability, conflict prevention, and development, while reinforcing their reputations as responsible global leaders committed to cooperation.

Through deeper multilateral collaboration, the European Union and the United Arab Emirates can extend their impact beyond bilateral relations, helping shape a more stable, prosperous, and sustainable international system.

## CONCLUSION

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## STRATEGIC COOPERATION BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

In recent years, the partnership between the European Union (EU) and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has gained significant strategic importance. This growing relationship reflects the evolving geopolitical landscape in which both actors seek to expand their influence through diplomacy, innovation, and sustainable development.

As a leading political and economic union, the EU has consistently championed values such as peace, democratic governance, human rights, and environmental responsibility. At the same time, the UAE has emerged as a dynamic regional power, leveraging its rapid economic growth and diversification in sectors such as renewable energy, technology, tourism, and infrastructure.

The intersection of these priorities offers a strong foundation for enhanced cooperation. Both the EU and the UAE are navigating complex 21st-century challenges, ranging from environmental degradation and socio-economic inequality to financial instability and security threats. These shared challenges underscore the

importance of strategic collaboration in areas of mutual interest, including climate action, green innovation, digital transformation, and global security. This paper explores how the European Union and the United Arab Emirates can deepen and expand their cooperation in light of global developments. By examining the overlapping interests, capacities, and policy frameworks of both partners, it will identify certain strategies to improve bilateral cooperation and support a more secure, inclusive, and progressive global order.

## SHARED GLOBAL CHALLENGES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

For the last few decades, researchers and policymakers have increasingly warned of interconnected global challenges that threaten long-term human and environmental stability.

These challenges are not confined to one region or sector; they cut across borders and disciplines. So, what are these challenges, and why are they so urgent? According to **Lopez-Claros, Dahl, and Groff (2020)**, the world today is facing an accelerating environmental crisis marked by rising the growing impact of climate change.

This includes sea-level rise, extreme weather events, and ecological degradation that compromise the planet's ability to sustain life. Environmental concerns are further intensified by the overuse of natural resources and the lack of coordinated global regulation.

However, the crisis is not purely ecological. Social instability has emerged as another critical issue. Widening inequality, persistent poverty, and high unemployment, especially among youth, continue to challenge governments and societies. These social problems are often exacerbated by inadequate access to education, healthcare, and political inclusion. Efforts to build a more inclusive and cohesive global community have been limited by the lack of profound and significant globalization that goes beyond economic exchanges.

Economically, the situation remains unstable. The pursuit of growth without considering environmental or social costs has proven unsustainable. Financial instability, rising debt levels, and recurring economic shocks point to a lack of structural reform. Lopez-Claros and his colleagues argue that there is currently no effective international framework to manage global economic risks, enforce corporate accountability, or ensure long-term sustainability.

Therefore, global cooperation is essential. These challenges; environmental, social, and economic are deeply interlinked and cannot be solved in isolation. A rethinking of governance, strategy, and partnership is necessary to confront the defining problems of the 21st century. As nations navigate this complex landscape, collaboration between important actors like the European Union and the United Arab Emirates will be crucial in promoting stability, sustainability, and shared progress.

## **OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEEPENING COOPERATION**

In accordance with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals particularly Goal 17, which emphasizes partnerships for the goals strengthening global collaboration can improve quality of life, environmental outcomes, development, and peace. All actors, including individuals, businesses, governments, and civil society, stand to benefit. These global goals, will be the focus of the essay, as they are all interconnected. The United Nations, as an international organization, provides a framework for multiple areas of EU-UAE collaboration.

## **ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY PARTNERSHIP**

The EU and UAE are focusing on environmental sustainability and energy transition, with the EU Green Deal aiming to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050 and the UAE Net Zero 2050 Strategic Initiative committing to net-zero emissions. Both are committing within the same timeframe, and collaboration in renewable energy development particularly green hydrogen production and trade is promising.

Both partners could benefit by leveraging their respective strengths to advance renewable energy initiatives in wind energy, solar energy, and hydropower. Green hydrogen production is particularly strong in France and Spain, according to Hydrogen (n.d.), creating opportunities for a strategic energy partnership with Masdar in Abu Dhabi, one of the world's largest renewable

energy investors and a major driver of the energy transition. The UAE, as one of the world's leading producers of oil and gas, can significantly contribute to meeting the EU's hydrogen needs, with future demand expected to exceed the EU's domestic production capacity.

Collaborating with the UAE would not only support energy diversification and the development of a hydrogen pipeline network but also enhance energy security by reducing reliance on Russian energy sources.

Strengthening this partnership through joint research initiatives on carbon capture technologies, alongside the expansion of environmental policies and clean energy programs, would further support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) and SDG 13 (Climate Action), both of which focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, limiting global warming, protecting ecosystems, and promoting the efficient use of renewable energy.

## TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Technology and innovation present significant opportunities for enhanced collaboration between the EU and UAE, aligning with SDG 9, which emphasizes building resilient infrastructure, fostering sustainable industrialization, and encouraging innovation. The UAE has demonstrated strong leadership through initiatives such as the UAE Artificial Intelligence Strategy 2031, aimed at positioning the country as a global leader in

AI technologies (Al Olama & His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, n.d.), as well as the establishment of the UAE Space Agency and the successful Emirates Mars Mission. Europe, with its expertise in cybersecurity, biotechnology, and space exploration, offers complementary strengths that could support joint technological advancement. Potential areas of cooperation include the development of artificial intelligence applications, collaboration on biotechnology innovations, strengthening cybersecurity frameworks, expanding space exploration initiatives, and enhancing cooperation through international security councils. Establishing mechanisms such as an EU-UAE Cybersecurity Council or partnering on future space missions could formalize these efforts and reinforce shared strategic goals. A closer technology partnership would provide significant economic, security, and innovation benefits while supporting a shared commitment to responsible and sustainable technological progress.

## MOBILITY AND TRAVEL

Mobility and travel represent another strong area of collaboration between the EU and UAE, contributing to economic growth, cultural exchange, and stronger bilateral ties. The UAE passport is globally recognized as one of the most powerful, offering visa-free access to 133 countries and visa-on-arrival to 47 others, including major destinations like the Schengen Area, Brazil, and Japan (**"The UAE Passport Named World's Most Powerful!" 2024**). Visa agreements and the introduction of digital visa systems have further facilitated smoother travel between the two regions.



To strengthen this relationship even further, the EU and UAE could work toward expanding digital visa platforms, particularly for students, business professionals, and tourists, reducing dependence on traditional visa processes like the Schengen system and enabling faster, more seamless mobility (“UAE CABINET | News,” n.d.).

An expansion of direct flight routes connecting major European cities with the UAE will enhance connectivity, supporting both tourism and business exchange

As tourism continues to be a major driver of economic growth with France, Spain, and Italy among the top global destinations by international tourist arrivals the UAE’s rapidly growing tourism sector is positioning itself as a global hub for visitors through creative initiatives. Strengthening mobility and travel partnerships would directly contribute to achieving SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), by promoting sustainable economic development, enhancing transport networks, and fostering greater international cooperation.

## GOVERNANCE AND DIPLOMACY

Strengthening governance and diplomatic cooperation between the EU and UAE aligns closely with SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). The European Union, recognized for its effective use of soft power, emphasizes diplomacy, the rule of law, and the promotion of human rights over coercive measures an approach exemplified by initiatives such as the Eastern Partnership (“Eastern Partnership,” n.d.).

The UAE, already skilled in projecting soft power through culture, diplomacy, and development aid, could further enhance its global engagement by learning from the EU’s experience and applying similar strategies within the GCC region.

Exploring joint training initiatives, soft power frameworks, or shared diplomatic programs could strengthen the UAE’s international influence and foster deeper cooperation. Such efforts would contribute to more effective global partnerships and support long-term international stability .

## CULTURE AND EDUCATION

Strengthening educational and cultural collaboration between the EU and UAE offers a powerful opportunity to build long-term and mutual understanding. Expanding multilingual learning platforms and emphasizing United Nations languages such as Arabic, French, and Spanish can support deeper academic exchange. With French and English among the most widely used languages globally, institutions like Sciences Po can help reinforce the presence of the French language in the UAE (**Loyalty, n.d.**).

Joint initiatives such as student exchange semesters, dual master’s programs, and collaborative academic ventures between institutions including the Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy and the Mohammed bin Rashid School of Government can enrich higher education on both sides.

These efforts can build on models such as New York University Abu Dhabi and Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi, which offers high-quality education in French.

Cultural exchange may also be enhanced through museum partnerships, art exhibitions, and creative collaborations. The Louvre Abu Dhabi, designed by French architect Jean Nouvel and established through a unique cultural licensing agreement, represents a successful model of cultural diplomacy (Reuters, 2007). Similar initiatives such as rotating exhibitions, pop-up galleries, and joint festivals could showcase Emirati art and heritage alongside European history and creativity. Book fairs, cultural exchanges, and shared exhibitions would not only foster greater mutual appreciation but also contribute to tourism, cultural awareness, and the creative economy.

In the research and innovation sphere, deeper partnerships between institutions like the UAE's Masdar Institute and Mohammed bin Rashid Space Centre and leading European centers such as the Max Planck Society, CNRS, and ETH Zurich can drive scientific progress and academic excellence. Establishing stronger quality frameworks across universities, promoting scholarships, and reassessing underperforming institutions would ensure greater alignment with global education standards and foster institutional growth. These efforts together directly support Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), by promoting inclusive, equitable, and high-quality learning opportunities through international cooperation.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the European Union and the United Arab Emirates, like all global actors, bring unique strengths to the international stage, and meaningful partnerships should be built on shared goals and mutual benefit. While each country has distinct priorities, the most pressing challenge facing the world today remains the environmental crisis, which requires urgent and united action. It is never too late to shift toward sustainable practices and adopt global solutions. Through cooperation, countries can make greater progress in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly when they align their efforts in areas such as renewable energy, digital innovation, mobility, and education. Turning toward digital solutions such as AI integration, digital visa systems, and advanced learning platforms can enhance global connectivity and governance. At the same time, investing in inclusive, high-quality education and promoting cultural exchange helps build understanding across societies and preserve shared heritage.

A successful EU-UAE partnership will not only reflect modern diplomacy and innovation, but also honor the importance of history, language, and identity in shaping a more peaceful and resilient future.

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## RULE OF LAW AS DIPLOMACY: EU-UAE JUDICIAL COOPERATION FOR INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY

### FOUNDATIONS OF PARTNERSHIP: RULE OF LAW AS DIPLOMACY

As international diplomacy moves beyond traditional state affairs, governance and legal integrity have become pretty central to soft power. Within the EU, judicial cooperation isn't just about cross-border justice, it's actually a strategic tool in its foreign relations, especially through programs like the European Neighbourhood Policy (**European Commission, 2022**). The UAE actively modernizes its legal system and expands its international role. Aligning with the EU on rule of law brings both practical and diplomatic benefits (**Al-Falasi, 2022; UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024**). This essay looks at how judicial monitoring and governance cooperation between the EU and UAE can help strengthen the rule of law and maintain institutional balance under the UAE's constitutional framework, while also boosting the UAE's soft power.

### THE NEW FRONTIER: GOVERNANCE AS A DIPLOMATIC TOOL

In their diplomatic partnership, the EU and UAE focus on governance and legislative reform. Security, effective governance, and international cooperation require the rule of law (**European Commission, 2022**). Joint efforts like the UAE-Eurojust meeting in September 2024 (**UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024**) show that this framework is already opening doors for closer judicial collaboration.

Through its involvement in such efforts, the UAE signals that it views judicial cooperation as a means to strengthen its legal system, especially in fighting organized crime (**Eurojust, 2022**). Eurojust's partnership reflects a commitment to tackling global challenges through multilateral legal cooperation. The UAE's Extradition and Judicial Assistance Law has been amended to make surrender demands and mutual legal help more fair and efficient while safeguarding national security (**Chambers and Partners, 2024**).

The EU uses judicial cooperation as a form

of soft power as well, promoting reforms and the rule of law across its neighbourhood and beyond, one of the main goals of the European Neighbourhood Policy (**European Commission, 2022**). For the UAE, this presents a chance to align with international legal standards while also deepening political ties and polishing its image as a credible, responsible legal actor on the global stage.

## **WITHIN THE CONSTITUTION: THE UAE JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND THE ROLE OF THE JUDICIAL**

The UAE's constitution makes it clear that the judiciary should work independently, without interference from outside forces (**Chambers and Partners, 2022**). This kind of independence is basically the foundation for protecting rights and making sure the rule of law is upheld. One way the UAE has shown it's serious about this is by setting up systems of judicial review that aim to boost transparency and accountability.

The idea is to keep judges neutral and raise the overall quality of legal decisions.

Serious concerns about how well the system actually works in practice exist. Reports like *Undermining Justice* by the European Center for Democracy and Human Rights and *No Peace Without Justice* point out ongoing issues such as political interference, arbitrary detentions, and a general lack of transparency in the courts. The legal system should ideally operate differently from how it really does. For instance, although the Court Inspection Division of Abu Dhabi is supposed to guarantee fair and rational court decisions, its practical influence is somewhat limited. This indicates that UAE actual judicial control is still under development (**Aldhaferi et al., 2022**).

EU countries have been big on the idea of strong judicial oversight, and that could actually be something really useful for the UAE. Things like setting up independent judicial councils, improving how cases are managed, and making legal procedures more open could really help strengthen the system (**Eurojust, 2023**). By collaborating with the EU, the UAE can raise its legal standards and help build more public trust in the courts. It demonstrates that people can really rely on the rule of law, not only some abstract concept.

## **LESSONS FROM EUROPE: JUDICIAL OVERSIGHT MODELS AND INSTITUTIONAL SAFEGUARDS**

The European Union's judicial systems are often seen as examples of transparency, independence, and accountability, offering useful lessons for the UAE as it works on improving its own legal framework (**European Commission, 2022**). Judicial monitoring plays a key role in upholding the rule of law and making sure the courts run properly in the EU. Institutions like Eurojust and OLAF help make sure justice stays fair and efficient across EU countries.

Eurojust, for example, helps courts in different countries work together on cases involving transnational crime. Its main goals are to help manage cross-border legal issues in a smoother way and bring more consistency to how courts handle cases (**Eurojust, 2023**).

OLAF, the EU's Anti-Fraud Office, deals with corruption and fraud, especially when EU money is involved. It also works with others, including the UAE, showing that even with different legal traditions, it's still possible to build strong systems of accountability that reach beyond borders (**OLAF, 2016**).

EU-supported reforms, like setting up independent judicial councils or using clear case management systems, could bring real improvements to the UAE's legal processes (**No Peace Without Justice, 2022**). These changes wouldn't just improve the court system internally, but also help the UAE match international standards of fairness and justice.

## FROM IDEAS TO IMPLEMENTATION: EU-UAE STRATEGIC SYNERGY IN JUDICIAL REFORM

The UAE's meetings with Eurojust show that both sides are open to deepening legal cooperation (**UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024**). The UAE intends to learn from Eurojust and OLAF, which handle cross-border legal concerns and fight financial crimes (**European Anti-Fraud Office, 2016**).

A meeting between the UAE and Eurojust focused on improving cooperation in tackling transnational crime and supporting global justice efforts (**Eurojust, 2023**). This kind of cooperation helps the UAE push forward with its goal of becoming more recognized on the international stage and matching up better with global legal norms. Reports like *Undermining Justice* have raised concerns about things like political influence and lack of clarity in how legal processes are carried out (**European Center for Democracy and Human Rights, 2024**), so there's definitely room for improvement. The EU can offer frameworks to set up independent judicial councils, structured case management systems, and more accessible legal processes (**No Peace Without Justice, 2022**).

UAE legislative reforms and judicial

collaborations can boost its soft power strategy and worldwide influence. The UAE can enhance its reputation and strengthen ties with the EU and its international partners by adopting global legal principles (**UAE Government Portal, 2024**).

## DIPLOMATIC TIGHTROPES: SOVEREIGNTY, LEGAL CULTURES, AND SHARED NORMS

One of the hardest requirements in EU-UAE legal cooperation is negotiating how to deal with national sovereignty while adopting foreign legal norms. For example, changes to its Extradition and Judicial Aid Law now permit it turn away foreign legal claims if they relate to public policy or national security (**Chambers & Partners, 2024**).

This shows how open the UAE is to cooperation and also how it is trying to keep control over its court system. The UAE is clearly eager to embrace global legal standards, especially those from the EU, as it seeks to strengthen its place in the international legal community and boost its global standing (**UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2024**). Sharia Law and Civil Law are not the same, which could lead to problems, especially when it comes to freedom, responsibility, and judicial oversight. The EU and UAE both support values like justice, the rule of law, and human rights. By working together through EU rule of law diplomacy, the UAE can improve its laws and promote shared values (**European Commission, 2022**). This cooperation gives the UAE a chance to step up as a key leader in regional governance, better align with international norms, and increase its influence in the MENA region (**UAE Government Portal, 2024**).

influence in the MENA region (**UAE Government Portal, 2024**).

## **POLICY PROPOSALS: BRIDGING NORMS AND SYSTEMS THROUGH JOINT INNOVATION**

The EU has a wealth of experience in judicial collaboration, which could help the UAE improve its own monitoring systems. By learning from the EU's best practices, the UAE could better align its courts with international expectations for openness and accountability, making sure its legal processes are more transparent and reliable. The UAE can enhance the efficiency and fairness of its legal system by seeking guidance from the EU, such as establishing independent judicial councils and using better case management tools (**Eurojust, 2023**).

The UAE has already taken steps with things like digital case tracking and e-court systems (**UAE Government Portal, 2024**), but there's definitely still room to grow.

Showing openness with real-time court reviews or monitoring could enhance public trust. The EU's peer reviews, judicial dashboards, and data-based decision-making should improve transparency, accountability, and efficiency (**OLAF, 2016**). The UAE could look to EU standards on judicial independence and how efficiently courts run to measure its own progress. Setting up ways to track how quickly cases move, how fair trials are, and how much people trust the system could help build a shared idea of what a strong court system looks like. They could also set up joint monitoring groups, maybe with support from OLAF or Eurojust (**European Commission, 2022**), to help make sure the reforms are actually being followed through

properly. That way, it supports both the country's sovereignty and its ties with the international community.

## **CONCLUSION: RULE OF LAW AS STRATEGIC DIPLOMACY**

As the world moves towards diplomacy focused on values, the EU and UAE have an opportunity to enhance their soft power. The UAE has a chance to enhance the opinions of the globe and strengthen its administration. Working together helps the EU increase its influence and demonstrate its support of justice and solid legislation.

Transparency, judicial independence, and public confidence are among the remaining difficult issues the UAE deals with. However they are not permanent, particularly given EU experience with court supervision. The EU may maintain UAE's legal identity while extending its governance ideas beyond of its territory with well-designed cooperative arrangements. Carefully handled, this cooperation could result in new types of judicial diplomacy whereby both sides share tools, objectives, and lessons enabling legal systems to develop stronger.

In the end, working together on rule of law is not just about governance. It is also an investment in legitimacy, influence, and long-term stability. As both the EU and UAE work through legal and cultural differences, they might open a new kind of diplomacy where institutions shape international partnerships more than just abstract ideas.

That makes judicial reform not only important for the UAE's legal system but also a real strategic asset. It can help boost the UAE's global credibility and support the EU's vision for a rules-based international order.

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## **BEYOND PROTECTIONISM: STRENGTHENING EU-UAE TRADE NETWORKS THROUGH INNOVATION AND FINANCIAL SOVEREIGNTY**

### **IMPLEMENTATION PERSPECTIVE**

As global trade faces an era marked by greater uncertainty and isolationism, the demand for resilient and diversified international partnerships has intensified. Nationalistic trade policies have contributed to the recent rise in global protectionism. These shifts have strained international trade relationships by pushing nations to seek new strategic partnerships. For instance, the EU-GCC Joint Communication of 2022 outlines mutual ambitions for a more robust and diversified partnership. The agreement emphasizes resilience, sustainability, and innovation in trade (European Commission, 2022).

This relationship provides a valuable basis for developing long-term frameworks that support shared growth and stability. Aligned with these developments, the UAE Vision 2031 illustrates the country's economic diversification and global partnership goals (We the UAE, 2025). Imagining an EU-UAE partnership that, by 2040, exemplifies international best practices in resilient, sustainable, and independent trade cooperation is key to revolutionizing

international trade.

Therefore, the two regions must establish a structured and innovation-led trade framework that insulates their economies from geopolitical instability while redefining their outstanding financial sovereignty and sustainable logistics.

### **IMPORTANCE OF ACCELERATING STRATEGIC TRADE RESILIENCE**

As the global supply chain disruptions intensify, the European Union has prioritized building strategic resilience in trade. Events such as the COVID-19 pandemic and shifting geopolitical tensions expose weaknesses within existing trade engagements. These trends compel the EU to rethink its partnerships. In response, the European Commission has stressed the importance of securing supply chains through alliances with trusted nations pursuing similar strategic goals.



For example, through the Abraham Accords, the UAE has become a key intermediary linking the EU with India via the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) (Krzymowski, 2024). This cooperation presents new opportunities to secure and diversify trade connectivity. However, despite the agreement’s future-oriented stance, narrowing participation to a few nations could produce more deliberate and well-structured outcomes.

With its ambitious economic diversification plan and logistical excellence, the UAE remains an ideal partner in this pursuit. Without timely action, reliance on unstable trade routes and financial structures could leave key sectors vulnerable to recurring economic disruptions.

## RISKS OF SLOW ACTION

Delaying strategic trade resilience efforts exposes the European Union and the United Arab Emirates to significant weaknesses. This gap could cause strategic vulnerabilities, particularly in sectors

susceptible to external trade controls.

For example, a slow response leaves crucial sectors open to external threats, such as sudden policy changes by international trade partners. Such risks severely disrupt trade flows, strain diplomatic relations, and weaken economic stability. In addition, **Zhu et al. (2024)** confirm that rapid supply chain diversification and reinforcement may grant firms a strong competitive edge on the global stage. Still, some analysts might argue that the strategic management of existing trade linkages may still provide net advantages, rendering abrupt economic realignments less justifiable. Still, such views and policies have not generated the expected security as evolving threats challenge traditional trade arrangements. For example, in 2021, the United States maintained a 10% tariff on aluminum exported from the UAE after promising to remove it, citing concerns over unfair competition (**Al Jazeera, 2021**). Therefore, rapid shifts in trade policy demand urgent and collective resilience measures to secure economic autonomy and reinforce global competitiveness.

## STRATEGIC COOPERATION PROPOSALS

### CREATION OF THE EU-UAE TRADE CORRIDOR INITIATIVE

Creating a dedicated EU-UAE Trade Corridor Initiative would establish a modern logistics and regulatory framework. This plan could guarantee fast, sustainable, and secure trade routes between Europe and the Gulf region. The proposed route would feature green shipping lanes that prioritize carbon-neutral transport methods.

This approach aligns closely with the European Green Deal while reinforcing the UAE’s leadership commitment following COP28 (European Council on Foreign Relations, 2023). Beyond environmental responsibility, the initiative would introduce integrated and AI-driven customs clearance systems designed to minimize delays and predict logistical challenges before they occur.

If implemented effectively, these efforts could fully safeguard EU-UAE trade networks against future disruptions and shifting trade policies by 2040. However, critics may argue that similar tactics have been previously implemented without yielding meaningful results. For example, they could invoke the Belt and Road Initiative case to assert that infrastructural investments have not consistently translated into robust or efficient trade flows in the UAE or the EU (Harutyunyan, 2021). For this reason, developing such advanced trade infrastructure would protect bilateral commerce from external disruptions and enhance sustainability.

## LAUNCH A STRATEGIC TRADE INSURANCE MECHANISM

A targeted trade risk protection scheme would strengthen EU-UAE economic resilience. In particular, the partners might create a bilateral insurance fund to protect businesses from unexpected trade disruptions, such as unfair business tariffs and unpredictable regulatory measures. Apart from public financing, the fund would involve joint underwriting by European and Emirati development banks in collaboration with private sector insurers.

However, as noted with the European Union 2011 Solvency II Regulation for Insurance Companies, critics might argue that bilateral insurance fund schemes may not necessarily eliminate bureaucratic delays or operational inefficiencies (Benoit, 2020). Hence, the EU and UAE authorities must establish clear governance structures and streamline decision-making processes to guarantee success.

Over time, this insurance technique could become a model for other international partnerships seeking greater economic security in the increasingly volatile global setting.

## PILOTING NON-DOLLAR BILATERAL SETTLEMENTS

Non-dollar bilateral settlements between the EU and the UAE would be a strategic move toward financial independence. The concept involves introducing pilot programs where bilateral transactions are settled using the Euro, UAE dirham, or an agreed-upon digital currency framework.

This approach would address the vulnerabilities associated with dollar volatility and the growing use of U.S. financial sanctions as a geopolitical tool. However, in recent years, stakeholders must understand that the BRICS nations' efforts to reduce reliance on the dollar have not fully materialized (Mosharrafa, 2024).

This situation reveals the complexities of transitioning to a non-dollar-based financial ecosystem. Therefore, the UAE and the EU would adopt an alternative strategy to overcome such a setback.

The partners would start by implementing test programs in less volatile sectors. Consequently, leaders can manage risks while demonstrating the feasibility of diversified financial arrangements by limiting the first phase to targeted sectors. This approach is essential because some advanced economies weaponize economic dependencies, retreat from rule-based economic systems, and embrace erratic policy shifts.

## SHARED CHALLENGES AND ALIGNMENT OPPORTUNITIES

### SHARED CHALLENGES

The EU and the UAE face common economic hurdles due to the rising protectionism from major powers. While **Zumbraegel and Kegel (2025)** find that the EU and the UAE have been relying on

the Suez Canal for shipping, **Buckley and Trzecinski (2023)** report that the two economies depend on the SWIFT financial framework dominated by the United States for international transactions.

Such vulnerabilities highlight the need for proactive measures, such as independent trade routes and alternative financial systems. Tariff increases and sanctions may restrict market access for both regions, thereby heightening the risk of economic retaliation. These gaps demonstrate the lack of bilateral redundancy protocols or alternative clearing mechanisms.

Unlike the Three Seas Initiative (3SI) that, according to **Krzymowski (2024)**, focuses on several nations, cooperation between the UAE and European nations only may enable more targeted and flexible responses. Establishing a joint EU-UAE task force dedicated to secure trade routes and integrated financial systems would effectively address these threats.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALIGNMENT

While the two economies face common economic risks, their sustainable infrastructure and global connectivity ambitions present a unique collaborative opportunity.

The European Union's Global Gateway strategy, which aims to enhance sustainable infrastructure connections, aligns with the UAE's Vision 2031 objectives. These frameworks prioritize expanding logistics capabilities and securing efficient trade pathways (Tagliapietra, 2024).

These two entities recently attempted to advance their cooperation by initiating formal negotiations toward a comprehensive free trade agreement. In this regard, the special emphasis was on strategic industries such as technology, energy, and healthcare (Interesse, 2025).

While this step is crucial, the lack of synchronized regulatory standards could hinder the success of this initiative. Hence, to achieve positive outcomes, the proposed plan should incorporate a structured EU-UAE working group that comprises legal, technical, and trade experts. These professionals should be mandated to draft mutual recognition agreements and develop joint compliance benchmarks.

### FINANCIAL COOPERATION ON REGULATORY INNOVATION

Strategic financial alignment offers another promising avenue for deepening EU-UAE

relations. Joint regulatory innovation to ease cross-border investments could create more dynamic capital flows between the two trading partners. For instance, creating faster licensing frameworks and supporting fintech initiatives would facilitate prompt business growth and expansion. A structured dialogue between European financial regulators and UAE authorities may facilitate a flexible and innovation-driven investment ecosystem. While pursuing this goal, leaders must be sure not to repeat the EU's previous failures marked by unresolved tensions, lack of strategic alignment, and the absence of a unified approach.

As confirmed by the Middle East Council on Global Affairs (2025), these gaps have severely hindered earlier initiatives with the GCC. Accordingly, the EU should develop a unified regulatory innovation task force to liaise directly with UAE financial authorities and coordinate fintech regulations, licensing standards, and supervisory technologies. The task force would help to reduce dependency on U.S.-centric financial infrastructure by establishing digital platforms and shared compliance models.

## CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Launch of Strategic Trade Insurance Mechanism

Create a joint EU-UAE Trade Insurance Mechanism to cover losses from tariffs, sanctions, or abrupt market exits.

Public development banks and private insurers could underwrite this instrument. The option aligns with the EU Trade Policy Review (2021) (World Trade Organization, 2023).

According to this policy, free trade agreements must advance sustainability, improve market access, and reinforce strategic autonomy. Dominant international actors and aligned states currently influence many policies and development initiatives in Europe and the Middle East. For example, Israel was recently reluctant to sign part of the Abraham Accord involving weapons transfers to the Gulf (Krzymowski, 2024). Therefore, the UAE and EU can bypass such obstacles through a robust strategic trade insurance framework.

### 2. Piloting Non-Dollar Bilateral Settlements

Implement an experimental program for non-dollar trade settlement between the EU and UAE. Start with key industries such as energy and technology using central bank digital currencies or direct euro-dirham swaps to process bilateral transactions.

The program should test the viability of using the UAE dirham, Euro, or a digital financial asset as an alternative to the United States dollar in bilateral transactions. Limited reliance on the dollar would lower exposure to exchange rate swings and U.S.-imposed sanctions. This strategy may contribute to achieving the

UAE Centennial 2071 objectives, which focus on promoting a stable and cohesive society (**United Arab Emirates, 2025**). Devising a new financial system is one of the most effective ways of evading the current risks associated with external monetary influence.

### **3. Strengthening Independent Trade Routes and Logistics Networks**

Invest in joint ports, rail links, and digitized freight networks connecting EU entry hubs with UAE ports like Jebel Ali. The infrastructure would bypass congested and politically sensitive chokepoints. This goal is inspired by the Abu Dhabi Transportation Mobility Management Strategy, a plan to satisfy mobility needs and reduce congestion (**UAE Department of Transport, 2023**). Apart from easing the reliance on congested external routes such as the Suez Canal, this opportunity would decrease dependence on US-controlled financial systems. For example, expanding Jebel Ali and Khalifa Port may improve intercontinental rail and sea networks for cargo movement across Asian and Gulf nations (**Oxford Analytica, 2023**). Investment in these infrastructures could minimize the reliance on volatile trade paths and external financial mechanisms.

EU-UAE strategic cooperation demands urgent and innovation-led reforms in trade resilience, financial autonomy, and regulatory alignment. Strategic initiatives such as trade insurance, non-dollar settlements, and independent logistics corridors could address shared vulnerabilities. Since they contrast with prevailing strategies, these techniques can reinforce long-term economic resilience. Establishing institutional frameworks could be vital.

This intervention should include a regulatory coordination council to ensure sustainable implementation.

In the future, both regions must prioritize structured and scalable solutions that safeguard their autonomy, reinforce mutual trust, and redefine their role as global leaders in sustainable and forward-thinking economic partnerships.

## EMERGING FRONTIERS IN EU–UAE RELATIONS

As President Ursula von der Leyen declared at Davos 2024, “this is a time to drive global collaboration more than ever” (**World Economic Forum, 2024**). In a world driven by rapid technological shifts, traditional partnerships must evolve. The European Union (EU) and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have built enduring ties across trade, security, and energy, yet new frontiers now define strategic relevance. Artificial Intelligence (AI) governance and space diplomacy present such opportunities: dynamic, high-stakes domains capable of redefining the international order. Deepening collaboration in these fields can elevate the EU–UAE relationship into a pioneering alliance, advancing economic interests and leadership in global governance. The EU’s regulatory expertise and the UAE’s entrepreneurial dynamism, when combined, can forge a distinctive model grounded in ethics, innovation, and shared ambition (**Krzymowski, 2020**).

This essay examines how joint action on AI and space can transform bilateral ties into a future-facing partnership that meets the challenges of a shifting international landscape.

## ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND DIGITAL GOVERNANCE: DEVELOPING ETHICAL INNOVATION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become integral to both the European Union’s (EU) digital economy and the United Arab Emirates’ (UAE) national transformation strategies. Across Europe, AI is reshaping healthcare, finance, and governance under strict ethical oversight (**European Commission, 2022**), while in the UAE, AI drives innovation across public services, energy, and transport, anchored by an ambitious national strategy (**UAE Government, 2021**). The European Union and the United Arab Emirates have each advanced ambitious AI agendas—Europe through its groundbreaking Artificial Intelligence Act, and the UAE through its national AI Strategy 2031. Yet despite these strides, collaboration between them remains largely underdeveloped. A bold partnership would go beyond aligning ethical frameworks; it would position the EU and UAE as co-leaders in crafting AI-driven solutions to shared global challenges, from climate resilience to food security. The EU positions itself as a global custodian of ethical AI. Its ‘Digital Decade Policy Programme 2030’ emphasizes human dignity, transparency, and accountability in all AI applications

(European Commission, 2022). The proposed Artificial Intelligence Act classifies AI systems by risk and imposes strict safeguards on high-risk technologies, a nod to Europe's broader tradition of rights protection. On the other hand, the UAE pursues an innovation-driven model, embedding AI across sectors while codifying ethical commitments. The 'UAE National Artificial Intelligence Strategy 2031' envisions leadership in economic diversification, sustainable development, and public sector efficiency (UAE Government, 2021). Its AI Ethics Guidelines promote fairness, accountability, and transparency, signaling alignment with evolving international norms. Rather than conflicting, the EU's rights-focused governance and the UAE's entrepreneurial dynamism could fuse into a hybrid model, an approach attractive to middle powers navigating between American deregulation and China's centralized digital control (Khalfan, 2024).

Three pathways could anchor this collaboration. First, an 'EU-UAE AI Ethics and Innovation Taskforce' could align regulatory approaches, merging Europe's GDPR frameworks with the UAE's ethical codes. Second, joint "AI for Good" initiatives—in precision agriculture, climate forecasting, and healthcare diagnostics—could showcase a model where technological ambition serves public welfare. Third, integrating the UAE into the EU's Global Gateway digital corridors would strengthen 5G resilience, cybersecurity, and trusted digital trade (European Commission, 2022). A trusted EU-UAE digital partnership could present a human-centered alternative, embedding ethics into innovation and reaffirming technology's role as a tool for enhancing human agency rather than undermining it.

## SPACE DIPLOMACY: EXPANDING HORIZONS THROUGH STRATEGIC COLLABORATION

Few arenas capture both the imagination and strategic urgency of the 21st century as space. No longer the exclusive playground of Cold War superpowers, outer space has become a domain where emerging actors assert their scientific prowess and diplomatic weight. In this expanding theater, the European Union (EU) and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are well-positioned to craft a new kind of partnership rooted in innovation, peaceful exploration, and multilateral governance. The UAE's rapid ascent is notable. The Emirates Mars Mission (Hope Probe), launched in 2021, marked the Arab world's first interplanetary endeavor and emphasized the UAE's use of space exploration to project soft power (UAE Space Agency, 2022).

Meanwhile, the EU, through the European Space Agency (ESA) and programs like Galileo and Copernicus, has long demonstrated leadership in satellite navigation, Earth observation, and scientific collaboration (European Space Agency, 2023).

Their capabilities are distinct but complementary. The UAE brings financial agility, diplomatic neutrality, and a hunger for rapid advancement; the EU brings technical depth, regulatory experience, and extensive multilateral networks. Together, they can amplify their influence in a space landscape increasingly marked by competition and commercialization.

Several initiatives could anchor their cooperation. Expanding Galileo's satellite services to the UAE would enhance aviation, maritime trade, and emergency

response capacities, areas vital to both economies (**European Space Agency, 2023**). Joint Earth observation projects using Copernicus data could address shared challenges like desertification, coastal degradation, and climate resilience. A proposed 'EU-UAE Earth Monitoring Center' in Abu Dhabi could serve as a regional hub for environmental intelligence and scientific diplomacy.

Deeper collaboration on lunar and asteroid exploration also holds promise. With global attention shifting toward Moon missions and resource utilization, a joint venture would demonstrate not only technical ambition but also a commitment to responsible exploration aligned with the Outer Space Treaty. Beyond missions, strategic coordination in multilateral forums such as the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) is essential. Joint advocacy for debris mitigation, non-weaponization, and equitable access to space orbits would position the EU and UAE as stewards of an increasingly fragile commons. Furthermore, building talent pipelines is equally rewarding. Scholarships, internships, and research fellowships in space sciences would nurture a generation of European and Emirati experts committed to collaborative exploration.

## **BUILDING A COMPREHENSIVE INNOVATION ALLIANCE**

Institutional anchoring is essential to sustain momentum across AI governance and space diplomacy. An "EU-UAE Innovation and Space Council" would coordinate research projects, fund initiatives, and convene annual summits alternating between European and Emirati

capitals.

In digital governance, the council could align AI certification programs and facilitate regulatory dialogue. In space, it could manage joint Earth observation missions, lunar exploration initiatives, and joint representation in multilateral forums. Building human capital would be a core mission. Scholarships, fellowships, and research grants could nurture a generation of European and Emirati experts dedicated to sustaining strategic collaboration.

These initiatives build upon the EU's broader ambition to deepen ties with the Gulf, as articulated in the Joint Communication on a Strategic Partnership with the Gulf (**European Commission, 2022**). Successful collaboration in AI and space could catalyze a wider strategic dialogue between the EU and UAE, extending into areas such as green technology, digital infrastructure, education exchanges, and resilient supply chains (**Krzyszowski, 2020**). By positioning innovation at the heart of their engagement, both actors can craft a future-oriented partnership capable of steering global transformations.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The EU and UAE can forge an alliance of influence rooted in ethical innovation and peaceful exploration by deepening strategic cooperation in AI governance and space diplomacy.

Their combined strengths—regulatory expertise and entrepreneurial dynamism—position them to lead on emerging frontiers. Through deliberate collaboration, they can reaffirm that leadership in the 21st century rests on weaving innovation into intergovernmental partnerships. Effective leadership today demands more than



policy frameworks or technological capability. It rests on working across differences, managing risk without stifling ambition, and sustaining collaboration in areas where incentives do not always align neatly.

The EU and UAE face real challenges in this respect: diverging political cultures, unequal market sizes, and competing external pressures will test any joint initiatives they pursue. Yet despite these difficulties, the strategic logic for closer cooperation remains compelling. Innovation is increasingly a collective effort, and no single actor, regardless of size, can dictate the emerging norms of AI governance or space exploration alone. Notably, the Joint Communication on a Strategic Partnership with the Gulf calls for enhanced cooperation in digital innovation, green transition, and security, areas that intersect directly with AI governance and space exploration. By building on this framework, the EU and UAE can operationalize a vision of strategic partnership, expanding collaboration from energy and trade into frontier technologies. With deliberate commitment, the EU and UAE can turn that leverage into lasting influence, strengthening their standing in a world that rewards those who shape, rather than react to, change.

## **BUILDING A COMPREHENSIVE INNOVATION ALLIANCE**

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## ETHICAL GENOMICS AND AI: A NEW FRONTIER FOR EU-UAE STRATEGIC COOPERATION

### INTRODUCTION

In the era following global pandemics such as COVID-19, which overwhelmed the healthcare systems, and led nations to struggle and economies to deteriorate, the world started realising how fragile health security is. It has come to realize the importance of healthcare innovation, BioTech, MedTech, Artificial Intelligence, ethical and genomic diplomacy that has significantly risen as tools to achieve public well-being, survival, national resilience, and shaping the future of international influence, shifting priorities towards global health security through cooperation and collaboration in these sectors, given that they are no longer a matter of choice, but requires an urgent call to action for countries that are looking for strategic approaches to cooperate to achieve a resilient future-facing partnership that meets the challenges of a shifting international landscape.

This essay explores how the UAE-EU can deepen their strategic cooperation and enhance their current joint communication through the establishment of an innovation hub and an ethical genomic alliance, while positioning health technology, Ethical Genomics, Genomics Diplomacy and

Artificial Intelligence as key pillars for strategic cooperations, aiming to achieve the UAE's national development goals and 2031 vision for global biotech leadership, besides the the EU's ambitions for digital resilience and ethical global influence. By aligning with the goals and ambitions of the EU and the UAE, these initiatives and partnerships are planned to address the gaps and challenges in the current joint communication that lacks the Ethical Genomic, BioTech and MedTech tracks, notably since both parties have shown significant potential in the given sectors.

The United Arab Emirates played a pivotal role in facilitating and accelerating the distribution of COVID-19 vaccines to developing countries. It ensured its access worldwide to help combat the crisis, leveraging its logistics infrastructure and wealth to serve humanitarian needs as part of its soft power strategies. (**UAE Embassy, 2022**).

Moreover, In 2024, the UAE contributed to genome sequencing as part of the UAE's Emirati Genome program, Dubai Genome Strategy and its 2031 vision, reflecting its scientific capabilities, data sovereignty, and

potential influence through incorporating collaboration, data-sharing partnerships, and maintaining ethical genomics, to emphasize the importance of advanced and accessible healthcare and innovation (**The Official Portal of the UAE government, 2024**).

In contrast, the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies has addressed ethical considerations and fundamental rights in editing and monitoring genomes in the genomics sector (**European Commission, 2014**). Hence, linking the UAE's capabilities in genomic ethics, MedTech and AI innovation programs, regulatory leadership with the EU's genomic and moral frameworks in a powerful ethical alliance genomic could ensure genomic equity and set new global norms to govern the data ethically, pushing to become a biotech innovation hub that influences global genomic medicine and deepen its geopolitical ties with other countries, notably since the current EU-UAE Joint Communication lacks Ethical Genomic, BioTech and MedTech tracks.

Furthermore, the EU has shown commitment to health sovereignty through various initiatives such as the 1+ Million Genomes, Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA), Horizon Europe, ensuring the ability to respond to health emergencies and support innovation in health technologies, facilitating the use of genomic data, and emphasizing the AI governance and ethical standards (**European Commission, 2025**).

Meanwhile, the UAE has shown commitment to advancing MedTech and genomic sciences as part of its vision 'we the UAE 2031' that prioritizes

biotechnology, AI and genomic research, AI driven diagnostics and predictive healthcare, through initiatives such as Dubai Genome Strategy, G42's healthcare solutions that are driven by Artificial Intelligence, Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence to address chronic and genetic diseases (**The official portal of the UAE government, 2023**).

However, The EU-UAE Joint Communication notably lacks Ethical Genomic, BioTech and MedTech tracks track that represents sectors that are rapidly and strategically emerging in both regions, missing a high opportunity for deeper collaboration, mutual benefit and global influence, particularly since both areas have the potential of collaborating on research and policy development to address the public health resilience in sectors like biotechnology, artificial intelligence and genomics, despite these sectors being a significant interest of both regions, still, the current joint communication outlines a comprehensive framework for collaboration focusing on trade, energy, digitalization, and climate change, and addresses cooperation in healthcare and medicine.

Hence, establishing such a track and enhancing the joint communication and collaboration in the emerging fields of MedTech, Genomics Diplomacy, Ethical Diplomacy and Artificial Intelligence, the UAE and the EU have potential opportunities to reshape the global genomic diplomacy and global health security, particularly through focusing on AI-driven predictive diagnostics, digital health, ethical genomics, data equity through biotech partnerships, and pandemic preparedness.

Pairing both regions' robust infrastructure, predictive diagnostics, clinical credibility and AI ethics is key to addressing global health challenges, particularly through addressing urgent tasks such as collaborating in ethical genomics through an ethical genomics alliance to fill a critical gap in the global genomic diversity, ensuring that diverse populations, particularly from developing countries, are addressed in the research. Moreover, combining the current strategic health initiatives of both the EU and the UAE is essential to enable coordinated earlier responses to future health crises and pandemics, ensuring this alliance leads in sectors of genomics diplomacy and ethical innovation, while simultaneously strengthening their economic growth as a key driver of global health leadership and set the global norms for ethical genomics.

Building on the foundations laid, the EU-UAE Ethical Genomics, Genomic Diplomacy and MedTech through AI initiative proposes a framework that would work towards fostering and enhancing their collaboration in these emerging fields, aiming to address gaps in global health security.

First of all, establishing a MedTech Innovation Hub that hosts annual genome and health summits that includes a committee from the participant parties and emphasize on AI-driven diagnostics and digital health solutions, as well as encouraging bilateral working groups focused on governing genomic data, while considering the genomic ethics, is a key cornerstone, critical to healthcare innovation, since it will serve as a joint startup and accelerate the development of diagnostic tools while meeting the global ethical standards.

However, both regions must align their genomic data standards, privacy, and AI policies for transparency.

Secondly, establishing an ethical genomics alliance to fill the critical gap in the global genomic diversity is vital, but with a focus on the diseases in the arab world, and ensuring data sovereignty through biotech partnerships and corresponding to their ethical guidelines.

Another key initiative should include monitoring the supply chains that deliver the goods and services related to the vital health supplies and medical equipment, such as vaccines and genome sequencing equipment, ensuring that these sources are accessible to both regions and are following the regulatory practices, to minimize delays in future health-related crises or pandemics. Finally, developing an AI-driven global response system that uses genomic and real-time data to predict diseases like strokes and asthma attacks focuses on improving international health security and enhancing regional cooperation.

While the EU-UAE ethical genomics, genomic diplomacy and Medtech through AI initiative offers a significant potential for improving their collaboration, various challenges needs to be considered, balanced and aligned for transparency and to avoid conflicts and tensions, particularly due to both regions having different regulatory systems and ethical standards, religious sensitivities explained in "Halal Genomics" guidelines and cultural norms, regulatory differences related to data sovereignty, intellectual property, geopolitical tensions, and competition from other countries, particularly countries with emerging economies such as China and the US.

## RECOMMENDATION

To deepen the EU-UAE collaboration in the field of Ethical Genomics, Genomic Diplomacy, BioTech and MedTech through AI, I strongly propose establishing a joint MedTech Innovation Hub and creating an ethical genomic alliance, since by focusing on the AI-driven predictive diagnostics, providing digital health solutions while considering the ethical genomics and policies, it could help the UAE achieve its 2031 vision and UAE national genome strategy that focuses on fostering innovation in AI and genomics to meet the global ethical standards while addressing the global health security issues. However, to ensure the success of the innovation hub, both the EU and the UAE need to consider balancing and aligning their genomic data sharing standards and the AI policies to promote transparency and ensure effective and efficient collaboration, as well as they need to provide a comprehensive framework that ensure global data equity, fulfilling the existing critical gaps in the global genomic diversity for diverse countries.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the ongoing cooperation between the EU and the UAE in sectors such as trade, energy and digitalisation is effective in achieving their shared strategic goals and fostering mutual growth, however both regions are missing a great potential for cooperation in the fields of BioTech, MedTech, Ethical Genomics, Genomic Diplomacy and AI, since both of them has the significant potential to reshape the global health security through considering their ongoing initiatives in the health innovation and genomics sectors. Therefore, by strategically aligning their efforts and cooperating in establishing an innovation hub and an ethical genomics alliance, both regions can ensure health resilience and global leadership in this sector, and they will have the opportunity to set the new international norms in the future of genomics medicine. Hence, the clock is ticking, and the world needs an urgent call to action for nations to unite for an ethical and resilient future encoded in our genomes.

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## EU-UAE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP: BLUE DIPLOMACY

### INTRODUCTION

The European Union (EU) and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have developed a strong political and economic partnership driven by shared interests in sustainable development, innovation, and other key areas. Originally, the main points of cooperation were energy, trade, and regional security, but now, the focus has shifted toward global environmental cooperation. Arising as a significant domain of concern, the ocean is both threatening and promising.

Amidst the global challenges, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and piracy, the EU and UAE are in a position to establish a mutually beneficial partnership that promotes sustainable seas and oceans (**European Commission, 2021; MOCCA, 2022**).

This paper argues that it is critical for the EU and UAE to work together on "Blue Diplomacy:" marine biodiversity and security, blue economy, and ocean stewardship, as a promising field for future cooperation.

### UNDERSTANDING THE EU-UAE RELATIONSHIP

The EU and the UAE are set to deepen their partnership as they launched the EU-UAE Joint Communication in 2022, highlighting priorities, such as sustainability, peace and order, climate resilience, humanitarian and technological development (**European Commission & European External Action Service, 2022**). This policy framework marked a new phase of bilateral relations, shifting from tactical to strategic cooperation on global issues.

In addition, both partners have strengthened climate cooperation at the global level. The UAE, as the host country of COP28 and a leading player in climate finance and renewable energy investments, plays a tremendous role in global environmental governance (**COP28 UAE, 2023**).

The EU's climate diplomacy, driven by the European Green Deal, has led in marine and maritime science, including biodiversity. These complementarities depict a growing strategic fit in values and goals, suggesting a sense of partnership in new areas of Blue Diplomacy.

## BLUE DIPLOMACY AS A FLAGSHIP OF ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGIC COOPERATION

Blue diplomacy is a relatively new approach in international relations in the context of environmental, economic, and security within ocean spaces. It entails an agreed-upon set of processes by which countries cooperate to conserve seas and oceans, conserve and manage resources for present and future generations and manage the shared ocean problems like pollution, overfishing and adverse effects of climate change. This involves issues like Ocean biology, Sea security, Blue economy opportunities and marine scientific collaboration (Scott & Ospanova, 2021). The EU and the UAE have chosen ocean conservation and, more specifically

marine environment as priority areas of cooperation.

The EU has always supported marine policy through the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the EU Blue Economy Strategy, among others; they provide for sustainable utilization of marine resources, conservation of marine ecosystem, and developments in the marine sectors (European Commission, 2021). Meanwhile, the UAE is anticipated to take on leadership in ocean diplomacy in 2026 after developing the Blue Economy Strategy in 2022 and its role as host of COP28.

Here is an overview of how the EU and the UAE can expand the common potential for blue diplomacy by realizing the complementarities of approaches, developing long-term strategies, and implementing practical projects both for the present and future generations.

### 1. COMPLEMENTARY CONTRIBUTIONS: HOW THE UAE CAN SUPPORT EUROPE – AND VICE VERSA

Area	UAE's Contribution to the EU	EU Contribution to the UAE
Finance & Innovation	Investment in blue projects in the Mediterranean and Global South	Transfer of advanced marine technologies and environmental innovation (e.g., ocean monitoring satellites, marine robotics, pollution tracking networks)
Environmental Expertise	Expertise in managing hypersaline and semi-enclosed seas like the Arabian Gulf	Host Emirati researchers in marine science hubs such as Ifremer (France) and GEOMAR/Helmholtz (Germany)
Climate Adaptation	Development of salt- and drought-tolerant crops (via ICBA), sustainable desalination, and cloud-seeding technology	Climate modeling and scientific exchange on ocean-climate systems (European Commission, 2021).
Geopolitical Bridging Role	Diplomatic link between Europe, South Asia, and East Africa	EU support for UAE mediation and inclusion in multilateral marine governance platforms
Maritime Security	Practical experience in combating piracy, smuggling, and securing strategic waterways (e.g., Strait of Hormuz)	Legal expertise in international maritime law (UNCLOS), joint naval exercises, and maritime cyber-resilience (UNCLOS, 1982).

## 2. LONG-TERM VISION: THE EU-UAE BLUE HORIZON 2050

Strategic cooperation in blue diplomacy requires the EU and UAE to create "EU-UAE Blue Horizon 2050" as a joint framework and forward-looking roadmap. The joint initiative needs to establish clear phases and performance targets with regular assessments.

### Key Objectives:

- Apply scientific ocean governance methods to maintain ocean health.
- Promote clean marine technologies and coastal sustainability through blue innovation.
- Ensure sustainable maritime security and protection of key shipping routes.

### Practical Initiatives and Regional Projects

- Abu Dhabi-Marseille Center of Maritime Security: Joint training and policy hub dedicated to maritime safety, illegal trafficking and ecological resilience.
- EU-UAE Ocean Research Alliance: Establish a joint platform for joint marine science cooperation in the Gulf and Mediterranean.

### EU-UAE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP: BLUE DIPLOMACY

- The Blue Bahrain Project: A trilateral coral reef restoration initiative (UAE funding + European technology) in one of the Gulf's most climate-vulnerable coastlines (CMF n.d).
- Safe Blue Corridors: Regional routes are safe via third country EU-UAE regionals for clean and secure transport of goods.

## STRATEGIC PILLARS OF COOPERATION:

Pillar	Description
Joint Marine Governance	Develop unified regional policies on marine biodiversity protection, IUU fishing, and pollution control.
Blue Economy Investment	Support eco-tourism, renewable ocean energy, smart port infrastructure, and circular marine industries.
Maritime Security Cooperation	Share intelligence, co-train naval units, and respond to shared threats like piracy or sabotage.
Integrating Blue Diplomacy into Global Agendas	Link ocean policies to climate adaptation, food security, and environmental migration.

## SERVING BOTH PRESENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS

Timeframe	Strategic Benefits
Present	Better marine pollution monitoring, enhanced maritime safety, and promotion of eco-tourism.
Future	Resilient ocean economies, reduced disaster risk, improved climate mitigation, support for sustainable food systems.



## CRITICAL ANALYSIS AND POLICY GAPS

The analysis of the EU–UAE collaboration in Blue Diplomacy revealed some crucial structural and strategic shortcomings that prevent enhanced cooperation between the two partners.

These gaps exist due to the issues of weak governance in the marine sector, uneven capabilities, and the fact that most policy and diplomatic initiatives in the marine and ocean sectors are not yet institutionally integrated.

First, there is the issue of institutional fragmentation. In the EU and the UAE, ocean-related tasks are generally divided between different ministries and departments with limited horizontal coordination.. This fragmentation undermines the creation of coordinated approaches to marine issues and erodes the coherence of international involvement. Thus, a viable Blue Diplomacy agenda calls for synergy spanning all ministries still lacking, especially in the Gulf region.

Second, there is a geographical and thematic disparity in current marine cooperation. The EU plans to focus more on the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, whereas the Arabian Gulf and the Indian Ocean are not prominently featured in its foreign policy management. However, the UAE's marine policy is not primarily multilateral, but focused on sustainable development of the coast.

To address this issue, it is necessary to revise existing frameworks and recognize emerging actors like the UAE.

Third, data asymmetry and limited research access hinder effective joint marine policymaking. The EU has highly developed

marine data infrastructures—such as Copernicus Marine Service and EMODnet—while the Gulf region suffers from a lack of publicly accessible, long-term oceanographic data. Without shared access to climate, biodiversity, and pollution data, efforts toward scientific cooperation and early warning systems remain constrained. Finally, the absence of formalized bilateral platforms dedicated specifically to ocean affairs limits momentum in marine cooperation. Current dialogues are often embedded within broader environmental or trade discussions, which dilutes the specificity and technical focus required to build a joint marine strategy. A standalone EU–UAE working group on ocean diplomacy could help overcome this challenge and serve as a launching pad for concrete projects, capacity-building programs, and multilateral advocacy in global marine for a (ICBA n.d).

In sum, while the foundations for collaboration are strong, the policy architecture to support a robust EU–UAE Blue Diplomacy partnership remains incomplete. Addressing these gaps through structural reforms, targeted investments, and institutional innovation will be essential for translating shared vision into long-term impact.

## STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS AND POLICY PROPOSALS

The EU–UAE Blue Diplomacy vision requires both entities to advance from political statements toward institutionalized and executive-based cooperation systems. A joint marine governance plan should establish practical steps based on mutual strengths and shared global responsibilities.

### **1. Establish a Bilateral "EU–UAE Blue Diplomacy Task Force"**

The EU institutions need to work alongside relevant UAE ministries through a dedicated task

force to coordinate policy development, research, and implementation. This task force would:

- Create regular sessions that address ocean-related policy.
- Synchronize national strategic plans with existing international ocean regulations, including UNCLOS and SDG 14.
- Direct marine security planning, data exchange operations, and research funding.

### **2. Launch a Joint Marine Research and Data Sharing Platform**

A Marine Knowledge Exchange Hub must be jointly developed by the EU and UAE to function

as follows:

- Focus on standardized data collection for marine biodiversity, pollution, and salinity in the Gulf and Mediterranean.
- Integrate EU systems EMODnet and Copernicus Marine for standardized data sharing.
- UAE-funded scholarships and fellowships in EU marine institutes such as Ifremer and Helmholtz GEOMAR (**GEOMAR n.d**).

### **3. Develop "Safe Blue Corridors" for Maritime Trade and Ecosystem Protection**

Jointly designate and protect strategic maritime routes that are:

- Environmentally monitored using satellite and AI tools.
- Secured through naval coordination and anti-smuggling surveillance.
- Aligned with blue economy priorities, ensuring ports are equipped with sustainable infrastructure and pollution controls.

### **4. Expand Trilateral Engagement: EU–UAE–Global South**

The UAE should serve as a bridge state linking EU marine policies with East Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. This would involve:

- Establish an Annual Blue South Dialogue either in Abu Dhabi or Brussels.
- Support development projects in the Red Sea and Western Indian Ocean.
- Advocate for equal access to marine technologies and climate funds in all underrepresented regions.

### **5. Institutionalize Blue Diplomacy within COP and UN Ocean Fora**

The EU and UAE should sponsor international resolutions through:

- The UN Ocean Conference (2025) and its follow-up mechanisms.
- Integrate Ocean–climate processes into COP.
- Support regional regimes like the Barcelona Convention or ROPME Sea Area.

Bilateral, trilateral, and global governance mechanisms can transform this partnership into a sustainable marine framework for the 21st century. These recommendations present practical solutions and respond to the fast-growing climate–ocean crisis.

## **CONCLUSION**

The increasing speed of global climate change and mounting stress on marine ecosystems demand immediate implementation of cross-regional ocean governance. Blue Diplomacy finds its guiding force through the EU and UAE due to their distinct strengths and global leadership aspirations. Research establishes that marine diplomacy emerges from the EU–UAE strategic relationship, offering opportunities for maritime security,

sustainability, and resilience. Bridging European regulatory expertise and scientific knowledge with UAE geopolitical influence and financial potential will turn their bilateral partnership into a globally impactful partnership.

To implement the proposed EU–UAE Blue Horizon 2050 framework, both sides must align their cooperation through institutionalized policies and a shared data equity system.

A complete Blue Diplomacy strategy would support national interests and contribute to global ocean health through stronger multilateral governance. The EU and UAE are well-positioned to seize current opportunities and uphold their commitments. Blue Diplomacy offers both nations, a modern, practical approach to enhance their diplomatic efforts.

## INTRODUCTION

In an age marked by rapid technological change and intensifying cultural interconnections, the European Union (EU) and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) stand at a pivotal moment. What was once primarily a relationship rooted in trade and diplomacy now finds itself expanding into new frontiers—digital transformation, climate innovation, youth engagement, and values-driven cooperation. To deepen strategic ties, accelerate sustainable development, and foster a genuine Willkommenskultur (culture of welcome), both partners must commit to long-term, cross-sectoral collaboration.

This paper proposes two transformative ideas: a digitally integrated, green-powered “Digital Silk Road,” and a binational Cultural & Youth Exchange Innovation Hub that redefines what youth diplomacy can achieve. As someone who has chosen to master German and Mandarin not as trophies but as bridges—encapsulated in my personal motto, “Sprache ist keine Trophäe, die man erringt, sondern eine Brücke, die man baut” (language is not a trophy to earn; it’s a bridge to build)—I believe deeply in using diversity as a tool for connection, not division. These dual proposals are rooted in that belief: that Europe and the Emirates can lead the world by valuing curiosity, innovation, and a respect for cultural plurality (**European External Action Service, 2022; European Commission, 2023**).

## CURRENT STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Since the Joint Communication on a Strategic Partnership with the Gulf in May 2022, the EU has actively pursued deeper engagement with Gulf states across energy transition, trade liberalisation, digital integration, and people-to-people initiatives (**European External Action Service, 2022**). The UAE, in turn, has positioned itself as a leader in green innovation through its Net Zero 2050 Strategy, targeting full carbon neutrality by mid-century and making bold investments in clean technology, digital infrastructure, and education (**UAE Ministry of Climate Change and Environment, 2021**).

At COP28 in Dubai (**December 2023**), co-hosted by the UAE and prominently attended by the EU, negotiations led to a historic commitment to phasing out fossil fuels—yet revealed deeper debates around “loss and damage” financing mechanisms. These divergences underscore the need for a long-term platform that turns shared values into joint projects. In April 2025, the launch of EU–UAE Free Trade Agreement negotiations focusing on green hydrogen, critical raw materials, and digital services further underscored the need for aligned infrastructure and policy (**Reuters, 2025**).

However, substantial bottlenecks remain. Despite the EU’s Global Gateway blueprint for digital connectivity, its projects often sidestep Gulf corridors—missing an

opportunity for technological and geopolitical alignment (**European Commission, 2023**). Meanwhile, youth mobility remains constrained by bureaucratic visa regimes, lack of institutional partnerships, and limited mutual recognition of academic credits (**European Commission, 2024**). These limitations risk stalling the energy of next-generation diplomacy unless addressed head-on.

To move forward, we must look to a partnership not of convenience, but of conviction. The following proposals reflect a vision rooted in mutual benefit, human development, and global leadership

## **PROPOSAL 1: AN EU–UAE “DIGITAL SILK ROAD”**

### **VISION**

Picture a high-speed, secure digital corridor linking Europe and the Gulf—an undersea fibre-optic cable running from Fujairah and Salalah to Marseille, complemented by a 5G/edge computing network that connects Abu Dhabi’s data hubs to Hamburg’s AI clusters. This “Digital Silk Road” would facilitate ultra-low latency trade, anchor green-powered data centres, and spark long-term joint ventures in digital infrastructure and sustainability. At the heart of this corridor is a joint Digital Academy—a pioneering institution that trains Emirati and EU youth in next-generation technologies and ethics. It is not merely a data pipeline, but a trust corridor: a Vernetzungsbasis (basis for networking and trust) for future innovation.

### **FEASIBILITY & IMPACT**

Europe’s digital economy is projected to

grow by over 35% by 2030, with demand for data-processing power and cybersecurity outpacing supply (**Reuters, 2024**). At the same time, the UAE has committed over \$100 billion to energy-efficient ICT and smart cities. Combining these trajectories, the corridor addresses dual needs: for the EU, a low-carbon, geopolitically safe route for its AI-driven industries; for the UAE, high-value digital diversification away from oil dependency. The project’s initial Key Performance Indicator: 80% of Digital Academy graduates employed within six months in green-IT sectors (**EU Digital Observatory, 2024**).

### **FUNDING & STRUCTURE**

Backed by the EU’s Global Gateway framework and UAE sovereign wealth funds (Mubadala, ADQ), this €3–4 billion initiative leverages public–private partnerships and blended finance. European banks (EBRD, EIB) can de-risk capital, while ports operators like AD Ports Group and Orange Marine co-develop landing sites. Learning from delays in the EU–Morocco digital link, pre-negotiated MOUs with Oman and Djibouti will secure cable routing from the start (**European Commission, 2021**).

### **INNOVATION & GOVERNANCE**

The Multi-Stakeholder Governance Board—co-chaired by DG CONNECT and the UAE Digital Authority—will set technical and ethical standards. Based on the EU Cybersecurity Act and UAE’s National Cybersecurity Strategy, a Digital Rights Charter will safeguard cross-border data flows and embed inclusivity through requirements like language-accessible

interfaces and regional subcontracting. This legal backbone cultivates a Vertrauensbasis (foundation of trust) between governments and tech operators alike.

## RISK MITIGATION

Risk mitigation for the Digital Silk Road includes ensuring route redundancy through tri-country agreements between Oman, the UAE, and the EU, which will provide flexible cable landing options in the event of disruptions. Regulatory certainty will be maintained by fast-tracking a Mutual Adequacy Decision on data transfer protocols, aligning both regions' legal frameworks for seamless and secure digital activity. To enhance supply chain resilience, at least 30% of fibre-optic components will be sourced from within the region, limiting exposure to geopolitical and logistical shocks while also supporting local industry development.

## SKILLS & CAPACITY BUILDING

The Digital Academy offers a modular, nine-month fellowship across Sharjah, Brussels, and online. Topics include machine learning, ethics of automation, and desert-based green infrastructure. A "Train-the-Trainer" module will ensure digital literacy cascades down to local SMEs and community colleges, inspired by my experience designing CSR projects for Sinopec's Middle East office.

## PERSONAL DRIVE

Having negotiated tech-policy clauses as a Model EU Top Delegate and led Sinopec CSR campaigns, I know the power of stakeholder alignment and grassroots innovation. This Silk Road is not just

infrastructure—it is Nachhaltigkeit (sustainability), digital democracy, and global foresight woven into a single strategic narrative.

## PROPOSAL 2: CULTURAL & YOUTH EXCHANGE INNOVATION HUB

### VISION

Turning now to the second pillar, I propose a dual-site Innovation Hub—a dynamic Jugendzentrum (youth centre) connecting Abu Dhabi and Brussels—where 50 cross-regional innovators gather annually for six-month residencies. Participants co-design virtual reality (VR) storytelling experiences focused on sustainability, identity, and urban inclusion. These residencies will offer university credit through transnational academic recognition, along with mentorship from cultural institutes and social-innovation labs.

Each year, high-impact hackathons will challenge intercultural teams to prototype social enterprises in just 48 hours, inspired by the theme "difference as advantage." Outputs will be showcased via an open-source platform—the Hub's digital portal—amplifying these VR "Cultural Mesas" to a global audience of educators, curators, and policy makers. Crucially, a Youth Sounding Board embedded within the EU Delegation ensures these voices directly influence strategy—a living expression of Willkommenskultur (culture of welcome).

### FEASIBILITY & IMPACT

The Hub will be seeded by €10 million from Erasmus+ and matched by €10 million from the UAE Ministry of Education (**European**

**Commission, 2018**). Programme delivery will be supported by the Goethe-Institut, Institut Français, and British Council. KPIs include 500 youth alumni in five years, 30 VR prototypes annually, and a 40% increase in intercultural competence scores, measured via pre- and post-residency surveys. A parallel impact target: a 25% increase in graduate employability within 12 months

## INNOVATION

The Hub's core innovation is the Cultural Mesa—a VR-based participatory storytelling model co-created by youth. Through immersive collaboration, teams develop micro-worlds simulating cross-border environmental challenges or shared urban futures. This medium activates deep empathy and narrative imagination, far beyond what traditional text-based diplomacy can offer.

Complementing this are Language Tandems: weekly virtual cafés pairing Arabic-speaking Emirati students with German or English-speaking Europeans. Each tandem concludes with a short co-produced documentary shared through Hub channels—celebrating plural identities and real conversations. From my own journey learning Deutsch out of passion, I know that such linguistic exchanges spark friendships, not just fluency.

## GOVERNANCE & SUSTAINABILITY

A Joint Steering Council, co-chaired by the UAE Federal Youth Authority and the EU's DG EAC, will oversee strategic goals, approve budgets, and set diversity benchmarks. Financial resilience is built through an endowment fund, with Siemens

Middle East and Etisalat among anticipated private-sector donors. The fund ensures operational stability beyond five years, even if public contributions fluctuate.

A bespoke "Cultural Exchange Visa" will be developed, drawing on outcomes of the First EU-GCC Summit, to simplify short-term mobility for programme participants and foster unbürokratische Zusammenarbeit (unbureaucratic cooperation).

## SKILLS & CAPACITY BUILDING

The Hub will host an accelerator-style Innovation Fellowship—a nine-month track where cohorts receive intensive mentorship in grant writing, intercultural leadership, and design thinking. A "Train-the-Trainer" module will equip graduates to become Hub Ambassadors, facilitating cultural diplomacy workshops at their home universities and beyond. This cascade approach ensures sustained, decentralised diffusion of intercultural literacy.

## PERSONAL DRIVE

This Innovation Hub reflects my lived belief that real diplomacy begins with empathy. At TEDx, I urged peers to take the "road less spoken." Through my Sinopec digital literacy work and as UOSMUN President, I brought together hundreds of diverse voices for shared dialogue. The Innovation Hub fuses all these energies—VR, language, curiosity—into a transformative, replicable blueprint for EU-UAE cultural diplomacy.

## POLICY ALIGNMENT & RISK MITIGATION

Both flagship proposals align closely with the EU–Gulf Strategic Communication’s four pillars: digital, climate, trade, and people-to-people exchange (**European Commission, 2022**). The Digital Silk Road leverages UAE solar energy to power infrastructure aligned with the Net Zero 2050 Strategy (**UAE Ministry of Climate Change and Environment, 2021**), while the Innovation Hub promotes intercultural Kompetenz (competence) through direct exchange.

Key risks—ranging from digital data insecurity to visa limitations—are addressed holistically. Datensicherheit (data security) is embedded via the EU Cybersecurity Act and the UAE’s Cybersecurity Strategy. A bilateral Mutual Adequacy Decision will facilitate frictionless data sharing and avoid legal grey zones. Quarterly regulatory forums will ensure continued Resilienz (resilience) to policy divergence.

On the cultural side, the proposed “Cultural Exchange Visa” directly responds to EU–GCC Summit mobility goals. To ensure financial Nachhaltigkeit (sustainability), a revolving public–private Finance Facility for Youth Innovation will reinvest returns from incubated ventures back into the Hub ecosystem, reducing donor dependency.

## CONCLUSION & CALL TO ACTION

By interlinking a secure Digital Silk Road and a visionary Youth Exchange Innovation Hub, the EU and UAE can chart a bold, cooperative path in a fragmented world. I call on H.E. Lucie Berger, EU Ambassador to the UAE, to convene the first Digital Silk Road Steering Board by Q4 2025 and to jointly inaugurate the Innovation Hub’s first cohort by mid-2026.

As someone who chose to learn languages not for ease, but for what they open up—Deutsch, Mandarin, and more—I have found that our richest progress lies in mutual curiosity. Let us turn these proposals into action, and write the next chapter of international cooperation together.



## **DEEPENING EU AND UAE RELATIONS THROUGH WATER GOVERNANCE AND YOUTH ENGAGEMENT WITH A FOCUS ON A STRATEGIC POLICY FRAMEWORK**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In an growing interconnected and climately challenged world, the relationship between the European Union (EU) and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is more strategically important than ever. The two actors though structurally and geographically different, share a growing list of mutual interests including, regional stability, climate innovation, sustainability, and youth engagement.

While trade and energy have historically driven their relations, the emerging global context demands that their partnership evolve beyond transactional cooperation.

Drawing from my experience in meteorology, humanitarian action, development, and diplomacy, I propose a strategic approach that centers on two underutilized yet high impact topics that are water governance and youth engagement. These areas offer long-term benefits, address systemic risks, and align with global policy frameworks such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the European Green Deal, and the UAE's Vision 2031 as well as the goal of reaching the net zero.

This paper will illustrate why water governance and youth engagement should be central pillars in the EU and UAE

relations and proposes a practical roadmap to deepen their bilateral cooperation.

### **1. WATER GOVERNANCE: RESILIENCE THROUGH JOINT MANAGEMENT**

#### **1.1. Common Challenges in Different Contexts**

The UAE is one of the most water-scarce countries globally, due to it being in an arid region, with annual renewable water resources below 100 m<sup>3</sup> per capital which is below the UN water poverty threshold of 1,000 m<sup>3</sup>. It depends heavily on desalination, with over 90% of its potable water sourced from energy intensive desalination plants (**TOWARDS NEW PEAKS, n.d.) (Sherif et al., 2023).**

Europe, by contrast, has more water availability but faces localized stress and have concerns for depletion. Southern Europe, particularly countries like Spain, Italy, and Greece, suffers from prolonged droughts and reduced groundwater availability and aquifers issue. Flooding events, exacerbated by climate change, also challenge urban water infrastructure across

Central and Eastern Europe.

Both regions faces climate-induced water issues. However, their complementary capabilities and European experience in regulation and integrated management, and Emirati expertise in technology and infrastructure will create good ground for collaboration in this sector.

## 1.2. The Case for a Water Governance Council

A joint effort of the EU and the UAE Water Governance Council would act as a policy, research, and innovation platform focused on:

- Promoting integrated water resource management like the (IWRM) (Environment, 2023).
- Supporting water data transparency and climate risk modelling that is water related
- Aligning regulatory standards for water reuse and efficiency

The council could build on existing frameworks, such as the EU Water Framework Directive and the UAE's Water Security Strategy 2036, and align with SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation).

## 1.3. Joint research and development (R&D) including Tech Transfer

The EU is home to leading water research institutions and environmental technology startups, while the UAE is investing billions in water innovation hubs like Masdar and the Mohammed bin

Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park's water desalination projects. A co-funded R&D grant program under a Horizon Europe-UAE umbrella could accelerate potential breakthroughs in:

- Solar-powered desalination
- AI-based water leak detection (Any water related innovation with AI)

- Precision irrigation for arid climates

This partnership would serve both local needs and create possible solutions for regions with water scarcity and lack of management issues.

## 1.4. Water Diplomacy in Fragile Contexts

Water scarcity is a growing driver of conflict and displacement. In regions like the Horn of Africa, Sahel, and parts of the Middle East, water insecurity intersects with governance failures and humanitarian crises. The EU and UAU are both major development donors and actors that can co-lead and cooperate in Track 2 diplomacy initiatives that focus on transboundary water agreements, community-based water security projects, and early warning systems.

Given my background in humanitarian action and meteorology, I believe this is where soft power can be most effective by using technical cooperation to prevent and prepare for a crises and build peace.

# 2. YOUTH ENGAGEMENT: INVESTING IN LONG-TERM LEADERSHIP

## 2.1. Youth as Strategic Stakeholders

Youth under 30 make up more than half of the UAE's population. In the EU, over 100 million people fall within the 15-29 age bracket (Glossary: Population pyramid, no date). Both demographics are inheriting a world of overlapping crises related with climate, economic inequality, and digital disruption. but also represent a source of creativity, energy and resilience.

Although, youth involvement in policymaking, particularly in foreign relations and environmental policy, remains symbolic rather than structural in many cases. The EU and the UAE relationship offers a space to rethink youth engagement. not as a social program, but as a basis of foreign policy and sustainable development.

## **2.2. The EU-UAE Youth Forum**

The creation of an EU-UAE Youth Forum would serve as a permanent bilateral dialogue

mechanism, focused on:

- Climate and environmental policy
- Digital transformation and green entrepreneurship
- Migration and inclusion

The forum would feed into broader decision-making processes and be supported by the European External Action Service (EEAS), UAE Ministry of Youth, and academic institutions like the Anwar Gargash Diplomatic (AGDA) in the UAE and Sciences Po. In France, as I am a result of a bilateral relationship between the two institutions I am an exchange student at Sciences Po from AGDA.

## **2.3. Education and Skills Mobility**

Building a joint education initiative similar to Erasmus+ (Home | Erasmus+, no date), but with targeted bilateral scholarships and internships in sustainability, diplomacy, and tech, would foster long-term trust. For example:

- Emirati students could study water law or environmental engineering at European universities.
- European youth could intern at UAE green tech start-ups or participate in urban sustainability projects.

These exchanges would align with the EU's Global Gateway strategy and the UAE's efforts to diversify beyond hydrocarbons and fossil fuel.

## **2.4. Youth Climate Innovation Accelerator**

A joint Youth Climate & Water Innovation driver, supported by EU venture platforms and UAE innovation funds (e.g., Mubadala or ADQ), would provide funding, mentorship, and international visibility to youth-led start-ups working on:

- Water-saving agricultural tools and other sectors.
- Climate adaptation AI platforms.
- Low-carbon building materials.
- Water governance think tanks.

Such an initiative would create global market access for innovators, particularly from the Global South, where both the EU and UAE are expanding their influence.

## **3. Integrating Water and Youth Agendas: A Unified Vision**

Water and youth agendas often exist in silos. But integrating these two creates policy coherence and compounds impact. Climate resilience, for example, is both a water and a youth issue because today's water decisions will determine tomorrow's livelihoods.

### **3.1. Youth Water Innovation Fellowship**

An EU-UAE Youth Water Fellowship could place young professionals in government ministries, UN agencies, or NGOs to work on water governance, climate adaptation, and international cooperation. Fellows would gain practical experience, while host institutions benefit from new perspectives and skills.

### 3.2. Water Education in Schools and Vocational Training

Together, the EU and UAE can fund curriculum development and teacher training programs that emphasize:

- The hydrological cycle and its links to climate change
- Smart water technologies
- International water law or governance.

By integrating this into both formal education and vocational pathways, we invest not just in awareness but in a future-ready workforce.

## 4. MEASURING PROGRESS: ACCOUNTABILITY AND INDICATORS

For cooperation to be meaningful, it must be measurable. I propose the adoption of a joint EU-UAE Sustainability Score card, reporting annually on:

- Joint research publications on water and climate
- Number of youth exchange participants
- Amount of co-invested capital in water or climate start-ups
- Humanitarian water access projects co-funded in fragile regions

Such metrics can be aligned with the EU's Global Europe instrument and the UAE's contributions to COP negotiations and SDG reporting.

## CONCLUSION: TOWARD A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

To conclude The EU-UAE relationship is at a crossroads. While energy and trade remain important, the next chapter must be about shared management of global commons like water, climate, and the future generations. Water governance and youth engagement offer strategic, values-driven, and future-facing paths for meaningful partnership.

From my perspective in meteorology and humanitarian action as well as diplomacy, water is the core of resilience. From my work in diplomacy and development, I see youth not as passive beneficiaries but as active shapers of global change. We must treat them as such.

If the EU and UAE invest in these areas not just as policy items but as strategic commitments, they won't just be cooperating both will be co-leading the global response to some of the 21st century's most urgent challenges. Since water can be a condition to address other issues in terms of policy too. Some actors might argue that water is the next thing but from my understanding water is the condition to achieve the goals of different issues like climate change, biodiversity and peace. Is also the condition for almost any SDG and the Paris agreement in 2015.

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