

International relations

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An overview

Indicators	Exports of goods and services (% of GDP)		Exports of goods and services (annual % growth)		Exports of goods and services (US\$ billion; current values)		Food exports (% of merchandise exports)		Food imports (% of merchandise imports)		Imports of goods and services (annual % growth)		Imports of goods and services (US\$ billion; current values)		Foreign direct investment, net inflows (% of GDP)		Foreign direct investment, net outflows (% of GDP)	
	2024 (n)	2024 (n)	2024 (n)	2024 (n)	2024 (n)	2024 (n)	2024 (n)	2024 (n)	2024 (n)	2024 (n)	2024 (n)	2024 (n)	2024 (n)	2024 (n)	2023 (c)	2023 (c)	2023 (c)	2023 (c)
PRT	46.5	3.4	143.3	14.4	15.3	5.0	137.9	4.3	2.0	2.0								
ESP	37.3	3.1	642.5	13.7	12.5	2.4	583.7	2.4	12.5	12.5								
ITA	32.7	0.4	81.4	11.5	11.5	0.7	72.4	0.9	11.3	11.3								
SVN	81.5	3.2	776.7	3.7	5.4	5.4	54.3	2.7	1.2	1.2								
HRV	49.8	0.9	46.1	15.2	14.3	5.4	48.0	5.0	1.6	1.6								
GRC	42.0	1.0	108.0	2.7	13.1	5.5	2.7	12.7	17.5	17.5								
ITA	16.5	5.3	11.5	9.7	13.9	2.7	11.7	12.7	12.7	12.7								
CYP	168.7	3.5	36.1	22.5	15.3	8.3	33.8	5.2	16.8	16.8								
SRB	52.7	3.2	46.9	46.9	15.3	8.3	52.4	6.3	0.2	0.2								
XXC	41.9	9.7	4.7	-	-	8.9	8.1	8.3	2.0	2.0								
BH	42.8	3.1	12.1	7.1	17.4	2.8	16.2	4.0	2.8	2.8								
BOS and HERZ	44.9	3.2	16.8	16.8	23.6	5.6	5.5	7.4	0.8	0.8								
MNE	62.7	3.8	10.5	10.6	11.7	0.6	12.7	7.0	1.3	1.3								
MD	36.1	0.8	9.8	13.4	16.6	6.0	11.7	6.3	0.3	0.3								
ALB	28.1	1.0	371.1	12.3	6.2	4.1	367.8	0.9	0.5	0.5								
TUR	30.6	1.6	16.9	16.9	16.9	0.5	16.9	0.5	0.4	0.4								
LEB	30.6	1.1	8.1	16.3	16.3	0.3	14.8	3.3	0.4	0.4								
JOR	42.6	1.1	27.7	13.4	20.2	20.2	30.5	3.1	0.1	0.1								
ISR	28.4	5.6	153.7	10.6	10.6	0.4	146.6	2.7	1.5	1.5								
IRL	21.0	11.1	2.9	21.4	30.9	31.1	8.3	1.2	0.0	0.0								
WE Bank and Gaza	16.4	10.6	53.7	20.4	20.4	4.7	34.4	12.0	0.1	0.1								
EGY	48.4	0.1	25.9	13.4	13.4	4.6	24.5	1.4	0.0	0.0								
EGY, Arab Rep.	48.4	0.8	25.9	13.4	13.4	4.6	24.5	1.4	0.0	0.0								
TUN	23.6	3.4	58.5	1.0	20.2	17.9	49.7	0.5	0.1	0.1								
DZA	43.3	8.6	68.9	18.9	14.0	13.0	81.0	1.1	0.5	0.5								
MAR	43.3	8.6	68.9	18.9	14.0	13.0	81.0	1.1	0.5	0.5								

(..) Not available.

(a) 2023 Algeria and Lebanon; 2022 Syrian Arab Republic

(b) 2023 Lebanon, Jordan, West Bank and Gaza, Tunisia, Morocco; 2019 Libya; 2017 Algeria; 2010 Syrian Arab Republic

(c) 2023 Lebanon and Libya; 2011 Syrian Arab Republic

(d) 2022 Malta, Cyprus, Serbia, North Macedonia and Morocco; 2021 Albania

Sources: World Bank national accounts data, OECD National Accounts data files, International Monetary Fund, UNCTAD.

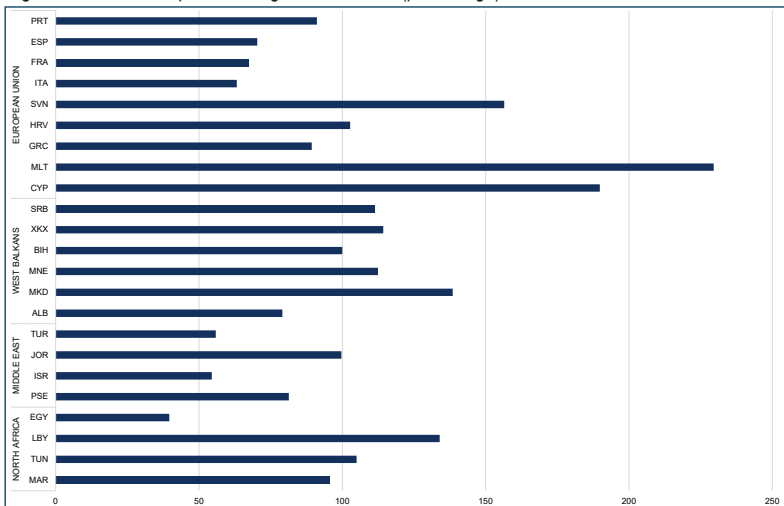
Some highlighted topics

International Openness and Trade Balance. Mediterranean countries are, overall, well integrated into international trade, displaying relatively high levels of trade openness. Among the 26 countries considered, only Syria (35.6%), Algeria (43.7%), and Egypt (39.6%) record a ratio of exports and imports to Gross Domestic Product below 50%. Large European Union economies—such as France, Italy, and Spain—as well as Turkey and Israel in the Middle East, exhibit intermediate levels of trade openness, ranging between 50% and 70%, reflecting their larger domestic markets when compared to smaller economies. By contrast, several smaller and more outward-oriented countries show markedly higher levels of openness.

Within the European Union, Malta (229.6%), Cyprus (189.8%), and Slovenia (156.5%) exceed the 100% threshold. Similarly high values are observed in North Africa for Libya (133.9%) and Tunisia (105%), as well as in all Western Balkan countries with the exception of Albania.

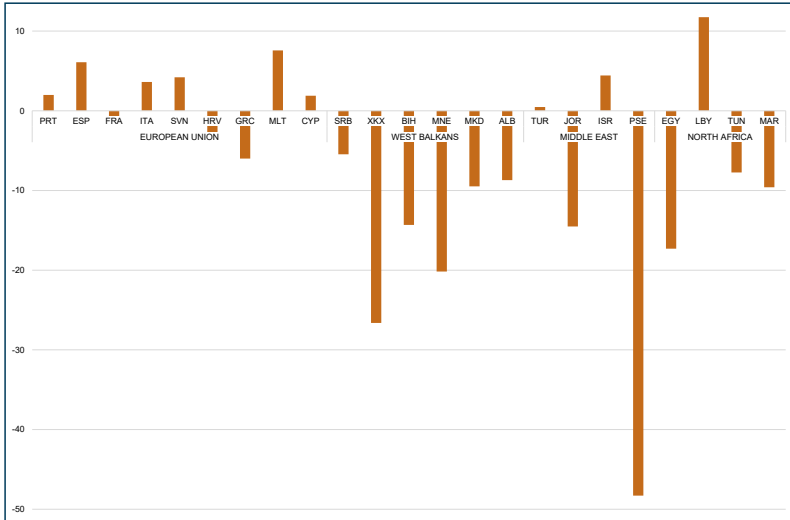
More developed countries with higher GDP levels tend to display relatively lower degrees of trade openness, as they benefit from large domestic markets and highly diversified productive structures that are able to satisfy a substantial share of domestic demand without relying extensively on foreign trade. In addition, their higher GDP increases the denominator of the exports-plus-imports-to-GDP ratio, thereby reducing its value even in the presence of sizable trade flows. In advanced economies, the larger weight

Fig. 1. International Openness degree. Year 2024 (percentage).



Source: WeMed on World Bank national accounts data e OECD National Accounts data files.

Fig. 2. Normalized trade balance. Year 2024 (percentage).



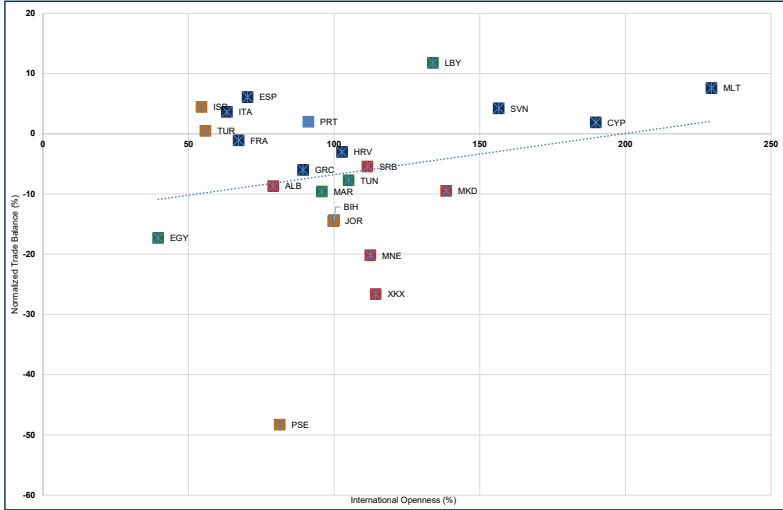
Source: WeMed on World Bank national accounts data e OECD National Accounts data files.

of service sectors—such as health, education, and personal services, which are often non-tradable internationally—further contributes to GDP growth without a proportional increase in external trade. By contrast, smaller or less developed economies tend to be more specialized, more dependent on foreign markets, and more deeply integrated into global value chains. As a result, they typically record higher levels of imports and exports relative to a smaller GDP base, and consequently higher degrees of trade openness.

The balance between exports and imports (normalized with respect to each country's total foreign trade) is negative for the majority of Mediterranean countries. Only ten countries—six of which are members of the European Union—record a trade surplus.

Among EU countries, those with a positive trade balance are, in descending order, Malta (+7.6%), Spain (+6.1%), Slovenia (+4.2%), Italy (+3.6%), Portugal (+2.0%), and Cyprus (+1.9%). These are joined by the two most economically advanced countries in the Middle East, with the highest GDP per capita, Israel (+4.4%) and Turkey (+0.5%), as well as by two North African countries that are major exporters of energy products—Libya (+11.8%) and Algeria (+8.1%)—which rank first and second, respectively, in terms of trade surplus among the twenty-six Mediterranean countries considered. All Western Balkan countries record trade deficits, with particularly pronounced shortfalls in Kosovo (−26.6%) and Montenegro (−20.2%). Trade balances are also markedly negative in Palesti-

Fig. 3. International Openness degree and normalized trade balance. Year 2024 (percentage).



Source: WeMed on World Bank national accounts data e OECD National Accounts data files.

ne (-48.3%) among Middle Eastern countries and in Egypt (-17.3%) in North Africa.

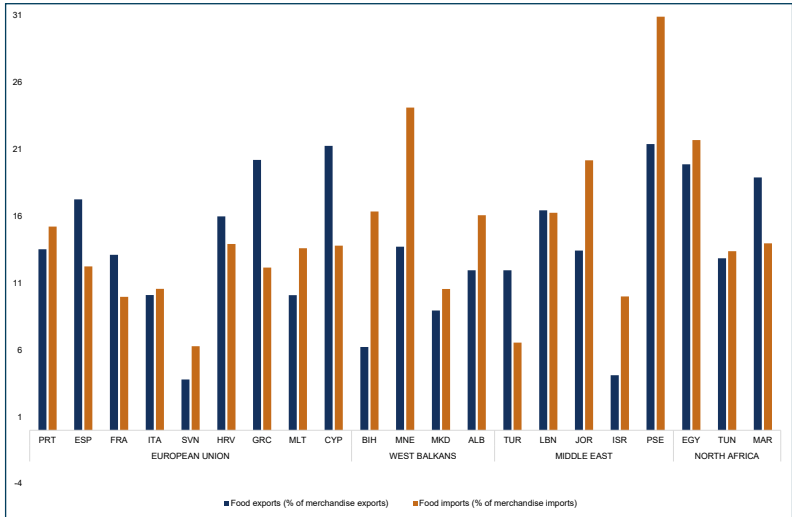
The two indicators discussed above—the degree of trade openness and the normalized trade balance—exhibit a positive, albeit weak, correlation (see Figure 3). Higher levels of trade openness are associated with a more balanced trade position.

Foreign Trade of Food Products. The share of food products in total foreign trade provides an indication of each country's degree of specialization in this specific production and trade segment. Eight out of the twenty-six Mediterranean countries record a positive balance between exports and imports of food products, five of which are European Union members (Spain, France, Cro-

tia, Greece, and Cyprus). Outside the EU, positive balances are observed in Morocco (food products accounting for 18.9% of exports and 14.0% of imports), Turkey (12.0% of exports and 6.5% of imports), and Lebanon (16.4% of exports and 16.3% of imports).

The share of food products in exports is particularly high in Cyprus (21.3%), Greece (20.2%), and Spain (17.3%) within the European Union, as well as in Palestine (21.4%) in the Middle East and in Egypt (19.9%) and Morocco (18.9%) in North Africa. On the import side, the weight of food products is especially pronounced in Palestine (30.9%)—the highest among all twenty-six Mediterranean countries—followed by Montenegro (24.1%) and Egypt (21.7%).

Fig. 4. Exports and Imports of food products. Year 2024 (percentage of merchandise trade).



Source: UNCTAD, World Bank.