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INTRODUCTION TO EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

DELEGATIONS

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A word of welcome

Dear Member,

Congratulations on your election and welcome to the European Parliament. We look forward to supporting you in your delegation work during this new legislative term!

The next few years are likely to be decisive for the future of EU external relations, as the EU re-defines its place in an increasingly disorderly and insecure world. It will have to assess and possibly recalibrate its foreign, security, defence, trade, and development policies and instruments in order to be an effective global player in the new geopolitical environment.

Reinforcing and expanding ties with partners around the world will be essential for preserving and promoting the rules-based global order and safeguarding the EU's interests and values. Parliamentary diplomacy has a central role to play in building enduring relationships and fostering policy dialogue with parliaments and stakeholders in non-EU countries.

Parliament wields significant influence as a driver of the EU's external policies when all its bodies work together in a coherent and strategic manner. Close coordination and cooperation between the committees, the interparliamentary delegations and assemblies, and all other actors engaged in supporting democracy is crucial.

As a delegation member, you will be actively contributing to making the European Parliament a driver of EU foreign policy. In doing so, you will be able to count on the full support of our desk officers as well as the wider staff and management in our Directorate-General.



Pietro Ducci
Director-
General for
External
Policies of the
Union

**Juan-Carlos
Jiménez Marín**
Director for
Regions, DG for
External
Policies

Caption: Pietro Ducci (l) and Juan Carlos Jiménez Marín (r)

Understanding the European Parliament's delegations

Interparliamentary delegations are standing bodies of Parliament comprising groups of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) that officially maintain and further deepen relations with the parliaments of non-EU countries, regions and organisations. Delegations are instruments of parliamentary diplomacy and scrutiny.

In regular discussions with parliamentarians of non-EU countries, delegation members have the opportunity to share their views on issues of common interest, on the state of relations with any given country or region, to make their partners aware of EU values, and at the same time, to familiarise themselves with positions taken by other parliaments and governments.

Parliamentary diplomacy is an integral part of wider EU relations with non-EU countries.

Interparliamentary meetings

Delegations organise interparliamentary meetings with elected representatives from outside the EU.

These meetings are generally held at regular intervals, depending on the type of delegation, and take place in alternating venues: for one meeting, MEPs will travel to another parliament outside the EU, and, for the next, the European Parliament delegation will host its guests in either Strasbourg or Brussels.

When interparliamentary meetings take place outside the EU, the programme will generally include meetings with interlocutors in government and civil society, in addition to meetings in the hosting parliament. MEPs often also use the opportunity to visit EU-funded projects.

Digital diplomacy is an increasingly important feature of delegation activities. As well as participating in in-person meetings, delegations remain in regular contact via online meetings and events, and can respond quickly to developing events and urgent issues within the EU and in partner countries or regions.

Discussions in Brussels and Strasbourg

Delegations also hold meetings in Brussels and Strasbourg, either alone or with other delegations or committees, to plan their interparliamentary encounters and to discuss the situation in their partners' countries.

Delegations regularly invite external guests to give presentations and exchange views; these include interlocutors from the European Commission, the European External Action Service, the respective embassies, academia and civil society organisations.

Number and structure of standing delegations

The number, structure and composition of interparliamentary delegations may differ from one term to another. There were 48 'standing' – in other words, permanent – delegations at the end of the previous term (2019–2024).

There are various types of delegations: interparliamentary delegations, delegations to joint parliamentary committees, delegations to parliamentary cooperation committees and delegations to multilateral parliamentary assemblies.

At any time, and in addition to the regular interparliamentary meetings, Parliament may also decide to send ad hoc delegations, i.e. officially appointed groups of MEPs, to non-EU countries in response to specific political developments or to take part in conferences or other events.

Composition

All delegations have the same structure: they have one Chair and two Vice-Chairs, who are elected by that delegation's members.

All delegation members are nominated by Parliament's political groups, with the total composition of each delegation reflecting Parliament's overall political balance.

Every single MEP is a member of a standing delegation. Some belong to more than one.

The largest delegations are usually those that participate in parliamentary assemblies, where several parliaments convene.

Rules

The delegations must follow strict rules that are laid out in several documents and decisions.

Two of Parliament's official Rules of Procedure focus on delegations and many of the rules for committees also apply to delegations.

The most extensive rules for delegations are contained in an official document called the 'Implementing provisions governing the work of delegations and missions outside the European Union'.

That text lays out the general aim of Parliament's delegations: 'maintaining and enhancing contacts with parliaments of States that are traditionally partners of the European Union and [...] promoting [...] the values on which the European Union is founded'.

The provisions also describe how Parliament's delegations should respect Parliament's positions and standards.

Other articles explain which MEPs can join a delegation's trips outside the EU. In order to keep costs down, the number of participants is strictly controlled, with all trips requiring prior authorisation.

Relationship with committees

Parliament has three full committees and two subcommittees focusing on activities outside the EU ('external action'). These committees have a privileged relationship with the delegations.

Committees and delegations keep one another informed of their meetings and discussions, and invite each other's members to join their proceedings and assignments, including when they travel outside the EU.

Of the various committees, the Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) plays the most critical role for the delegations. AFET coordinates and is responsible for political oversight of the delegations – not only of standing delegations, but of all MEPs travelling on official Parliament business to countries outside the EU.

The Committee on International Trade (INTA) liaises with all delegations when the agenda touches on international economic and trade issues.

The Committee on Development (DEVE) coordinates delegations that address development issues.

Before any delegation meets with elected representatives from outside the EU, committees may suggest political topics that the delegation could or should address. After the meeting, the Chair of the delegation reports back to the relevant committees.

Focusing on democracy and human rights

Many delegations also involve the European Parliament's Democracy and Elections Coordination Group (DEG) in their work. This body, headed by the Chairs of AFET and DEVE, oversees Parliament's efforts in strengthening democracy and human rights outside the EU.

One of the group's principal activities is organising election observation missions. Between 10 and 12 times a year, MEPs travel to non-EU countries to observe voting processes. Their experience as elected representatives adds political credibility to their evaluations.

Other projects overseen by the DEG aim to help parliaments in non-EU countries grow stronger and achieve their full potential.

Gender mainstreaming

Each delegation nominates one of its members to be responsible for gender mainstreaming in the work of the delegation.

Outreach to civil society and non-parliamentary stakeholders

Delegations maintain contacts with civil society actors and non-parliamentary stakeholders in the country or region on which they work. Exchanges can take place at Parliament's places of work or when the delegation is visiting a non-EU country. In certain cases, specific meeting slots are reserved for engagement with young people and women.

Types of delegations

All Parliament's delegations reach out to parliamentarians in other countries, regions and organisations. But just how and where they meet depends on which type of delegation they are.

Parliamentary assemblies

One group of delegations participates in parliamentary assemblies – regular, formal meetings that bring together elected representatives from several parliaments. The European Parliament's delegation is just one of several at these assemblies.

In most cases, the European Parliament's delegation is the largest single delegation at the assembly, with MEPs accounting for about half the total number of delegates. However, in some parliamentary assemblies, the European Parliament's representatives are in the minority.

Examples of parliamentary assemblies include the Delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (DNAT) and the Delegation to the Euro-Latin America Parliamentary Assembly (DLAT).

Interparliamentary committees

Parliament's delegations to interparliamentary committees meet their counterparts in regular, formal meetings. Most of these interparliamentary committees are bilateral: they involve the European Parliament and one other delegation, usually from a single country.

Interparliamentary committees may be called Parliamentary Association Committees, Parliamentary Cooperation Committees, Joint Parliamentary Committees or Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committees, depending on a number of factors.

All these committees are created by bilateral agreements between the EU and the partner country or region. The meetings follow strict rules of procedure.

In the 2019–2024 term, Parliament had 15 delegations that participated in 23 interparliamentary committees. Examples include the Delegation to the EU–

Mexico Joint Parliamentary Committee (D-MX) and the Delegation to the EU-Ukraine Parliamentary Association Committee (D-UA).

Other interparliamentary delegations

The largest group of delegations focuses on relations with another country, or sometimes with a group of countries.

Members of these delegations meet their fellow legislators in ordinary interparliamentary meetings. The frequency of these meetings can vary according to the schedules and availability of the two partners. These meetings do not have their own rules, although they still adhere to the general provisions for delegations established by the European Parliament.

Most of Parliament's delegations fall into this category of interparliamentary delegations. Two examples are the Delegation for relations with Japan (D-JP) and the Delegation for relations with Canada (D-CA).

Conference of Delegation Chairs (CDC)

The Conference of Delegation Chairs (CDC) is the political body in Parliament that coordinates the work of Parliament's standing delegations.

The CDC ensures that the delegations work efficiently and in coordination with Parliament's other structures. Its regular meetings provide a forum in which to discuss issues and challenges common to the delegations.

Composition and Chair

The members of the Conference of Delegation Chairs are the Chairs of Parliament's 48 standing delegations and of the three committees that work on international relations: the Committees on Foreign Affairs (AFET), Development (DEVE) and International Trade (INTA).

One of the 48 delegation Chairs is elected to be Chair of the Conference. They hold the position for the duration of the parliamentary term.

Scheduling

Meetings of the Conference of Delegation Chairs are usually held on the Wednesday of Strasbourg sessions.

Twice a year, the CDC adopts the six-month calendar of delegation meetings to be approved subsequently by Parliament's Conference of Presidents. AFET, INTA and DEVE are consulted during this process.

In drafting the schedule, the CDC works with a parallel political body overseeing the work of committees, the Conference of Committee Chairs. Together, they

verify that the schedules of the delegations and committees complement one another and that they align with Parliament's general calendar.

Upcoming activities aimed at supporting democracy and human rights outside the EU are also taken into account.

Parliament's Conference of Presidents, composed of the President of the European Parliament and the Chairs of the political groups, is responsible for approving the final six-month calendar of delegation meetings.

Coordinating role

The Conference of Delegation Chairs coordinates with other political bodies in Parliament on a number of issues in addition to the calendar.

It submits recommendations on the delegations' work to the Conference of Presidents.

Parliament's Bureau, made up of the President and Vice-Presidents of the European Parliament, sometimes asks the CDC to fulfil certain tasks.

The CDC advocates for best practices in the work of those different bodies and the adoption of common approaches and guidelines for the delegations' activities.

By working with committees too, the CDC also ensures that Parliament's committees and delegations remain aligned. This, in turn, strengthens Parliament's contribution to EU foreign policy.

Support services to delegations

Every delegation is assisted by a secretariat, usually comprising at least one desk officer, who covers the country or region in question, and an assistant, who takes care of all administrative and logistical matters to facilitate the activities of that delegation.

The secretariat receives guidance from the Chair and the Vice-Chairs as regards the priorities for the work of the delegation, after these have been discussed among delegation members.

The secretariat follows guidance from the Chair and delegation members on the scheduling of regular meetings, the timing and venues of interparliamentary meetings, and the issues to be included in draft agendas.

Background information is provided to delegation members ahead of each regular meeting, but most importantly, in preparation for each interparliamentary meeting with a parliament of a non-EU country. Regular delegation meetings in Brussels or in Strasbourg are used to update MEPs on the state of relations with a given country or region, ahead of an official visit or interparliamentary meeting. The relevant desk officer is an important source of

expertise and background briefing material on the country or region for which they are responsible. The desk officer can also advise on internal rules and procedural questions.

The secretariat is expected to implement the activities of delegations in accordance with relevant rules (including the Rules of Procedure and the implementing provisions on the work of delegations). These rules have an impact on, for instance, the possible timing of meetings, the scheduling of interparliamentary meetings, and the availability of translation and interpretation.

Besides the assistance provided to the delegation as a standing body of Parliament, individual MEPs have the possibility to request specific information on relevant policy fields and analysis from the Directorate for Members' Research Service in the Directorate-General for Parliamentary Research Services (EPRS). Specific briefing notes can be requested by MEPs on any policy field covered by the EU, including analysis and research related to the country or region covered by the respective delegation.

Last but not least, Parliament has established five liaison offices outside the EU (in London and Washington DC, and at the United Nations in New York, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Jakarta and the African Union in Addis Ababa). These representations perform liaison functions with the respective parliaments and parliamentary assemblies and engage in dialogue with legislators, officials and civil society organisations. They can be an additional source of information and assistance for MEPs in their activities. In the 2024-2029 term, further liaison offices or external antennae will open in Latin America, the Western Balkans and Ukraine.

List of all delegations

Asia and Pacific

<u>D-AF</u>	Delegation for relations with Afghanistan
<u>DANZ</u>	Delegation for relations with Australia and New Zealand
<u>DASE</u>	Delegation for relations with the countries of Southeast Asia and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)
<u>DCAS</u>	Delegation to the EU-Kazakhstan, EU-Kyrgyzstan and EU-Uzbekistan and EU-Tajikistan Parliamentary Cooperation Committees and for relations with Turkmenistan and Mongolia
<u>D-CN</u>	Delegation for relations with the People's Republic of China
<u>D-IN</u>	Delegation for relations with India
<u>D-JP</u>	Delegation for relations with Japan
<u>DKOR</u>	Delegation for relations with the Korean Peninsula
<u>DSAS</u>	Delegation for relations with the countries of South Asia

Canada and United States

<u>D-CA</u>	Delegation for relations with Canada
<u>DNAT</u>	Delegation for relations with the NATO Parliamentary Assembly
<u>D-US</u>	Delegation for relations with the United States

Europe and the North

<u>D-AL</u>	Delegation to the EU-Albania Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee
<u>D-BY</u>	Delegation for relations with Belarus
<u>DEEA</u>	Delegation for Northern cooperation and for relations with Switzerland and Norway and to the EU-Iceland Joint Parliamentary Committee and the European Economic Area (EEA) Joint Parliamentary Committee
<u>DEPA</u>	Delegation to the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly
<u>D-MD</u>	Delegation to the EU-Moldova Parliamentary Association Committee
<u>D-ME</u>	Delegation to the EU-Montenegro Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee
<u>D-MK</u>	Delegation to the EU-North Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee
<u>D-RS</u>	Delegation to the EU-Serbia Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee
<u>D-RU</u>	Delegation to the EU-Russia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee
<u>DSCA</u>	Delegation to the EU-Armenia Parliamentary Partnership Committee, the EU-Azerbaijan Parliamentary Cooperation Committee and the EU-Georgia Parliamentary Association Committee
<u>DSEE</u>	Delegation for relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo
<u>D-TR</u>	Delegation to the EU-Türkiye Joint Parliamentary Committee
<u>D-UA</u>	Delegation to the EU-Ukraine Parliamentary Association Committee
<u>D-UK</u>	Delegation to the EU-UK Parliamentary Partnership Assembly

Latin America and Caribbean

<u>DAND</u>	Delegation for relations with the countries of the Andean Community
<u>D-BR</u>	Delegation for relations with the Federative Republic of Brazil
<u>DCAM</u>	Delegation for relations with the countries of Central America
<u>DCAR</u>	Delegation to the CARIFORUM-EU Parliamentary Committee
<u>D-CL</u>	Delegation to the EU-Chile Joint Parliamentary Committee
<u>DLAT</u>	Delegation to the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly
<u>DMER</u>	Delegation for relations with Mercosur
<u>D-MX</u>	Delegation to the EU-Mexico Joint Parliamentary Committee

Mediterranean and Middle East

<u>DARP</u>	Delegation for relations with the Arab Peninsula
<u>D-IL</u>	Delegation for relations with Israel
<u>D-IQ</u>	Delegation for relations with Iraq
<u>D-IR</u>	Delegation for relations with Iran
<u>DMAG</u>	Delegation for relations with Maghreb countries and the Arab Maghreb Union, including the EU-Morocco, EU-Tunisia and EU-Algeria Joint Parliamentary Committees
<u>DMAS</u>	Delegation for relations with the Mashreq countries
<u>DMED</u>	Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean
<u>DPAL</u>	Delegation for relations with Palestine

Sub-Saharan Africa and the Organisation for African, Caribbean and Pacific States

<u>DACP</u>	Delegation to the OACPS-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly
<u>DAFR</u>	Delegation to the Africa-EU Parliamentary Assembly
<u>DCAB</u>	Delegation to the Caribbean-EU Parliamentary Assembly
<u>DPAC</u>	Delegation to the Pacific-EU Parliamentary Assembly
<u>DPAP</u>	Delegation for relations with the Pan African Parliament
<u>D-ZA</u>	Delegation for relations with South Africa