

# Understanding European Parliament delegations

Members of the European Parliament form official groups – delegations – with ties to regions and organisations, as well as parliaments, in non-EU countries. Parliament has expanded its impact EU in foreign policy in recent decades, and its delegations are a key component of its diplomatic work.

## Parliament delegations: parliamentary actors with a global reach

The European Parliament's [delegations](#) are official groups of Members who build ties to countries, regions or organisations outside the European Union (EU). There are two main types of delegations: permanent ('standing') delegations and ad-hoc delegations, which Parliament can create on a case-by-case basis to focus on particular developments in a country or region. Standing delegations belong in three subgroups: parliamentary assemblies, interparliamentary committees, and other interparliamentary delegations (see below). Standing delegations meet regularly in Brussels and Strasbourg to assess and discuss the situation in their partner countries and on their respective ties to the EU. The delegations invite external experts to share their views: representatives from embassies or universities, or staff from the European Union's External Action Service (EEAS), for example. The delegations also invite members of the political opposition or civil society in a given country, to give them a voice at their meetings. In addition, delegations hold meetings with parliaments from the relevant countries: 'interparliamentary meetings'. These activities help form and further relations between Members and their counterparts in countries outside the EU.

## Rules and responsibilities

According to Rule 223(5) of [Parliament's Rules of Procedure](#), the Conference of Presidents adopts the rules for the delegations on a proposal from the Conference of Delegation Chairs. The rules applying to the delegations are set out in the Conference of Presidents' [decision](#) of 29 October 2015. The delegations maintain and develop Parliament's international contacts and contribute to enhancing the role and visibility of the European Union in the world. The rules also specify that delegation activities shall aim at maintaining and enhancing contacts with parliaments of states that are traditionally EU partners. On the other hand, they shall contribute to promoting in third countries the fundamental values of the European Union: the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law ([Article 6](#) of the Treaty on the EU). Parliament's international contacts foster, wherever possible and appropriate, the parliamentary dimension of international relations.

## The standing delegations: composition and work

The European Parliament currently – at the beginning of the ninth legislature (2019-2024) – has 44 standing delegations; the same number as in the previous legislature. Following the 2019 election, Parliament adopted a [decision](#) on the numerical strength of its interparliamentary delegations. It lists the delegations operating during this term, and the number of Members each one includes. The distribution and size of delegations may differ from one term to the next. For example, a single delegation covered Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo in the seventh legislative term (2009-2014). Since 2014, four separate delegations have dealt with relations with these countries.

The number of Members in a given delegation corresponds to the number of parliamentarians from the respective partner country/countries. The work of the delegations also varies according to the partner. For example, the Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP) [delegation](#) is established under the Cotonou Agreement. In the ACP delegation, two plenary sessions with the entire joint assembly are complemented with regional meetings. In some delegations, the work is mainly based on invitation, where some countries are prioritised for visits. The voice of the delegations has major potential to amplify messages.

See also EPRS Briefings on '[Connecting parliamentary and executive diplomacy at EU and Member State level](#)' and '[The European Parliament's evolving soft power](#)', September 2019.

## What are the different types of standing delegations?

**Parliamentary assemblies** are regular, formal meetings of elected representatives from several parliaments. Currently, 5 of Parliament's 44 delegations participate in parliamentary assemblies, namely the Delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (DNAT), the Delegation to the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, the Delegation to the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly, the Delegation to the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly, and the Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean. In most cases, Parliament's delegation is the largest single delegation at the assembly. The number of Members constitutes approximately half the total number of delegates. One exception is the DNAT, where the delegation size is limited to ten Members.

**Interparliamentary committees** are mostly bilateral. European Parliament delegations meet their counterparts from a country/countries in formal meetings, held on a regular basis. Interparliamentary committees differ according to the type of bilateral agreement establishing them, between the EU and the respective country. These include Parliamentary Association Committees, Parliamentary Cooperation Committees, Joint Parliamentary Committees or Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committees. Parliament currently has 15 delegations participating in 23 parliamentary committees.

**Other interparliamentary delegations** form the largest group of delegations (25 out of the total number of 44 delegations), which work with relations with individual countries or a group of countries. The 'interparliamentary meetings' – in which the delegations meet with their counterparts – are not held on a regular basis, and do not have their own rules, although they follow the general provisions for delegations.

On 17 July 2019, Members voted on the [composition of interparliamentary delegations](#). Following the approval of the nature and numerical strength of interparliamentary delegations, the political groups and non-attached Members appoint delegation members. The composition of these delegations must ensure that EU Member States, political views and genders are represented fairly. The constituent meetings of the delegations, on 26 September 2019, were held to elect chairs and vice-chairs. The interparliamentary delegations include:

**Europe, Western Balkans and Turkey:** EU-North Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) (13 members); EU-Turkey JPC (25); Delegation for Northern cooperation and for relations with Switzerland and Norway and to the EU-Iceland JPC and the European Economic Area JPC (17); Delegation to the EU-Serbia Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee (15); Delegation to the EU-Albania Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee (PAC, 14); Delegation to the EU-Montenegro Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee (14); Delegation for relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo (13).

**Russia and the Eastern Partnership:** Delegation to the EU-Russia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee (31); Delegation to the EU-Ukraine PAC (16); Delegation to the EU-Moldova PAC (14); Delegation for relations with Belarus (12); Delegation to the EU-Armenia Parliamentary Partnership Committee, the EU-Azerbaijan Parliamentary Cooperation Committee and the EU-Georgia PAC (18).

**Maghreb, Mashreq, Israel and Palestine:** Delegations for relations with Israel (18); Palestine (18); the Maghreb countries and the Arab Maghreb Union, including the EU-Morocco, EU-Tunisia and EU-Algeria Joint Parliamentary Committees (18); the Mashreq countries (18).

**The Arab Peninsula, Iraq and Iran:** Delegations for relations with: the Arab Peninsula (15); Iraq (7); Iran (11).

**The Americas:** Delegations for relations with: the United States (63); Canada (16); the Federative Republic of Brazil (14); Central America (15); the Andean Community (12); Mercosur (19); Delegation to the EU-Mexico JPC (14); Delegation to the EU-Chile JPC (14); Delegation to the Cariforum-EU Parliamentary Committee (15).

**Asia/Pacific:** Delegations for relations with: Japan (24); the People's Republic of China (37); India (23); Afghanistan (7); South Asia (15); Southeast Asia and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN, 26); the Korean Peninsula (12); Australia and New Zealand (12); Delegation to the EU-Kazakhstan, EU-Kyrgyzstan, EU-Uzbekistan and EU-Tajikistan Parliamentary Cooperation Committees, and for relations with Turkmenistan and Mongolia (19).

**Africa:** Delegations for relations with: South Africa (15); the Pan-African Parliament (12).

**Multilateral assemblies:** Delegation to the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly (78); Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean (49); Delegation to the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly (75); Delegation to the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly (60); Delegation for relations with the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (10).

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