

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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Delegation for relations with Mercosur

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE DELEGATION

and Summary of Activities during the 6th Parliamentary Term (2004-2009)



General context

In accordance with Rules 198 and 200 of Parliament's Rules of Procedure, the European Parliament may set up standing interparliamentary delegations, Parliamentary Cooperation Committees and Joint Parliamentary Committees. The number of these bodies may vary from one legislature to the other.

The interparliamentary delegations' main objective is to establish, channel and promote parliamentary dialogue with the partner countries' legislative institutions and also with the parliamentary institutions concerned with integration at regional or sub-regional level. Such objectives are achieved by means of regular gatherings at Parliament's places of work and in the counterpart countries, during which topics of mutual interest in the national, bi-regional and international spheres are discussed.

Delegations for relations with Latin America

The European Union and Latin America have enjoyed a Strategic Partnership since the first bi-regional Summit in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) in 1999. EU policy priorities towards Latin America are defined in the Communication on a 'Stronger Partnership between the European Union and Latin America' (2005).

Of the 34 standing Delegations during the 2004-2009 term, five were responsible for bilateral and sub-regional relations with Latin America:

- Delegation to the Joint Parliamentary Committee EU-Mexico¹
- Delegation to the Joint Parliamentary Committee EU-Chile¹
- Delegation for relations with the countries of Central America
- Delegation for relations with Mercosur
- Delegation for relations with the countries of the Andean Community

All these delegations work closely together with the European Parliament's Delegation to the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly (Eurolat).

Information gathered is made available to Parliament's other Members by means of regular reports or reports drawn up by the chairman after each visit or interparliamentary meeting. The reports are usually submitted to the Committee on Foreign Affairs and Human Rights Sub-Committee, Development, International Trade and when directly relevant to other Committees. They sometimes give rise to European Parliament resolutions.

The Delegation for relations with Mercosur

The Delegation for relations with Mercosur covers relations with the Mercosur itself and with its Member states², Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay³.

¹ The establishment of the Joint Parliamentary Committees with Mexico and Chile has been provided for in the Associations Agreements of the European Union with the respective countries and have thus a legal standing of their own.

² The lack of reference to the Member states in the Delegation's name has often proved misleading with our South American partners.

³ Venezuela's request to be part of Mercosur is pending ratification by Paraguay and Brazil. Until then, the Delegation for relations with the Andean Community is responsible for this country, but the Delegation for relations with Mercosur is invited to take part in the relevant meetings. A joint Delegation visit to Venezuela had been envisaged in 2008-2009.

The Chairperson of the European Parliament's Delegation in the previous term was Mr Sérgio SOUSA PINTO (PSE, Portugal).

At present, there is no institutional agreement covering relations between the EU and **Mercosur**. In 2000 the EU and Mercosur opened negotiations for an Association Agreement based on three pillars: political dialogue, cooperation and a free trade area. However, negotiations were suspended in 2004 over fundamental differences in the trade chapter. Political relations have nevertheless evolved, with an agreement made at the last Summit in Lima (2008) to extend relations to three new areas, science and technology, infrastructure and renewable energy.

Relations between EP and the Parliament of Mercosur (formerly with the Mercosur Common Parliamentary Committee) include political dialogue and technical cooperation. The Parliament of Mercosur was inaugurated in May 2007 in Montevideo. The first Interparliamentary meeting with EP took place in May 2008 in Brussels.

Several contacts and interchanges with politicians and staff from the Parliament of Mercosur have taken place.

The establishment of a EU group to act as a counterpart to EP's Delegation in the Congress of **Brazil**, as well as the conclusion of a Strategic EU-Brazil Partnership with a provision for interparliamentary relations, both during year 2008, provide the ground for a strengthening of links with this country.

The regular bilateral relations with the other Member states, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay, are on an informal basis in the absence of provisions on parliamentary contacts in the cooperation agreements signed in the early 1990s with these countries.

The DMER delegation holds regular meetings in Brussels and Strasbourg to examine matters such as the current social, economic and political situation relating to the region covered by the delegation. Meetings frequently focus on discussing matters of regional interest, such as the negotiations between the EU and the Mercosur on an Association Agreement, or regional integration, or otherwise to examine the situation in a given country, with political, diplomatic, trade-union or civil-society representatives from that country or region. An important interlocutor for the delegation is the European Commission representative. The responsible desk officer for Mercosur or relevant country is normally invited to attend the meeting.

The European Parliament's places of work are also the venues for inter-parliamentary meetings. Delegations from the relevant countries visit the European Parliament on an irregular but frequent basis.

As a general rule the various aspects of the relations between the parties involved are analysed under three thematic headings: politics, economic affairs and social issues. The first of these also included international current affairs and matters relating to regional integration.

As provided for in the implementing provisions governing the work of delegations, delegations that cover an entire region may divide themselves into working groups, since they cover a number of countries, and visit one or more during one mission. During the parliamentary term the DMER delegation used this approach to organise working group missions.

The programme for such visits generally included meetings with members of the executive and the legislative and of political parties, and with businessmen, trade unions and representatives of civil society, in particular organisations involved in protecting and promoting human rights. The programmes also include working meetings with the accredited ambassadors of the EU Member States and visits to projects financed by the European Union. In virtually all the countries concerned the delegations are generally received by the highest authorities of the country visited.

Activities during the 2004-2009 term - chronology of meetings

Meeting	Date	Venue
Visit by State Legislators of Brazil	March 2009	Strasbourg
IPM Brazil	24-28 November 2008	Brasília, Salvador da Bahia
IPM Mercosur	27-28 May 2008	Brussels
IPM Argentina	30 March - 4 April 2008	Buenos Aires, Salta
Seminar with Parliament of Mercosur staff	11-15 February 2008	Brussels, Strasbourg
Visit by Chair of Committee of Foreign Affairs, HoR Brazil	5 June 2007	Brussels
Working group to Paraguay and Uruguay ; Inauguration of the Parliament of Mercosur	4-8 May 2007	Asunción, Montevideo
Visit by Chair of Mercosur Common Parliamentary Committee	14 February 2007	Strasbourg
Working group to Argentina	17-22 April 2006	Buenos Aires, Bariloche
Working group to Brazil	15-21 May 2005	Sao Paulo, Brasília, Rio
Visit by Mercosur Common Parliamentary Committee	25-27 April 2005	Brussels
Working group to Paraguay and Uruguay , including meeting with Mercosur Common Parliamentary Committee	20-26 November 2005	Asunción, Montevideo
IPM Argentina	22-26 November 2004	Buenos Aires, La Plata
Seminar with Mercosur Common Parliamentary Committee	9-10 November 2004	Brussels

(all reports available on demand at the Secretariat)

Overview of the most important issues and perspectives for the new term

The new structure of EP Delegation's to the **Eurolat** Assembly, with all its Members being selected from the relevant Delegations will provide an opportunity for a better synergy between regional, sub-regional and bilateral relations.

The Delegation should strengthen its institutional links with the Parliament of Mercosur and express all possible political and technical support to its increased influence in the political strengthening of Mercosur as the most advanced integration mechanism in South America as well as support progress in the negotiations of the EU-Mercosur Association Agreement. Together with the other Delegations concerned, it should also follow with close attention the political development of UNASUR (Union of South American Nations).

The Delegation should also give due attention to the relations with individual Member states. In particular, the EU-Brazil Summit of 22 December 2008 Council decided to endorse the European Commission's proposal to establish a Strategic Partnership between Brazil and the European Union. This decision was overwhelmingly endorsed also by the European Parliament in its Recommendations to the Council on the Strategic Partnership (Report by Mrs Koppa, March 2009).

The challenge ahead will consist in cooperating with the Brazilian Congress to follow the development of a number of activities and concrete measures defined under the umbrella of the "Strategic Partnership. These could include a more regular dialogue on issues such as migration, research and technology, environment, terrorism, organised crime and drug trafficking, education and culture, regional development and more consultation on issues of global interest in international fora.

Secretariat (as of September 2009)

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