

# EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009



2014

*Delegation for relations with the Mercosur countries*

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE DELEGATION FOR RELATIONS WITH THE MERCOSUR COUNTRIES and summary of activities in the seventh parliamentary term (2009-2014)**

América do Sul - MERCOSUL



Orig.: Prof. Dr. Wanderley Mendes de Costa  
Cartografia: George Manoel Rosa  
Atualiz.: Vivian Mendes 2007

### **Background**

As laid down in Rules 212 and 214 of its Rules of Procedure, the European Parliament may set up standing interparliamentary delegations and joint parliamentary committees, in addition to parliamentary cooperation committees. The number of such bodies can vary from one parliamentary term to another.

Interparliamentary delegations<sup>1</sup> maintain and develop Parliament's international contacts. The aim of their activities is thus to keep up and intensify contacts with the parliaments of the EU's traditional partner countries and, secondly, to help foster core EU values in non-EU countries, that is to say, the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law (Article 6 and Article 11(1), fifth indent, of the EU Treaty).

On the basis of their geographical areas of responsibility, standing interparliamentary delegations contribute to the proceedings of the interparliamentary committees and other parliamentary bodies and supply them with material for discussion, in particular as regards:

- the state of bilateral interparliamentary relations;
- human rights, the protection of minorities, and the promotion of democratic values, within broader EU policy in this sphere and in keeping with the positions adopted by Parliament;
- the state of bilateral political, economic, financial, and social relations;
- the assessment of international agreements concluded between the European Union and non-member countries;
- the external aspects of EU policies on the internal market;
- democratic scrutiny of the implementation of the EU's external funding instruments, including assessment of the effectiveness of EU projects financed under the Union budget in terms of their impact on the ground;
- the implementation of recommendations made in the course of election observation missions, in close cooperation with the parliamentary committees responsible. Standing interparliamentary delegations are also called upon to lend their expertise to election observation missions.

Standing interparliamentary delegations accordingly seek first and foremost to establish, channel, and foster parliamentary dialogue with the legislative institutions of partner countries and, moreover, with parliamentary institutions involved in integration at regional or subregional level. These aims are achieved through regular meetings held at the working places of the European Parliament and counterpart parliaments; discussions at the meetings are given over to matters of common interest in a national, bi-regional, or international context, which constitute the bedrock of parliamentary diplomacy in the true sense.

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<sup>1</sup> Implementing provisions governing the work of delegations: decision adopted by the Conference of Presidents on 10 March 2011 (version of 10 January 2013).

## **Delegations responsible for relations with Latin America**

The European Union and Latin America have been in a strategic partnership since the first bi-regional summit, which took place in the Brazilian city of Rio de Janeiro in 1999. The EU's political priorities in relation to Latin America were charted in a Commission communication entitled 'A stronger partnership between the European Union and Latin America' and fleshed out further in a 2009 communication entitled 'The European Union and Latin America: Global Players in Partnership'.

Out of the 40 standing delegations that operated in the 2009-2014 parliamentary term, five handled bilateral and subregional relations with Latin America:

- Delegation to the EU-Mexico Joint Parliamentary Committee<sup>1</sup>
- Delegation to the EU-Chile Joint Parliamentary Committee<sup>1</sup>
- Delegation for relations with the countries of Central America
- Delegation for relations with the Mercosur countries
- Delegation for relations with the countries of the Andean Community

The 75 members of these five delegations make up the European Parliament delegation to the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly (EuroLat).

The information obtained is passed on to MEPs through regular reports or reports drawn up by the delegation Chair concerned after every visit or interparliamentary meeting. The reports are generally sent to the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Subcommittee on Human Rights, the Committee on Development, the Committee on International Trade, and to other committees, when the content of a report is directly relevant to them. Sometimes reports can lead to European Parliament resolutions.

### **The delegation for relations with the Mercosur countries**

The delegation for relations with the Mercosur countries is responsible for relations with Mercosur and with its five member countries<sup>2</sup>: Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

In the previous parliamentary term (2009-2014) the delegation was headed by Luis Yañez-Barnuevo García (S&D – Spain). Nuno Melo (PPE – Portugal) and Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE – France) served as first and second vice-chairs respectively.

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<sup>1</sup> The EU-Mexico and EU-Chile joint parliamentary committees were set up under the EU's partnership and association agreements with those two countries, and the committees therefore have a distinctive legal status.

<sup>2</sup> The omission of the member countries from the delegation's name often used to give rise to misapprehensions among our South American partners, prompting the EP Conference of Presidents to adopt the new name for the delegation on 18 January 2010.

In December 1995 the EU and Mercosur signed an interregional cooperation agreement. This agreement, which was of a transitional nature and designed to allow for future developments, was intended to strengthen relations between the two regions in order to pave the way for an economic and political bi-regional association. Accordingly, in 2000, the EU and Mercosur opened negotiations with a view to signing such an association agreement, which was to be based on three pillars, namely political dialogue, cooperation, and the establishment of a free trade area. However, owing to serious differences of opinion between the European and Latin American negotiators, regarding the trade chapter, the negotiations were broken off in 2004. In spite of that, political relations continued to be fostered, and the importance of an EU-Mercosur association agreement was repeatedly stressed (Fifth EU-Latin America and Caribbean Summit, held in Lima in 2008<sup>1</sup>, and at the Fourth EU-Mercosur Summit (Madrid, 2010)). The decision taken in January 2013, at the First EU-CELAC Summit, to begin preparations for an exchange of market access offers was a great fillip to the negotiations. At the end of 2013, however, neither bloc was ready to embark on such an exchange. This year (2014) several obstacles, including the fact that the Mercosur countries have not been speaking with one voice, have added to the delay. But the negotiations are about to reach a crucial moment, and the expectation is that an agreement will be possible to achieve in the short term on the basis of a fair and even-handed exchange of offers.

Relations between the EP and the Mercosur Parliament (and previously the Mercosur Joint Parliamentary Commission) encompass political dialogue and technical cooperation. The Mercosur Parliament (Parlasur) held its inaugural session in Montevideo in May 2007, and the first interparliamentary meeting with the EP was held in Brussels in May 2008.

Contacts and exchanges of information with members and officials of the Mercosur Parliament have gradually been put in place.

In 2008 an EU parliamentary group was set up in the National Congress of Brazil in order to act as the opposite number to the EP delegation for relations with Mercosur. This group, and the newly cemented EU-Brazil strategic partnership, have provided the necessary starting point for forging closer links with Brazil. As provided for in the EP resolution of 12 March 2014, a separate delegation is to be set up, the delegation for relations with the Federative Republic of Brazil. This new delegation could play a key role in strengthening parliamentary ties and monitoring the joint action plan drawn up for the strategic partnership.

Parliamentary relations with other Mercosur countries – Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay – are of an informal nature, as the cooperation agreements concluded with those countries in the early 1990s do not extend to parliamentary contacts between legislative bodies.

The EP delegation for relations with the Mercosur countries (DMER) holds meetings from time to time in Brussels and Strasbourg to discuss the social, economic, and political situation in the region that it covers. The meetings relate to matters of mutual and/or regional interest, such as the negotiations between the EU and Mercosur on an association agreement or regional integration. They may also be used to examine the situation in a given country, together with political, diplomatic, trade union, or civil society representatives of that country or of the region. To that extent, it is very important to secure the involvement of the

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<sup>1</sup> EU-Mercosur relations are continuing to develop, not least as a result of an agreement reached at the 2008 Lima summit to widen their scope to include the three new areas of science and technology, infrastructure, and renewable energy.

Mercosur countries' accredited diplomatic representatives in Brussels. EU representatives in the Mercosur countries are also valuable contact persons for the delegation. The official responsible in the European External Action Service (EEAS) for Mercosur or for the country concerned in a particular instance is generally invited to attend delegation meetings.

DMER meetings are held on EP premises. The European Parliament is also frequently visited by delegations from various countries, though not at regular intervals. In the EP's seventh term (2009-2014) DMER meetings were attended by one state president (President Fernando Lugo of Paraguay), Mercosur countries' ambassadors to the EU (Brazil, eight times; Uruguay, five times; Paraguay, four times; and Argentina, three times), and European Commission (DG Trade) and EEAS representatives. Commissioner Karel De Gucht attended one DMER meeting, and Dr João Aguiar Machado, Director in DG Trade, appeared six times before DMER. The EEAS Managing Director for the Americas, Christian Leffler, attended four DMER meetings.

The general rule is that individual aspects of relations between the two sides are considered from the viewpoint of three subject headings: politics, economics, and social matters. The 'political affairs' heading also encompasses current international developments and regional integration issues.

In accordance with the implementing provisions governing the work of delegations, those delegations responsible for an entire region can split themselves into working groups, given that they cover several countries, and visit one or more countries in the course of a mission. During the last parliamentary term (2009-2014) the delegation for relations with the Mercosur countries employed that method to organise working group missions (visits).

The programme for such missions generally included meetings with members of the government, parliament, and political parties and with entrepreneurs, trade unionists, and civil society representatives, especially organisations involved in protecting and promoting human rights and the environment. In addition, the visitors held working meetings with ambassadors of EU Member States and made tours of inspection of EU-funded projects. Sometimes, the EP delegations were received by the highest political authorities of the host country. In the seventh parliamentary term DMER sent working groups to Brazil (in 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013), Argentina (in 2010 and 2013), Uruguay (in 2011 and 2013), and Paraguay (in 2011 and 2012). Relations with Venezuela, which joined Mercosur only recently and consequently now comes within DMER's field of activity, were partially suspended during the final term of office of the late President Hugo Chaves. The EP resolutions on Venezuela were not well received by the authorities in Caracas and caused bilateral relations to wane. However, the resolution of 27 February 2014 on the situation in Venezuela incurred no wrath, the EP having taken a balanced, moderate attitude. Parliamentary relations are therefore likely to resume and develop.

The subjects discussed during the DMER working group visits covered national affairs, for example the ouster of the Paraguayan President Fernando Lugo, international affairs, such as the economic crisis, and bi-regional matters, namely the negotiations on the future EU-Mercosur association agreement, the implementation of the EU-Brazil strategic partnership, and closer interparliamentary cooperation.

### **Activities from 2009 to 2014 – Chronology of meetings**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Place</b>
EU-Mercosur Interparliamentary Group meeting: EP delegation with Parlasur and Parlatino members of EuroLat	30 October 2009	Panama City
Visit of Parlasur Vice-President, Ignacio Mendoza	18 November 2009	Brussels
EU-Mercosur seminar (attended by delegation Chair)	23-24 November 2009	Madrid
Visit of delegation Chair to Parlasur (seminar)	28 November – 2 December 2009	Montevideo
Visit of Bolivian Senate President, Óscar Ortiz Antelo	16 December 2009	Strasbourg
Visit of members of Mercosur Parliament	22 March 2010	Brussels
Visit of delegation from National Congress of Brazil	19 May 2010	Strasbourg
Interparliamentary meeting: delegation working group visit to Brazil and Argentina	24-28 May 2010	Brazil (Brasilia) and Argentina (Buenos Aires)
Visit of Paraguayan delegation to Mercosur Parliament	21-23 June 2010	Brussels
EU-Mercosur Interparliamentary Group meeting: EP delegation with Parlasur and Parlatino members of EuroLat	5 November 2010	Cuenca, Ecuador
Interparliamentary meeting: delegation working group visit to Brazil	25-29 April 2011	Brazil (Brasilia and Rio de Janeiro)
EU-Mercosur Interparliamentary Group meeting: EP delegation with Parlasur and Parlatino members of EuroLat	18 May 2011	Montevideo, Uruguay
Visit of President Fernando Lugo of Paraguay	24 May 2011	Brussels
1st EU-Brazil interparliamentary meeting	6 July 2011	Strasbourg
Visit of President José Mujica of Uruguay	20 October 2011	Brussels
Interparliamentary meeting: delegation working group visit to Uruguay, Mercosur Parliament, and Paraguay	31 October – 4 November 2011	Uruguay (Montevideo) and Paraguay (Asunción)
EU-Mercosur interparliamentary group meeting: EP delegation with Parlasur and Parlatino members of EuroLat	22 November 2011	Brussels

Visit of state Governor of Minas Gerais (Brazil), Alberto Pinto Coelho	8 December 2011	Brussels
Visit of group of Brazilian officials/diplomats	6 March 2012	Brussels
Interparliamentary meeting: delegation working group visit to Paraguay	16-18 July 2012	Paraguay (Asunción)
Interparliamentary meeting: delegation working group visit to Brazil	28 October – 2 November 2012	Brazil (Florianópolis and Brasília)
Visit of Paraguayan delegation to Mercosur Parliament	7-8 November 2012	Brussels
Visit of Latin American university students and teachers of Community law under the direction of Prof. Calogero Pizzolo (B. Aires)	18 February 2013	Brussels
Interparliamentary meeting: delegation working group visit to Uruguay and Argentina	28 April – 3 May 2013	Uruguay (Montevideo) and Argentina (Buenos Aires)
Visit of President-elect of Paraguay, Horácio Cartes	25 June 2013	Brussels
Interparliamentary meeting: delegation working group visit to Brazil	27-31 October 2013	Brazil (Brasília and Recife)
Election observation delegation for Paraguayan general election (EP ad hoc delegation)	19-22 April 2013	Paraguay
Visit of Latin American university students and teachers of Community law under the direction of Prof. Calogero Pizzolo (B. Aires)	10 February 2014	Brussels

*(All reports can be obtained on request from the secretariat)*

## **Overview of bi-regional relations and outlook for the new parliamentary term (2014-2019)**

The new structure of the EP delegation to the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly (EuroLat), whose members are chosen from among the membership of the six relevant delegations, will enable regional, sub-regional, and bilateral relations to operate in greater synergy.

The delegation will need to strengthen its institutional links with the Mercosur Parliament (Parlasur) and offer all possible political and technical support so as to enable Parlasur to increase its influence as Mercosur comes to carry the greater political weight commensurate with its status as the most highly developed integration machinery in South America; it should also assist the progress of the negotiations on the EU-Mercosur association agreement.

Together with the other relevant delegations, it should, in addition, keep a close watch on political developments regarding UNASUR (the Union of South American Nations).

Another area on which the delegation will have to focus particular attention is relations with the individual Mercosur countries. Specifically, at the EU-Brazil Summit of 22 December 2008, the Council decided to approve the Commission proposal to establish a strategic partnership between Brazil and the EU. That decision was also endorsed by the European Parliament in its recommendation to the Council on the EU-Brazil strategic partnership (report by Maria Eleni Koppa, March 2009).

The challenge for the future will be to join forces with the Brazilian Congress in giving expression to the strategic partnership through activities and measures to be pursued at the practical level, which could include more regular dialogue on, for example, migration, research, science and technology, the environment, terrorism, organised crime and drug trafficking, education and culture, and regional development and, as regards matters of global interest, more consultation between the two partners in international forums. The newly established EP delegation for relations with the Federative Republic of Brazil will have an essential role to play<sup>1</sup>.

The signing of the EU-Mercosur association agreement would establish a formal basis for relations between the EP and Mercosur, as a joint parliamentary committee would be set up to monitor the agreement.

#### **Secretariat (since January 2013)**

Head of Unit: J. Javier Fernández Fernández  
[josejavier.fernandez@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:josejavier.fernandez@europarl.europa.eu)

Administrator: Pedro Neves  
[pedro.neves@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:pedro.neves@europarl.europa.eu)

Assistant: Francisco Cabral  
[francisco.cabral@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:francisco.cabral@europarl.europa.eu)

#### **EP resolutions concerning Mercosur countries adopted in plenary in the seventh parliamentary term (2009-2014)**

##### **Mercosur**

17 January 2013

[European Parliament resolution of 17 January 2013 on trade negotiations between the EU and Mercosur FR, ES, DE](#)

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<sup>1</sup> EP decision of 12.3.2014 and Conference of Presidents' decision of 10.7.2014



## **Argentina**

28 September 2011

[Modification of concessions in the schedules of Bulgaria and Romania in the course of their accession to the European Union \(EU-Argentina agreement\)](#) [FR](#), [ES](#), [DE](#)

## **Brazil**

21 November 2012

[Modification of concessions with respect to processed poultry meat between the EU, Brazil, and Thailand](#) [FR](#), [ES](#), [DE](#)

13 September 2012

[Renewal of the Agreement for scientific and technological cooperation between the European Community and the Federative Republic of Brazil](#) [FR](#), [ES](#), [DE](#)

13 September 2011

[EU-Brazil agreement on civil aviation safety](#) [FR](#), [ES](#), [DE](#)

15 February 2011

[Agreement between the EU and Brazil on short-stay visa waiver for holders of diplomatic, service or official passports](#) [FR](#), [ES](#), [DE](#)

15 February 2011

[Agreement between the EU and Brazil on short-stay visa waiver for holders of ordinary passports](#) [FR](#), [ES](#), [DE](#)

15 February 2011

[Agreement between the European Union and Brazil on certain aspects of air services](#) [FR](#), [ES](#), [DE](#)

20 January 2011

[Brazil : extradition of Cesare Battisti](#), [FR](#), [ES](#), [DE](#)

## **Venezuela**

27 February 2014

[European Parliament resolution of 27 February 2014 on the situation in Venezuela](#) [FR](#), [ES](#), [DE](#)

24 May 2012

[European Parliament resolution of 24 May 2012 on the possible withdrawal of Venezuela from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights](#) [FR](#), [ES](#), [DE](#)

8 July 2010

[European Parliament resolution of 8 July 2010 on Venezuela, in particular the case of Maria Lourdes Afiuni](#) [FR](#), [ES](#), [DE](#)

11 February 2010

[European Parliament resolution of 11 February 2010 on Venezuela](#) [FR](#), [ES](#), [DE](#)