



## Delegation to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman on 23-27 February 2020

The cross-party European Parliament Delegation for relations with the Arab Peninsula chaired by Dr Hannah Neumann and composed of three other Members (Eva Kaili - S&D, Greece, Cristian Buşoi - EPP, Romania and Matteo Adinolfi - ID, Italy) held an intense visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman on 23-27 February 2020.

### Saudi Arabia

During the visit, Members discussed the socio-economic situation in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as well as **political and security challenges in the region**, holding meetings with different national and regional authorities. They held a fruitful exchange of views with Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, H.E Adel Al Jubeir, who stressed the importance of maintaining stability in the region, with particular reference to the various regional crises. Members emphasized the need for a full respect of international humanitarian law, the need for a political solution to the conflicts in Yemen, Syria and Libya.

The importance of cooperation between the EU and GCC was underlined during the meeting with GCC Secretary General, Dr Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani. Members discussed the past negotiations on the Free Trade Agreement with the EU, expressed their intention to strengthen EU-GCC parliamentary relations and stressed the positive role the GCC can play in defusing regional tensions between its members.

In several other meetings, the members of the delegation were able to exchange views on the **process of social and economic transformation** recently undertaken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with particular emphasis to environmental issues and women empowerment. The "Vision 2030 plan" and the current G20 activities under the presidency of Saudi Arabia were also discussed with members of the EP delegation.

The MEPs reiterated their opposition to the death penalty and stressed the need to respect human rights, to fully align national legislation to international standards and to ensure that women's rights are fully respected. Members frequently raised the cases of the Saudi blogger **Raif Badawi**, laureate of the 2015 Sakharov Prize, and of the five imprisoned women rights defenders, including **Loujain al-Hathloul**, who will face the third hearing of her trial on 11 March.

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The European Parliament is composed of the following political groups:

European People's Party (EPP)  
Greens/European Free Alliance (EFA)  
Renew Europe  
Confederal Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL)

Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D)  
Identity and Democracy (ID)  
European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)



## Oman

The European Parliament's delegation was the first European Union's visit which occurred since the passing away of Sultan Qaboos bin Said and the designation of his successor, Sultan Haitham bin Tariq. Members of the delegation expressed their **warmest condolences for the death of Sultan Qaboos** and acknowledged the impressive achievements made during his 50 years of reign.

The socio-economic situation in the country was also discussed during the visit and Members agreed on the need for economic reforms, creation of jobs for the youth and the diversification of revenue's sources currently mostly relying upon oil and gas.

Meetings with H.E. Dr. Yahya bin Mahfoodh Al Mantheri, Chairman of the State Council and H.E. Khalid bin Hilal Al Mawali, Chairman of Shura Council, were held in a very friendly atmosphere and paved the way to **deeper parliamentary cooperation between the European Union and Oman**.

Members held high-level meetings with with H.H. Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, H.E. Yousef Bin Alawi, Minister of Foreign Affairs and H.E. Sayyid Badr bin Saud Al Busaidi, Minister of Defence. During these visits, Members shared Oman's concerns about the gradual deterioration of the stability in the Gulf region and voiced their appreciation for the role traditionally played by the Sultanate in defusing tensions and contributing to finding lasting solutions to current regional disputes and conflicts.

During the meetings held in Muscat, the exemption of Omani citizens from entry visa to the European Countries (**Visa waiver**) was also evoked. Omani representatives asked the European Parliament to interpose its good offices for a successful conclusion of this long-standing issue.

During the official visit, members also discussed the situation of human rights and social rights in Oman as well as environmental issues related to climate change.

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