

Delegation with relations with Mercosur

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE DELEGATION FOR RELATIONS WITH MERCOSUR

and summary of its activities during the eighth parliamentary term (2014-2019)



Under Article 5(2) of the Ushuaia Protocol, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has been suspended from all the rights and obligations inherent to its status as a State Party of Mercosur. The Plurinational State of Bolivia is in the process of accession.

(***) The governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland are in dispute over sovereignty over the Falkland Islands.

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General background

Rules <u>223</u> and <u>224</u> of its Rules of Procedure empower the European Parliament to establish standing inter-parliamentary delegations and parliamentary committees, respectively. The number of such bodies can vary from one parliamentary term to another.

Interparliamentary delegations¹ 'shall maintain and develop Parliament's international contacts and contribute to enhancing the role and visibility of the European Union in the world.

Accordingly, delegation activities shall both aim to maintain and enhance contacts with parliaments of States that are traditionally partners of the European Union and contribute to promoting in third countries the values on which the European Union is founded, namely the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law (Articles 2 and 3(5) of the EU Treaty).

Parliament's international contacts shall be aimed at fostering, wherever possible and appropriate, the parliamentary dimension of international relations.

On the basis of their geographic areas of responsibility, the standing interparliamentary delegations shall contribute to the work of parliamentary committees and other Parliament bodies and provide input for the debates within them, in particular as regards:

-) the state of bilateral interparliamentary relations;
- human rights, the protection of minorities and the promotion of democratic values, in the general context of EU policy in this area and in accordance 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 third countries;
- the external aspects of Union policies on the internal market;
- democratic scrutiny of the implementation of the European Union's external funding instruments, including the assessment of the effectiveness, by virtue of their impact on the ground, of Union projects funded from the Union budget;
- the implementation of recommendations made in the course of election observation missions, in close cooperation with the parliamentary committees responsible. The standing interparliamentary delegations shall also make their expertise available to election observation missions.'

The interparliamentary delegations' main objective is thus to establish, channel and promote parliamentary dialogue with the partner countries' legislative institutions and also with the

¹ Implementing provisions governing the work of delegations and missions outside the European Union – Conference Of Presidents Decision of 29 October 2015 (amending the decision of 10 April 2014, and incorporating updated references from December 2014 to ensure alignment with the Rules of Procedure and other relevant provisions and from September 2015 to Annex I to update the denominations of some interparliamentary delegations).



legislative institutions concerned with integration at regional and sub-regional level. These aims are achieved through regular meetings held at the places of work of the European Parliament¹ and the counterpart parliaments. Discussions at these meetings centre on issues of common interest at national, bi-regional or international level and are the very essence of parliamentary diplomacy.

The work done by delegations helps in the pursuit of Parliament's political and legislative priorities and is reflected in the positions both of Parliament, as adopted in plenary, and of the committees responsible which, in carrying out their work, must take due account of the delegations' external expertise and their contribution.

Delegations for relations with Latin America

The EU's political priorities in relation to Latin America were outlined in a Commission communication entitled 'A stronger partnership between the European Union and Latin America' (2005) and fleshed out in a 2009 communication entitled 'The European Union and Latin America: Global Players in Partnership' and the Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council entitled 'The European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean: Joining forces for a common future' of April 2019.

On 17 April 2019, Parliament adopted a <u>resolution on the number of interparliamentary</u> <u>delegations</u>, delegations to joint interparliamentary committees and delegations to parliamentary cooperation committees and multilateral parliamentary assemblies, which listed the delegations active in the current parliamentary term.

On 17 July 2019, the European Parliament adopted a <u>resolution on the numerical strength of the interparliamentary delegations</u>, setting the number of MEPs for each delegation.

Of the 44 standing delegations active during the 2019-2024 parliamentary term, six will be responsible for bilateral and sub-regional relations with Latin America:

- Delegation to the EU-Mexico Joint Parliamentary Committee²
- Delegation to the EU-Chile Joint Parliamentary Committee²
- Delegation for Relations with the Countries of Central America
- Delegation with relations with Mercosur
- Delegation for relations with the countries of the Andean Community
- Delegation for relations with the Federative Republic of Brazil.

The 75 Members of <u>Parliament's Delegation to the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary</u> <u>Assembly</u> (EuroLat) will be chosen solely from the members of these six delegations³.

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¹ Brussels, Strasbourg and Luxemburg.

² Since the EU-Mexico and EU-Chile Joint Parliamentary Committees were set up under the EU's partnership and association agreements with those two countries, these committees have a distinct legal status.

³ 'Decides that the members of ... the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly ... shall be drawn exclusively from the bilateral or sub-regional delegations covered by each Assembly;' (EP Decision of

The information gathered by the delegations is made available to MEPs by means of regular reports or reports drawn up by the chair of each delegation after each mission or interparliamentary meeting¹. These reports are usually submitted to the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Subcommittee on Human Rights, the Committee on Development and the Committee on International Trade, as well as to the other committees to which their content is directly relevant. They may form the basis for European Parliament resolutions.

The European Union and countries of Latin America entered into a bi-regional strategic partnership at the bi-regional summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1999. The parliamentary dimension of the bi-regional strategic partnership is embodied in the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly (EuroLat), where Members of the European Parliament delegation and members of the national and regional parliaments making up the Latin American delegation engage in frank dialogue on the challenges facing societies in both regions.

Delegation for Relations with Mercosur (DMER)

The Delegation for Relations with Mercosur (hereinafter 'DMER') is responsible for relations with Mercosur and its member countries: Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela².

The DMER Chair during the previous parliamentary term (2014-2019) was Francisco Assis (S&D, Portugal). Xavier Benito Ziluaga (GUE/NGL, Spain) and Elisabetta Gardini (PPE, Italy) were the first and second vice-chairs respectively.

The EU has no formal parliamentary relations with Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay, as the cooperation agreements the EU concluded with those countries in the early 1990s do not cover parliamentary relations between legislative bodies.

In February 2015, however, during the DMER visit to Paraguay, the Chair of the EP delegation proposed that an EU-Paraguay Parliamentary Friendship Committee be set up, in an effort to harness the potential for parliamentary diplomacy more effectively. The National Congress of Paraguay adopted a decision on the setting-up of this body in May 2016.

The Venezuelan National Assembly also established an Interparliamentary Friendship Group with the European Union in November 2016. Unfortunately, the internal situation in Venezuela has not allowed for any kind of meeting or visit between the representatives of the two parliamentary bodies, with the exception of the visit to the European Parliament by Julio Borges, the former President of the Venezuelan National Assembly, in May 2017.

It should be noted that a <u>Delegation for relations with the Federative Republic of Brazil</u> was established following the adoption of the <u>European Parliament resolution of 12 March 2014</u>.

^{17.4.2019).}

¹ As a general rule, interparliamentary meetings shall be held alternately in one of Parliament's places of work (Brussels, Strasbourg or Luxembourg) and in the third country or countries concerned.

² Under Article 5(2) of the Ushuaia Protocol, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela <u>has been suspended</u> from all the rights and obligations inherent to its status as a State Party of Mercosur. The Plurinational State of Bolivia is in the process of accession.

The conclusion of an <u>EU-Brazil Strategic Partnership</u> in 2007 and the establishment of an EU-Brazil Parliamentary Group within the Brazilian National Congress in 2008, to act as the counterpart for DMER, had provided a basis for strengthening ties with Brazil and setting up a specific delegation for that country. That delegation has played a key role in tightening the bonds between the two parliaments and monitoring the joint action plan being implemented within the framework of the strategic partnership. Due attention must therefore be paid to respecting the remits of the delegations involved.

The Mercosur Parliament (<u>Parlasur</u>) held its first session in Montevideo in May 2007, and the first interparliamentary meeting with the European Parliament was held in Brussels in May 2008. Relations between the European Parliament and Parlasur centre on political dialogue, technical cooperation and information exchange.

DMER holds regular **meetings** in Brussels and Strasbourg to address issues relating to the political, economic and social situation in the region for which it is responsible. These meetings deal with matters of mutual and/or regional interest, such as the association agreement negotiations between the EU and Mercosur, regional integration and matters of international importance affecting both Mercosur and EU countries. They may also serve to assess the situation in a given Mercosur country, in which case political, diplomatic, trade union and civil society representatives of that country or the region are invited to attend, along with representatives of the other EU institutions. To that end, the European External Action Service (EEAS) official responsible for Mercosur or for the country concerned is generally invited to attend delegation meetings.

The European Parliament also receives intermittent **visits** by delegations from the various Mercosur countries. During the eighth legislative term (2014-2019), DMER meetings were attended by Tomás Bittar Navarro, President of Parlasur at the time, Julio Borges, then President of the National Assembly of Venezuela, and the ambassadors to the EU of the member states of Mercosur (and those of countries in the process of joining Mercosur).

Under the Implementing provisions governing the work of delegations, the fact that DMER is responsible for more than one country means it can hold interparliamentary meetings in more than one of the Mercosur countries each year¹.

The programme for such **missions** customarily includes meetings with members of the respective government, parliament and political parties and with entrepreneurs, trade unionists, academics and representatives of the press and civil society, and particularly human rights, development and environmental organisations. The programme also includes working meetings with the ambassadors of the EU Member States and visits to EU-funded projects. During the 8th legislative term, DMER visited Paraguay and Uruguay (December 2015 and

¹ Calculated over a period of two calendar years, the total number of members of DMER that can participate in delegation missions to the third country/countries for which they are responsible must not exceed **75%** (Conference of Presidents decision of 29.10.2015) of the total number of full members of the delegation. For the purposes of that calculation, each parliamentary term is understood to consist of two periods of two calendar years.

Any mission undertaken by a standing interparliamentary delegation to a third country or third countries pursuant to Article 8 (of the Implementing provisions governing the work of delegations) must as a general principle take place during the weeks set aside for external parliamentary activities (constituency weeks) in Parliament's calendar.

November 2018), Argentina (November 2016) and Brazil (November 2017 – joint visit with the Delegation for relations with Brazil). The focus of discussions during these visits was the negotiation of the Association Agreement between the European Union and Mercosur, the very important role that parliamentary diplomacy can play in strengthening relations between the two sides of the Atlantic and stepping up interparliamentary cooperation. Other issues addressed included China's growing influence in trade relations and on political systems in Latin America, and in South America in particular. Exchanges of views also took place on topics such as drug trafficking, corruption, terrorism, migration-related issues and development cooperation between the EU and the countries of the region.

Relations between the European Parliament and the **Mercosur Parliament** (Parlasur) were boosted during the last parliamentary term with the visit to Brussels of the former Parlasur president, Tomás Bittar Navarro (Paraguay) and the subsequent meeting between DMER and the Parlasur Bureau in Montevideo in October 2018, which paved the way to closer relations between the two parliaments and the introduction of administrative and technical cooperation mechanisms.

EU support for the Mercosur integration process and negotiation of an EU-Mercosur Association Agreement

The European Union has supported the Mercosur integration process ever since the organisation was first established in 1991. An <u>Interinstitutional Cooperation Agreement</u> was signed on 25 May 1992 with the aim of passing on to Mercosur the experience Europe had acquired in regional integration. This agreement has provided a framework for the authorities of each region to work in close cooperation and organise a whole series of meetings. In December 1995, the EU and Mercosur signed an <u>Interregional Cooperation Agreement</u>. That agreement, which was transitional and flexible, was designed to strengthen relations between the two regions and pave the way for a bi-regional economic and political partnership.

It was to this end that in 2000 the EU and Mercosur launched negotiations on an association agreement based on three pillars: political dialogue, cooperation and establishing a free trade area. However, negotiations were broken off in 2004 owing to serious disagreements between the European and Latin American negotiating teams over the trade chapter. Despite this, continuing efforts were made to nurture political relations, and the importance of an EU-Mercosur association agreement was repeatedly stressed (at the Fifth EU-Latin America and Caribbean Summit, held in Lima in 2008 and the Fourth EU-Mercosur Summit, held in Madrid in 2010).

In the declaration adopted at the Second CELAC-EU Summit in June 2015, the EU and Mercosur once again emphasised their commitment to 'complete a balanced, comprehensive and ambitious Association Agreement as soon as possible' (paragraph 75). It was against this backdrop that negotiations on an EU-Mercosur association agreement were relaunched in May 2016 in the form of an exchange of offers and a negotiating round. The negotiations on the trade chapter of the agreement addressed key issues such as customs tariffs, rules of origin, technical barriers to trade, health and plant-health measures, trade in services, public procurement, designations of origin, intellectual property and rules for SMEs.

After 38 negotiating rounds (the last in March 2019), the two sides reached a consensus that cleared the way for the EU Mercosur Association Agreement to be approved at a ministerial summit in Brussels on 27 and 28 June 2019. Conclusion of the agreement was announced at the G20 Summit in Osaka on 30 June 2019.

Taken together, the EU and Mercosur generate roughly a quarter of the world's GDP and constitute a market of 780 million people. The EU is Mercosur's second largest trading partner, and its first for investment. Mercosur is the EU's eighth largest trading partner. Implementation of the trade facet of the agreement will create one of the largest free trade areas in the world. Tariffs will be scaled back over a 15-year period in a manner weighted in favour of Mercosur.

The new European Parliament has to give its approval to the agreement under the consent procedure (Rule 105). DMER will play a key role in this process alongside the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on International Trade.

Situation in Venezuela and the European Parliament's position

Venezuela is experiencing a grave political, economic and social crisis under the regime of Nicolás Maduro. The situation continues to deteriorate and has triggered a humanitarian crisis affecting much of the population. More than 3 million people have been forced to emigrate, which could also have a destabilising effect on their countries of destination.

The EU partially suspended relations with Venezuela during the last term of office of the late President Hugo Chávez. Circumstances have worsened significantly since his successor, Nicolás Maduro, came to power, and the European Parliament has adopted positions on the situation in Venezuela on a number of occasions. Between May 2014 and March 2019, it was the subject of a total of ten European Parliament resolutions, more than any other country. The resolutions adopted were supported by a large majority of Members and urged Nicolás Maduro and his government to uphold democratic principles and fundamental rights and to hold free, transparent and fair elections. Parliament also recognised the legitimacy of the National Assembly and the interim presidency of Juan Guaidó.

Given the circumstances, official contacts between the European Parliament and Venezuela during the eighth legislative term were limited to contributions at DMER meetings from the Venezuelan Ambassador to the EU and a visit by Julio Borges, President of the Venezuelan National Assembly at the time, as part of a tour of the EU institutions in Brussels. More importantly, the 2017 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought was awarded to the democratic opposition in Venezuela, while in June 2018 an ad hoc mission visited Cúcuta (Colombia) and Boa Vista (Brazil) on the border with Venezuela to assess the situation of Venezuelan migrants in those countries. A further ad hoc mission to the cities of Lima and Tumbes in Peru was conducted for the same purpose in March 2019.

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Activities in the period 2014 to 2019 – Chronological list of meetings

Meeting	Date	Location:
Visit of a delegation of senior officials from the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies and the Brazilian Senate	10-14 November 2014	Brussels
Interparliamentary Meeting: DMER mission to Paraguay and Uruguay	16-20 February 2015	Asunción (Paraguay) and Montevideo (Uruguay)
Visit of the Ombudsman for the City of Buenos Aires, Ángel Armando Alejandro Amor, accompanied by the following members of the City of Buenos Aires Government: Oliveto Lago Paula Mariana, Muiños María Rosa, García José Alejandro	12 November 2015	Brussels
Interparliamentary Meeting: DMER mission to Argentina	1-3 November 2016	Buenos Aires and San Luis
Visit of a delegation from the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies	15-17 February 2017	Strasbourg
Visit of a delegation from the Venezuelan National Assembly, led by Julio Borges, President of the Assembly	31 May 2017	Brussels
Interparliamentary Meeting: DMER mission to Brazil (in conjunction with the Delegation for relations with Brazil)	31 October – 2 November 2017	Brasilia and Rio de Janeiro
EU-Mercosur interparliamentary group meeting: EP delegation and Parlasur and Parlatino members of EuroLat	4 April 2018	Panama City (Panama)
Visit by the President of Parlasur, Tomás Bittar Navarro, accompanied by Vice-Presidents Walter Norberto Nostrala, Head of the Argentine Delegation, and Celso Russomanno, Head of the Brazilian Delegation	11 October 2018	Brussels
Interparliamentary Meeting: DMER mission to Paraguay, Uruguay and Parlasur	29 October – 1 November 2018	Montevideo (Uruguay) and Asunción (Paraguay)

(Reports on all the above meetings are available from the secretariat)

Overview of bi-regional relations and outlook for the new parliamentary term (2019-2024)

Perhaps the most important role DMER will play during the ninth parliamentary term will be to monitor the adoption process for the EU-Mercosur Association Agreement and to keep a watching brief on its ratification and implementation. DMER must also track developments within Mercosur, at a time when the organisation has managed to reassert and reposition itself, particularly vis-à-vis other organisations such as the Pacific Alliance and Prosur. Along with the other delegations concerned, DMER will also have to take account of political developments in CELAC (the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States).

DMER will need to strengthen its institutional links with the Mercosur Parliament (Parlasur) and provide all possible political and technical support for that parliament so that it can exert greater influence on the process of strengthening Mercosur from a political perspective, as this is the most developed integration mechanism in South America.

The delegation will also have to devote attention to relations with all the individual Mercosur countries. As regards Brazil, DMER will have to factor in the new political and economic situation following the victory of Jair Bolsonaro in the autumn 2018 elections, while respecting the apportionment of responsibilities between itself and the <u>Delegation for relations with the Federative Republic of Brazil</u>. It will also have to take into account the outcome of the elections to be held in Argentina and Uruguay in October 2019. Lastly, DMER must keep a close eye on the grave political, economic, social and humanitarian situation in Venezuela and help find a peaceful solution to that crisis.

In conclusion, it is essential to highlight the role to be played by the European Parliament's Delegation to the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly (<u>EuroLat</u>) – whose members are elected from among the six delegations concerned – as a means of generating greater synergies at regional, sub-regional and bilateral level.

All this will take place within a renewed framework of relations between the European Union and Latin America based on the recent Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council entitled 'The European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean: joining forces for a common future', which was presented by the Commission and the EEAS in April 2019 and on which Parliament is to draw up a report.

EP resolutions on the Mercosur countries adopted in plenary during the 8th parliamentary term (2014-2019)

Brazil

Situation of the Guarani-Kaiowá in the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso Do Sul, 24.11.2016

Paraguay

Paraguay: legal aspects related to child pregnancy, 11.6.2015

Venezuela

Emergency situation in Venezuela, 28.3.2019

Situation in Venezuela, 31.1.2019

Situation in Venezuela, 25.10.2018

Migration crisis and humanitarian situation in Venezuela and at its terrestrial borders with Colombia and Brazil, 5.7.2018

Elections in Venezuela, 3.5.2018

Situation in Venezuela, 8.2.2018

Situation in Venezuela, 27.4.2017

Situation in Venezuela, 8.6.2016

Situation in Venezuela, 12.3.2015

Persecution of the democratic opposition in Venezuela, 18.12.2014

EU-LAC relations

EU political relations with Latin America, 13.9.2017

Other European Parliament resolutions on EU-LAC relations (2006-2019)

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Studies and other EP publications on Mercosur and Latin American countries

/ Argentina:

- o Economic indicators and trade with EU, 7.12.2018
- Will Argentina's new international agenda survive the current uncertainty?, 18.10.2018
- Argentina: concluding the EU-Mercosur trade negotiations amid economic turmoil, 18.10.2018
- o Argentina ahead of the 2017 mid-term elections, 10.10.2017
- o Argentina: revival of a traditional partnership, 10.10.2016
- o Argentina: President Macri sets a new course, 20.3.2016
- o Argentina: a change of course, 25.11.2015 (EN)
- o Argentina: Political parties and the EU, 3.9.2015

Brazil:

- o Brazil ahead of the 2018 elections, 5.10.2018
- o <u>Brazil: timid economic recovery despite political uncertainty and corruption</u>, 21.11.2017 (ES, PT)¹
- o Brazil in the context of EU-Mercosur trade negotiations, 11.9.2017 (EN) (PT)
- o Brazil: economic indicators and trade with EU, 23.6.2016
- o Brazil: <u>Crisis imperils the future of President Dilma Rousseff's government</u>, 13.10.2015 (<u>PT</u>)¹
- o Brazil: Political parties, 8.6.2015
- o Brazil's humanitarian policy, 17.5.2016
- o Brazil's ambitions in climate change policy, 3.12.2015
- o Brazil: economic situation, 30.10.2015
- o EU-Brazil cooperation on internet governance and ICT issues, 30.10.2015
- o Brazil: Promises of more change but in which direction?, 22.10.2014¹

EN

¹ Published for internal use only. All the above reports are available from the secretariat.

Paraguay:

- o Paraguay: party factionalism will shape the new government, 22.10.2018
- o Paraguay: elections in April 2018, 12.4.2018
- o Paraguay: Political parties, 3.9.2015
- Paraguay: after political 'normalisation', social and economic challenges remain, 27.1.2015

Uruguay:

- o Uruguay: A stable democracy develops new international ties, 8.10.2018
- o Uruguay: political parties, 8.5.2015
- o Despite political stability, economic and social challenges loom, 6.2.2015

Venezuela:

- o Venezuela: the standoff continues, 12.4.2019
- o Venezuela [What Think Tanks are thinking], 1.3.2019
- o Migration flows from Venezuela and their impact on Peru, 20.02.2019 (EN)
- o Venezuela: an unexpected turn of events, 7.2.2019
- o The Venezuelan migrant crisis A growing emergency for the region, 17.12.2018
- o Rule of law and human rights in Cuba and Venezuela and EU engagement, 11.12.2018
- o Migration flows from Venezuela and their impact on Brazil and Colombia, 14.6.2018¹ (EN)¹
- o <u>The 2017 Sakharov Prize</u>, 5.12.2017 (<u>DE</u>) (<u>EN</u>) (<u>FR</u>) (<u>IT</u>) (<u>PL</u>)
- o <u>Venezuela's 2015 legislative elections</u>, 4.12.2015
- o Venezuela recent events, 30.10.2015¹
- Venezuela recent events, 2.12.2015¹
- o Venezuela: electoral process starts amidst political polarisation, 12.7.2015
- o Venezuela: human rights situation, 6.5.2015
- o Venezuela: political parties, 30.4.2015

Other topics:

- Fact Sheets on the European Union: Latin America and the Caribbean, May 2019
 (EN, FR, PT, DE, IT)
- o EU trade with Latin America and the Caribbean: Overview and figures, 14.9.2018

- International agreements review and monitoring clauses a rolling check-list, March 2018
- o <u>EU security cooperation with Latin America: A priority requiring consolidation</u>, 23.11. 2017
- o EU-Latin America cooperation on climate change issues, 28.9.2017
- o The EU-Latin American Strategic Partnership: state of play and ways forward, 30.8.2017 (EN)
- o EU development cooperation with Latin America, 10.4.2017
- o Sexual violence against minors in Latin America, 12.10.2016 (EN, FR)
- <u>Latin America's informal economy Some formalisation strategies</u>, September 2016