

2024 – 2029



THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S ROLE IN **EXTERNAL POLICIES**



The European Parliament's role in external policies

Over the years, the European Parliament has developed an important diplomatic role, combining its formal powers, political influence and innovative initiatives. It makes the EP an important player in European external action, complementing EU executive diplomacy in pursuit of the objectives defined in the treaties. This trend responds to the growing importance EU citizens attach to the EU security and defence, as confirmed in the [Eurobarometer survey](#) conducted in April 2024.

The EP's formal powers in the field of external policies:

- **Legislative power:** the EP is co-legislator with the Council, and adopts laws (known as "regulations" or "directives") in many areas, such as trade or EU assistance to third countries, as well as in policy areas with an important external dimension (for example, industry, climate, migration, energy or digital issues).
- **Prerogatives related to international agreements:** Parliament monitors the negotiation and implementation of international agreements concluded by the EU with a non-EU country or region and is fully and immediately informed by the EU executive at all stages. For the vast majority of these agreements, Parliament's consent is required before they can fully enter into force. These agreements are either of general nature (cooperation/association agreements) or sectoral (trade, transport, fisheries, visas, etc.).
- **Parliamentary control:** the EP political bodies ensure that the European Commission, the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Union's key foreign policy actors remain politically and democratically accountable;
- **Budgetary power:** Parliament adopts the budget with the Council, and controls the proper use of funds, for example regarding EU spending on cooperation aid through the Global Europe (NDICI) Instrument.

The EP's growing diplomatic role is implemented in particular through :

1. **Political dialogue with authorities** (both executive and parliamentary) and citizens/civil society in non-EU countries, notably via :
 - International engagement of the **EP President**;
 - Exchanges of views in relevant **committees**, and bilateral meetings of committee chairs. Foreign Affairs ministers are for example frequent guests in the Committee on Foreign Affairs;
 - Its vast **inter-parliamentary network** (both bilateral and multilateral) via "**standing delegations**" – official bodies of the Parliament which maintain and deepen relations with the parliaments of non-EU countries, regions and organisations, thus serving as EP's primary link to other legislatures. The network is also instrumental when there is a need to reach out to all global partners at the same time, as was done, for example, at the start of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. A large share of the standing delegations constitute the "EU component" of inter-parliamentary bodies established by international agreements. These bodies discuss not only bilateral relations, but also global issues and the external impact of EU policies and legislation. They operate under the political oversight and coordination of the Foreign Affairs and Development Committees.
 - **Visits to third countries** : during their missions outside the EU, MEPs on official visit benefit from a wide access to a large number of interlocutors – both governmental and non-governmental.
 - **Participation in international conference and fora**, such as G7 or G20 summits of Speakers of parliaments.
2. The impact of **European Parliament resolutions** on third countries (urgency resolutions on violations of human rights, democracy and the rule of law; reports on the implementation of agreements with third countries; progress reports on enlargement countries; annual reports on the Common Foreign and Security Policy, the European Security and Defence Policy, Human rights and democracy in the world, etc.). Through its resolutions on foreign policy issues, Parliament contributes to shaping the EU positions and strategies.

3. **Democracy support activities:** under the leadership of the Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group (DEG) set up in 2012, co-chaired by the chairs of the Foreign affairs and Development committees, the EP focuses on a number of priority countries/regions: Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Tunisia, Western Balkans, Pan-African Parliament, etc. DEG activities cover:
- **Capacity-building for parliaments** outside the EU, such as the support to the Verkhovna Rada (parliament) of Ukraine;
 - **Observation, monitoring and follow-up of elections in third countries;** the EP participates in approximately 6-10 electoral observation missions annually, e.g. in 2023 in Montenegro, Paraguay, Nigeria, Guatemala and Sierra Leone among others;
 - **Mediation, facilitation and dialogue processes,** notably through the Jean Monnet Dialogues for Peace and Democracy (dialogue between different political forces) and the Young Political Leaders Programme;
 - **Promotion of human rights,** notably through the Sakharov Prize and the Sakharov Community as well as the Simone Veil programme (for women parliamentarians).

The rules of the European Parliament provide for different modalities of cooperation and coordination between the different actors of parliamentary diplomacy – notably the committees, standing delegations and DEG. Close cooperation is required in order to achieve a high impact, visibility and coherence of action, building on the specific assets of each parliamentary body. It is also key to articulate in a meaningful way the diplomatic action of the different EU institutions.

Parliamentary work is supported by the secretariats of the different parliamentary bodies engaged in external action, who themselves work closely together and with other institutions, as well as by a number of EP Liaison Offices (Washington, London) and seconded EP staffers to some EU diplomatic representations.

Added value of parliamentary diplomacy

Parliamentary diplomacy makes it possible to establish a long-term dialogue between peers and, through this dialogue, to reinforce awareness about EU legislation and positions, to better understand perceptions, impacts and consequences of such legislation and positions in third countries, and to forge alliances and solid partnerships including in global fora. Interparliamentary work is also instrumental in accompanying the process of adoption of the “acquis communautaire” by the parliaments of countries wishing to become EU members.

Parliament has also a key role to play in bringing EU foreign policy closer to European citizens, and in providing a public forum for the elaboration of and discussion on this policy.

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