Role of the European Parliament and its parliamentary diplomacy in the EU's foreign and security policy

2023/2105(INI) - 16/01/2024 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 492 votes to 73, with 55 abstentions, a resolution on the role of the European Parliament and its parliamentary diplomacy in the EU's foreign and security policy.

Strengthening parliamentary diplomacy

Members welcomed **Parliament's growing role** in the EU's external action, which has gradually evolved into a substantial one. They highlighted the distinct role and value of EU parliamentary diplomacy in complementing and reinforcing the visibility and impact of EU foreign and security policy, alongside the European External Action Service (EEAS), the Commission and the diplomatic services and parliaments of the Member States, while preserving Parliament's own autonomy.

Members believe that great untapped potential exists for Parliament to **further develop its diplomatic role** and contribution to the achievement of EU foreign and security policy objectives.

Tools, means and values of parliamentary diplomacy

The resolution highlighted Parliament's specific, dynamic and public contribution to the EU's foreign and security policy and to tackling global challenges through the work of its **committees** working on external affairs, including the subcommittees on Human Rights and on Security and Defence. **Standing delegations** provide important and complementary work to that of the committees.

Members consider that Parliament's **official missions** outside the EU form an integral part of EU external policy and must therefore enjoy the full support of the EU delegations, as well as the highest level of information and security from the EEAS in this regard. The relevant Parliament bodies should set up **internal coordination** by, among other actions, periodically drafting a list of priority countries with whom to engage, based on upcoming legislative files and geopolitical or strategic priorities.

Members believe that the political dialogue carried out by Parliament and its individual Members with governmental, parliamentary and civil society actors across the world contributes to promoting EU priorities, views and values related to global standards in areas such as universal human rights and democracy, LGBTI rights, women's rights and gender equality, climate and energy diplomacy, connectivity, artificial intelligence and digital and technological policies.

Parliament highlighted the key relevance of **Parliament's debates and resolutions** on breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law as one of its tools with the greatest impact abroad when addressing human rights situations in non-EU countries. It called therefore for better visibility for these debates and resolutions. It also called for Parliament's actions to be further developed and for a voice to be given to those whose rights are at risk in the next parliamentary term.

The resolution stressed the importance and the unique nature of Parliament's role in **election observation missions** and more broadly in democracy support programmes. It called for strengthened coordination with the Commission in supporting parliamentary democracy worldwide and bolstering institutional support for parliaments.

Parliament's contribution to the EU's foreign and security policy

Parliament believes that the next parliamentary term and the establishment of the future Commission should be an opportunity to **strengthen the framework of interinstitutional relations** between Parliament, the EEAS and the Commission, including EU delegations, in order to enhance parliamentary diplomacy and strengthen the EU's toolbox for external action.

Members called on the Commission, the Council and the Member States to genuinely involve Parliament in the implementation and scrutiny of matters of strategic relevance in EU foreign affairs, including the application of restrictive measures, as well as in the scrutiny of external financing instruments. They also insisted on Parliament's right to information on CFSP matters.

The resolution stressed that Parliament's scrutiny function and power to **monitor the negotiation and implementation of international agreements** should grant it a critical role in shaping the Union's engagement with non-EU countries and international organisations, and its overall action in the international arena. Members insisted that all **key strategic policy documents** adopted by the Commission and the Council in relation to the conduct of EU external policy should be drafted in consultation with Parliament and should integrate Parliament's role and input therein.

Members highlighted the specific role of parliamentary bodies in helping partner countries and, in particular, enlargement and potential candidate countries in the Western Balkans and the Eastern neighbourhood. They highlighted the role of the European Parliament in globally advancing gender equality, including the fight against femicide and gender-based violence, and LGBTI rights in the EU's external action.

Team Europe: Parliament as a foreign policy partner

Members considered that ,while Parliament should maintain its full autonomy in carrying out its external policy agenda, joint ad hoc visits and statements by Parliament alongside Commission and Council representatives in relation to key developments in non-EU countries offer a promising area for enacting the Team Europe approach.

The resolution called, in this regard, for an interinstitutional Team Europe pilot programme to be launched in a selected number of non-EU countries and for this pilot programme to ensure that Parliament's tools are fully integrated within a joined-up interinstitutional approach towards the countries concerned.

Parliament called for the creation of an interinstitutional task force on human rights defenders to coordinate European efforts on priority human rights defender cases. It reiterated its request for the adoption of an **annual list of focus countries** of serious concern in relation to the plight of human rights defenders and democracy activists, which would, inter alia, allow for a fully coordinated Team Europe practical response on the ground.