

The German Bundestag and International Relations



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The Importance of International Relations for the Bundestag

The fact that parliamentarians and parliaments maintain international relations must puzzle those people who picture the world – or even just the world of politics – as a huge organisational chart wherein everybody has their allotted place, area of responsibility and superiors to whom they report. According to this understanding the role of national parliaments is to enact national laws and exercise oversight over the government. Foreign policy should therefore be a matter for the executive, in other words, the government along with, in some countries, the head of state.

Foreign policy might be the preserve of government, but it is still important for parliamentarians to maintain contacts beyond their borders.

Parliaments and parliamentarians, nevertheless, engage in extensive contacts across their borders. According to the 19th century theories of constitutional law which still dominate the thinking of many people, foreign relations between parliamentarians constitute a breach of the principle of sovereignty. Every state in the past, whether democratic or monarchical, was established clearly – and for the most part hierarchically – according to these theories. The exact structure was a matter for the state alone, but among themselves the states all had equal rights. They dismissed outside interference and if they interfered in the business of other states, they did so cautiously and covertly, employing “supreme statecraft”. The generally accepted division of labour dictated that government alone was responsible for foreign relations, and though outdated, this view lives on today, not least in diplomatic circles.

In modern democracies, debates about the government monopoly on the conduct of foreign relations take moderate forms. There may be arguments, for example, about setting up a “parliamentary assembly” to at least keep parliaments up to date with the decisions of a particular international organisation. Where such a body already exists, there may be disputes over what rights it should have: rights of co-determination,

powers of oversight or merely rights to information. In authoritarian or unstable states, by contrast, parliamentarians who undermine the government's monopoly by engaging in foreign contacts sometimes run the risk of being banned from travelling abroad or even facing charges of high treason.

By the late 19th century the image of isolated nation states which all obeyed their own laws and whose contacts with each other were made only through "envoys" was already out of date. The invention of the telephone heralded the era of the great international organisations. Since the founding of the "International Telegraph Union" in 1865, a vast array of international organisations has grown up. More and more problems demand supranational solutions and the issues tackled by international organisations have become increasingly diverse. Except in the case of those organisations which are purely private, it is generally national governments which together steer their work.

The more decisions are taken at international level, however, the stronger the governments of the different states become and the more difficult it is for national parliaments to exercise effective scrutiny over them. Internationalisation demands special vigilance on the part of parliaments.

The mechanism which weakens parliaments is easy to pinpoint but difficult to overcome. When heads of government or individual ministers finally reach unanimous decisions at international conferences after lengthy negotiations, it is very difficult for the national parliament to step in afterwards and undo everything. Parliaments have to think very carefully therefore before rejecting an international agreement.

Counteracting this tendency provides a strong and legitimate motive for parliaments and parliamentarians from different countries to maintain direct relations with each other and join forces in new oversight bodies. This is vital for democracy. Many international organisations which are set up by governments now have parliamentary assemblies. They are made up of representatives from the parliaments of member states

The invention of the telephone heralded the era of the international organisations.

according to a set formula. In most cases they have no real powers of scrutiny as such, but they do often have the right to information. At any rate, the existence of the assemblies ensures that members of government discover they are still subject to parliamentary oversight even when they travel abroad and engage in international activities.

Even if they do not have repercussions at national level, however, international relations are too close and too important to be left to governments alone. History shows that in institutional terms governments act at intergovernmental level. In situations where governments have reached an impasse, parliamentarians can take a far more nuanced approach and still maintain or even forge new relations to help the cause of peace. There have been many occasions when a meeting between parliamentarians has been instrumental in easing tensions. If two governments are in dispute, the chances of reaching political agreement are greater if the two countries have a mutual interest in and good knowledge of each other's political system and country at parliamentary level. Governments might sometimes disapprove for fear such encounters are

The President of the Assemblée nationale, Jean-Louis Debré, and his German counterpart, Dr Norbert Lammer, during a plenary sitting of the German Bundestag.





President of the Bundestag Dr Norbert Lammert receives a delegation from the Consultative Council of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

seen to challenge their international policy, but on many occasions they benefit from such contacts – particularly, for example, when they want to put a message across but the normal “diplomatic channels” are blocked. At the time when many Arab states were establishing relations with the German Democratic Republic during the 1960s and the Federal Government broke off relations with these countries in line with its political doctrine of the time, it was the parliamentarians who maintained contact with the Arab world.

In matters of international relations, however, it would be wrong to think that governments are always stricter and more rigorous than parliamentarians. In many cases the reverse is true: they are far more lenient. Members of government are often reluctant to address sensitive international problems, such as breaches of human or civil rights in another country or conflicts with third states. Their reluctance to address a prob-

lem need not necessarily be politically motivated. After all, in most cases governments also want something from the other side – an order for their industry, perhaps, or agreement to an international project. It can often be impolitic in such cases to burden relations by bringing up an awkward topic. Parliamentarians have far more freedom to broach sensitive issues than the representatives of a government. This makes the relationship potentially divisive, but it also makes it more honest. International relations which are based only on pleasantries and fleeting identities of interest are not very robust.

Parliamentarians have far more freedom to broach sensitive topics than representatives of government.

Democratic oversight and monitoring by parliament at international level as well are certainly the most important, although not the sole, functions of interparliamentary relations. Parliamentarians are also motivated to become involved at this level by the idea of furthering the cause of international understanding and strengthening solidarity and good working relations across borders.

If the head of state of a foreign country is invited to address the German Bundestag and has an opportunity to speak directly to the German people or their representatives, this constitutes a special and very rare honour and a highly symbolic act. Under the rules of classic diplomacy the appearance of a foreign representative in a national parliament is actually regarded as an inadmissible "interference", since traditionally states communicate with each other only through their governments. To sanction such "interference" signals a very high level of trust.

Interventions and contacts which are based on trust and confidence also play an important role in interparliamentary relations and sometimes go far beyond the ceremonial appearances of heads of state. If French members of parliament attend a sitting of the German Bundestag and their German colleagues a sitting of the Assemblée nationale, this reflects a particularly trusting relationship between the two countries. In addition to their considerable practical benefit, the exchange programmes for parliamentary staff, too, are also symbolic acts of confidence building. They are a way of saying: look, we are happy to give



Joint session of the members of the Presidiums of the German Bundestag and the Assemblée nationale with President of the Assemblée nationale Jean-Louis Debré and President of the Bundestag Dr Norbert Lammert.

foreigners a thorough insight into the core area of our national sovereignty.

The idea of parliamentarianism is not invented anew in every nation; rather, it has its own logic and history which transcends all borders. Throughout the world parliaments stand in a tense relationship with governments; they seek to assert their voting rights, budget rights, powers of scrutiny and rights to information and strive to find the most efficient way to arrive at workable decisions deriving from hundreds of individual wishes.

The first pan-German parliament, which assembled in St Paul's Church in Frankfurt in 1848, was not taken seriously by the power-holders of the time – a fate still shared by many parliaments in the world today. In the Kaiser's time the Reichstag fought for its rights first with the Chancellor and then with the Kaiser; similar conflicts between the legislature and executive still occur throughout the world today.



St Paul's Church in Frankfurt.

Some dictatorships allow parliaments to exist in order to disguise where the true power lies. How should democrats behave towards them? Should they make use of the limited powers that such a parliament has – or have nothing to do with it on the grounds that it is only a sham? The concept of the immunity of parliamentarians from prosecution is still foreign to many countries, where members of parliament run the risk of being punished for representing the interests of their voters.

Parliamentarians throughout the world face similar problems and, as colleagues, shared interests. Not all these will be about fundamental democratic questions. One problem shared by all parliaments is how to sift and disseminate information – which nowadays mostly means electronically. How much information do members of parliament need to enable them to make a responsible decision? How can the volume of information be limited so that they are not drowned in a flood of details? What can Members of the Bundestag learn in this respect from American Congressmen? These are just a few of the questions discussed by parliamentarians in dialogue with their foreign counterparts.

National Assembly in Frankfurt

The first freely elected parliament in Germany convened in St Paul's Church in Frankfurt in 1849. It drafted the first national constitution which was based on the principles of parliamentary democracy and provided for a bill of rights and a constitutional monarchy with an hereditary *Kaiser* or emperor. Although the National Assembly and its constitution failed as a result of the refusal of the Prussian king to accept the title of German *Kaiser*, significant parts of the project formed the template for the Weimar constitution of 1919 and the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany adopted in 1949.

Towards an “International Parliament”: the Parliamentary Assemblies

The Council of Europe: as lively as any national parliament

Anybody who has been present when the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) meets for one of its four annual weeks of sittings will testify that this is anything but a “politicians’ holiday”, as is sometimes disparagingly claimed. The sittings in Strasbourg are every bit as hard-hitting and meticulously planned as those of national parliaments. In fact, the debates are often far livelier since a far smaller proportion of the business handled by the Council of Europe is routine and non-contentious than is the case for national parliaments. The proceedings in Strasbourg are not only lively but also tough. The fact that only a few debates make it on to the TV screens in Germany reflects the fact that the issues of the European Union and what goes on in Brussels are regarded as more important. The situation is completely different in the many countries of Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union and Turkey which only joined the Council of Europe after 1990 or which are not members of the EU.

In Albania or Romania anybody interested in politics knows the names of the Council of Europe’s rapporteurs for their country – members of parliament who would rejoice if only they enjoyed such popularity in their own countries. Numerous leading politicians in Central and Eastern Europe are former members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. For most of the East European countries, joining the Council of Europe was the first milestone on the path towards the West. If the European Union today sets great store by its “values”, it is often forgotten that it was the Council of Europe



Council of Europe

The Council of Europe is the continent’s oldest international political organisation and now comprises 46 member states. It was founded in 1949 with the aim of defending human rights, parliamentary democracy and the rule of law and promoting an awareness of a European identity founded on shared values which transcend cultural differences.

which was and still is responsible for spreading and monitoring these values. Resolutions on such questions as tackling internet websites which incite violence or the issue of assisted dying influence national legislation in many member states. Strasbourg parliamentarians often complain that their work receives little attention in the public arena, whereas any meeting of heads of government, even if purely ceremonial, will always be dutifully reported in all the newspapers.



The Council of Europe building in Strasbourg

The Council of Europe was founded in 1949 by the European countries of Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Turkey also joined in the same year, followed by Germany in 1950 and Austria in 1956. Portugal and Spain, which were still ruled by authoritarian regimes long after World War Two, did not join until 1976 and 1977 respectively. The idea of the Council of Europe was conceived in the United Kingdom during the Second World War. The British prime minister, Winston Churchill, originally supported the establishment of international councils for each of the individual continents rather than a single United Nations body. Only the Council of Europe actually came into

being – albeit with no remit for security issues. This was a matter for the United Nations, which had by then been established. The prime task of the Council of Europe is to defend human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

All the countries of Europe, bar Belarus which is a dictatorship, have now become members of the Council of Europe, as have Armenia and Azerbaijan, two countries which really belong geographically to Asia. The members of the Council debated long and carefully about applications for membership from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro, countries which had previously been at war. The accession of Russia in 1996 caused bitter controversy. Some regarded it as politically important for Russia to join, while others feared that this would erode the Council's strict democracy criteria. Normally the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe pays little heed to power political considerations. When, in 1967, the colonels' junta seized power in Greece, a Nato country, Greece's membership of the Council of Europe was promptly suspended.

The Council of Europe is a thoroughly parliamentary institution: in terms of political importance, the Parliamentary (until 1974 "Consultative") Assembly undoubtedly ranks on a par with the Committee of Ministers. The "Congress of Local and Regional Authorities" is a further component of the Council of Europe. The Council's best-known organ is probably the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), frequently confused with the Court of Justice of the European Communities (ECJ). Every citizen can bring a case against his or her country at the court in Strasbourg. Judgements handed down by the ECHR at times provoke interest even in the old member states. A notable example was the "Caroline judgement" of 24 June 2004, which ruled against Germany for the lack of legal protection of privacy (afforded to Princess Caroline of Monaco) in the media.

The national parliaments of the 46 member states delegate between two and 18 representatives to the Assembly, in proportion to the size of population. Canada, Israel, and Mexico have observer status. The Assembly, says SPD Member of the Bun-



Winston Churchill

"...there is a remedy which...would as if by a miracle transform the whole scene, and would in a few years make all Europe...free and happy...We must build a kind of United States of Europe."

The Parliamentary Assembly is the "active" part of the Council of Europe system.

destag Rudolf Bindig, who was head of the German delegation in the 15th electoral term, is the "active part" of the Council of Europe system and its strongest instrument is the "monitoring procedure". Under the procedure countries which have applied to join the Council of Europe or in which human rights violations have been committed are placed by the Assembly under observation by parliamentarians from other member states. Bindig points to the abolition or at least suspension of the death penalty in all the member states as a particularly successful initiative of the Parliamentary Assembly.

The CDU/CSU Member of the Bundestag Eduard Lintner, who was deputy head of the German delegation in the 15th electoral term, sees the strength of the Council of Europe above all in its focus on questions relating to the rule of law and human rights. The next aim, he says, is to enable the Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg to operate more efficiently. At present the Court is deluged with 40,000 cases each year. Protocol no. 14 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms has been drafted for the purpose of introducing necessary reforms. It currently awaits signing and ratification by the member states.

Since it was founded, the Council of Europe has produced around 200 conventions, protocols and treaties. The best-known is the European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms dating from 1953. As well as adopting treaties, the Council also keeps a constant watch on their implementation. It is not sufficient for the government of an accession candidate simply to sign all these documents. Before a country can accede, its legislation and administrative practices are meticulously scrutinised and critically examined.

In the eyes of some governments, this "interference" by outside parliamentarians goes too far. But the members of parliament involved, a number of whom have already invested a great deal of energy in this process for more than a decade, are not satisfied with empty phrases or prepared to give any country an easy ride. They also make sure that they find out what the

public has to say in the country they are investigating. Successfully completing the accession process enhances the prestige of the governments of candidate countries.

The Council of Europe maintains its vigilance even after the accession process is complete and places member states against which complaints have been raised under observation. This is highly embarrassing for the government in question and is generally fully exploited by the country's opposition.

The German Bundestag delegates 18 representatives and 18 substitutes to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The head of the German delegation, Joachim Förster (CDU/CSU), is at the same time a Vice-President of the Parliamentary Assembly.

Further information on the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe can be found online at:

www.assembly.coe.int

and

www.bundestag.de/htdocs_e/internat/index.html



Parliamentarians in a Minefield: Nato

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato)

Nato was founded in 1949 by 12 countries of Europe and North America. The members of this military alliance are committed to resolving disputes peacefully and shaping international relations in a spirit of friendship. The organisation's aim is to maintain the western liberal social order through political, economic, social and cultural cooperation and the recognition of democratic principles. In the event of an armed attack on one of the members, the Treaty commits the other member states to collective self-defence.

Throughout the world security policy, the domain of Nato, is pre-eminently a government matter; because of the need for secrecy, governments are reluctant to allow parliamentarians full access to information. Germany handles security policy issues more democratically than many other countries. The Bundeswehr is sometimes termed a "parliamentary army" since every deployment requires the sanction of the Bundestag, which values this prerogative very highly. In matters relating to the internal state of the armed forces and strategic decisions among the Alliance partners, however, the Bundestag's rights to be consulted are in fact limited. The national parliaments have no control whatsoever over anything that the North Atlantic Council debates and decides and over what the Alliance's Secretary-General does. Since the Bundeswehr, like the armed forces of the Alliance partners, has placed itself under the joint supreme command of Nato, the Nato Parliamentary Assembly is particularly important in this respect.

Right from the time Nato was founded in 1949, parliamentarians sought a voice in the organisation. For a long time their calls met with resistance, their way blocked in the main by the redoubtable British prime minister, Winston Churchill. It was not until six years later, in 1955, that a "Nato Parliamentary Conference" was formed on the initiative of the Belgian statesman, Paul-Henri Spaak. Governments would not permit it to become an official organ of Nato, and even after two changes of title – first to "North Atlantic Assembly" and then finally to "Nato Parliamentary Assembly" – it is still not an organ of the Alliance but rather an organisation which is independent of Nato in legal terms and which also resides at a dif-

ferent address in Brussels. After some initial reticence, Nato and the parliamentarians reached a kind of arrangement. Today the Nato Secretary-General attends and also addresses the bi-annual meetings of the Parliamentary Assembly. The parliamentarians are not alone in welcoming these contacts. It would be hard for the powers-that-be in Nato to find a better qualified body of their countries' security and defence politicians. If they want to ensure that an objection from a parliament does not wreck their strategic goals, they are well advised to use the Parliamentary Assembly as a kind of early warning system. In Nato the principle of unanimity applies, which means there is a need to tread carefully.

In formal terms the remit of the Parliamentary Assembly, with its 248 members, is to further "cooperation between the member states in matters of defence and security" and promote "Atlantic solidarity" – goals, in other words, which can only benefit Nato as a government organisation. It was parliamentarians who on many occasions acted as "icebreakers" in the years of upheaval before and after 1990 and the opening of Nato to the East. Already in 1988 they were forging cautious contacts with Hungary, which was still officially within the Soviet sphere of influence but nevertheless sent its foreign minister to one of the parliamentarians' committee meetings. Had this initiative originated from Nato, it might very well have been regarded as a threat to security in the former Warsaw Pact and have had serious repercussions. Because they were independent, however, the parliamentarians had a greater scope for action than governments. In the following year the Assembly also provided a forum for attempts to eliminate the rift between Washington and Moscow: the Soviet Vice-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff appeared before a committee, and a delegation of Nato parlia-

Warsaw Pact

The eastern bloc's military mutual assistance pact was signed in 1955 by eight states and formed the counterweight to Nato during the Cold War. Among other things the member states affirmed their intention to safeguard peace and render each other military assistance in the event of an attack on participating states. Perestroika in the Soviet Union in the 1980s threw the continued existence of the alliance into doubt. The Warsaw Pact was officially dissolved on 1 July 1991 after the reunification of Germany in 1990.



The offices of the Nato Parliamentary Assembly

mentarians travelled to Moscow to visit the Supreme Soviet. It would be fundamentally wrong, however, to perceive the Parliamentary Assembly purely as the Nato Council's support troops. In 1999 there were fierce debates among the security policymakers in the Assembly over the war in Kosovo. The Iraq war, too, provoked heated arguments among the delegates in 2003, while the Nato Council steered clear of the topic.

Following the most recent enlargement round in 2004 when seven Central and Eastern European countries joined, Nato now has 26 members. The parliaments of all these countries, as well as the 13 parliaments which are associate members of

the Assembly, send their delegates to the bi-annual meetings of the Parliamentary Assembly, which are always held somewhere different and in each case at the invitation of one of the member countries.

In autumn 2004 the head of the German delegation to the Nato Parliamentary Assembly, Karl Lamers (CDU/CSU), was elected Chairman of the Sub-Committee on "Nato Partnerships" by the Assembly; in the following year in Laibach, Slovenia, he was elected Chairman of the Group of Conservatives. Two years ago the parliamentarians elected his deputy, Markus Meckel (SPD), Chairman of the Political Committee.

Further information on the Parliamentary Assembly of Nato can be found online at:

www.nato-pa.int

and

www.naa.be

or at:

www.bundestag.de/htdocs_e/internat/index.html

Parliamentarians Formulating Security Policy: the OSCE



In the case of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the parliamentarians of the participating states did not need to first painstakingly carve out a niche for themselves, as they did within Nato. Instead, the establishment of a parliamentary assembly was first called for in 1990 in the Charter of Paris, which was signed by the heads of state and government of 34 nations.

One year later, parliamentarians from all the signatory states of the CSCE (the predecessor to the OSCE, see information box, page 18) came together to create a CSCE Parliamentary Assembly, as requested by their heads of state and government. The Madrid Declaration of 1990 established the basic provisions of the Rules of Procedure, as well as the Assembly's working methods, size (currently 317 parliamentarians), mandate and distribution of votes. Germany has 13 seats in the Assembly.

The OSCE has no military arm and its function and the history of its establishment also differ sharply from those of Nato, which was created during the Cold War as a military alliance of the West. The OSCE, by contrast, saw itself from the outset as a "collective security system" intended to bridge the divide between potential adversaries – a function which makes the involvement of parliamentarians virtually indispensable.

As early as 1967, the Warsaw Pact, the Communist bloc's military alliance headed by the Soviet Union, urged that a conference on security and cooperation in Europe be established. It was the period of political détente and a thaw in relations. The West hesitated for a long time: it feared that the Soviet Union wanted to force the Americans out of Europe in political terms, in the hope that it would be able

Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

The OSCE was created in 1995 from the "Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe" (CSCE). The 56 member states include all the countries of Europe, the successor states of the Soviet Union, the USA and Canada. The aims of the OSCE are the safeguarding of peace and post-conflict rehabilitation. The OSCE, unlike Nato, has no military function. It is one of the main instruments of early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict assistance in its territory.

to deal more easily with the European Nato partners than with the superpower across the Atlantic. Long preliminary talks were needed before the conference was finally opened in July 1973 – with the USA and Canada participating.

Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE)

The CSCE was opened in Helsinki on 3 July 1973. Seven Warsaw Pact countries, 13 neutral countries and the 15 Nato members participated. By signing the CSCE Final Act in Helsinki in 1975 the participating states undertook to refrain from assaulting each other's frontiers, to settle disputes peacefully, not to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries, to uphold human rights and fundamental freedoms and to cooperate in economic, scientific and environmental matters.

For two years, the representatives of seven Warsaw Pact states, 15 Nato members and 13 neutral countries met in the Finnish capital, Helsinki. The outcome was the CSCE Final Act, also known as the Helsinki Final Act. In exchange for concrete steps towards disarmament, the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact states accepted, for the first time in history, an international treaty that committed them to respect for human rights and basic liberties, including freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief. One positive development, from the Communist bloc's perspective, was that the Federal Republic recognised the GDR as a fully valid partner for the first time.

Follow-up conferences were held to review progress in implementing the Helsinki Final Act. More importantly, however, the document quickly became known throughout the Eastern bloc and had a galvanising effect on democratic dissent everywhere. Many historians argue today that the CSCE accords of 1975 were the pinnacle of the policy of détente and the beginning of the end for the

Communist bloc.

The fall of Communism brought about a change in the function of the Conference, which had by then become a permanent institution. Its existence, however, was never called into question. At the start of the Yugoslav crisis, many hopes were pinned on the small, young organisation, whose members included all the powers which had, or might conceivably have had, an interest in the Balkans. In 1992 the CSCE, as it was still known at the time, was recognised by the United Nations as a regional arrangement. It established a secretariat in Vienna and subse-

quently began to deploy missions to potential crisis spots in Europe and the Caucasus. In 1995 the CSCE was renamed the “Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe” (OSCE). It maintains various field missions, providing practical assistance as regards conflict prevention and management. These missions



Annual session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE

help to develop and consolidate democracy, observe how states function and whether human and civil rights are upheld in line with the CSCE Final Act, monitor the media and assist with institution building.

An important institution for all young democracies is the “Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in Warsaw” (ODIHR), which deals with the development of both state structures and civil society in the member countries. The ODIHR’s staff have special training and experience in monitoring elections. Many a fledgling democracy has hoped in vain to receive the verdict “free and fair”, the ODIHR’s green light. However, the ODIHR does not just offer criticism. It always makes a point of also giving recommendations about what should be done differently and better next time.



The Swede Göran Lennmarker was elected President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in July 2006

In 1992 the Parliamentary Assembly met for the first time in Budapest. At the centre of the work of the Assembly, which maintains a permanent secretariat in Copenhagen, is its annual session, hosted by member countries in turn and culminating in the adoption of a political declaration. Another meeting is held in February at the OSCE's seat in Vienna, focusing on dialogue with the representatives of the OSCE. The autumn meeting has in recent years encompassed the Mediterranean Forum. Throughout the year, parliamentarians are involved in election monitoring missions and attend symposiums and regional conferences.

In keeping with the traditionally friendly relationship within the OSCE between governments and parliaments, the Chairperson-in-Office – a post which rotates annually between the foreign ministers of the member states – reports to the Parliamentary Assembly about the OSCE's work and answers parliamentarians' questions. Nonetheless, the OSCE remains in essence an intergovernmental organisation. Officially, the Parliamentary Assembly is a distinct body.

The main focal points of the Parliamentary Assembly's work generally correspond to those of the OSCE's Ministerial Council. The parliamentarians' commitment and expertise is primarily directed at South-Eastern Europe and Central Asia, in other words, those regions where the OSCE maintains missions. For some years, the Assembly has been devoting particular attention to combating racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia. An anti-Semitism conference held by the OSCE in Berlin in April 2004 met with a strong international response. Parliamentarians have a particularly delicate role to play in rapprochement with Belarus, the sole remaining state in Europe that is governed by a dictatorship. It is often a challenge merely to ensure that contacts are not broken off.

The 317 delegates support the OSCE's work in three committees, whose subjects correspond to the Helsinki baskets (Political Affairs and Security; Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment; Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian

Questions). In addition, there are ad hoc committees and special representatives on issues ranging from transparency in the OSCE to regional problems or gender issues. In principle, the parliamentarians also examine the OSCE's function and problems: for example, the questions of what priorities it should set and how it defines its role in comparison with the Council of Europe and Nato. In 2005 experts drew up proposals on these issues at OSCE and Assembly level.

With 13 members and 13 alternate members, Germany's delegation is one of the largest. Member of the Bundestag Uta Zapf (SPD) chairs the Ad Hoc Working Group on Belarus; Hans Raidel (CDU/CSU) was elected Vice-Chair of the General Committee on Political Affairs and Security in 2006.

Further information on the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE can be found online at:

www.oscepa.org

and

www.bundestag.de/htdocs_e/internat/index.html



The Interparliamentary European Security and Defence Assembly (Assembly of the WEU)

Unlike in the case of Nato, the parliamentarians in the Western European Union (WEU) did not have to fight for their role: the existence of a Parliamentary Assembly is anchored in the organisation's founding treaty. The ten member states (Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom) send 115 parliamentarians, among them 18 Germans, to the body's biannual sessions. The Assembly also has eight "affiliate members" (the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia); five "permanent observers" (the neutral countries of Austria, Finland, Ireland and Sweden, as well as Denmark, a Nato partner) and three "associate members" (Iceland, Norway and Turkey).

Western European Union (WEU)

The WEU as it is today was founded in 1954 by Germany, France, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and Italy as a mutual defence pact in which the members are committed first and foremost to rendering assistance to each other in the event of an external attack and to safeguarding peace and security in Europe. The WEU lost much of its importance with the establishment of Nato but enjoyed a revival in the 1990s as a pillar of the EU's security and defence policy.

The Assembly of the WEU is now known as the Interparliamentary European Security and Defence Assembly. The name reflects the body's aspiration to think beyond the changing WEU. However, the organisation now has few remaining functions. It constitutes the framework for the 19-member Western European Armaments Organisation (WEAO), which is responsible for preparing for the establishment of a European Armaments Agency.

The WEU is by nature a far more tightly-knit organisation than the OSCE or Nato; this accounts for the important role parliamentarians play within it. It was established in 1948 in the town of Dunkirk in northern France, initially as a mutual defence pact between the Western European states to counter the potential threat of a Germany which might be regaining its strength. This typical post-war constellation was soon outdated. From the early 1950s onwards, France sought to closely integrate Germany into all possible alliances.



The seat of the Assembly of the WEU in Paris

This was also true in the field of security policy: in 1954 the Germans, together with the Western Europeans, concluded the modified Brussels Treaty. The central clause of this treaty, Article V, contains a commitment to mutual defence in the event of an external attack. The French government originally wanted to push integration far further and merge the Western European armed forces, including the future German forces, in a very close association: a European Defence Community (EDC). However, this was blocked by the French Assemblée nationale. The modified Brussels Treaty and hence the WEU as it is today were created in the aftermath, as there was a determination to at least retain a mutual defence commitment despite the failure of the EDC project. The new organisation was not given a military role. It was Nato, with the USA as its dominant member, which finally integrated the new Germany into the Western defence structures in 1955.

The mutual defence commitment contained in the modified Brussels Treaty goes further than any other such commitment: in the event of an attack, members of the WEU automatically afford each other military and all other forms of assistance; no special resolutions are required in an emergency. Fortunately, no such attack has taken place since 1954. But the WEU has been the guardian of a valuable asset in the form of Article V. As a result, it has not needed to be particularly active in other

The WEU gained new importance as the EU sought to establish itself as a single entity in terms of security and defence policy.

respects, unlike Nato, which has been working towards military integration. For this reason, the WEU has never played a particularly important role in the public consciousness.

As European integration took a major leap forwards in the late 1980s, the member states recalled the existence of the near-forgotten organisation. Europe was intended to also become a single entity in terms of security and defence policy. What could be more logical than to turn to an existing organisation? At the famous EU summit in Maastricht in December 1991, the European Union, as it was now called, finally requested that the WEU "elaborate and implement" decisions with defence implications. All WEU members are also members of the EU. The reverse, however, is not true. A problem arose when, soon afterwards, the EU admitted neutral countries which did not want to enter into mutual defence commitments and were therefore unable to join the WEU.

A few years later, the WEU's brief blossoming was already over: since 1998, the European Union has itself been evolving step by step into a mutual assistance pact with a military component. It was still the WEU which sent a police contingent to Kosovo after the war in 1999. But by 2002 it was the EU itself that took over the military peacekeeping mission in neighbouring Macedonia from Nato. Only the explicit mutual defence commitment, which the EU cannot, or cannot yet, adopt out of consideration for its neutral members, is still enshrined in the WEU treaty. The Western European Union will in any case continue to exist until a treaty establishing a constitution for Europe enters into force.

The Parliamentary Assembly naturally plays a special role in an organisation which is struggling so hard to define its function and where matters of principle are constantly on the agenda. It was the parliamentarians who at an early stage sought ways to integrate the WEU into the EU and set out the various available options.

But matters of principle are by no means the only issues dealt with by the Interparliamentary European Security and

Defence Assembly, as it is known today. It mainly provides input and support at parliamentary level for the numerous activities which the EU member states have developed in the context of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). These include, among others, Operation Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This also explains the new name of the Assembly. At present the European Parliament does not have any competence to participate consistently in this important policy area in the European Union. Alongside Nato, the Interparliamentary European Security and Defence Assembly gives its member states a distinct profile on defence- and security-policy issues. WEU parliamentarians, for example, have repeatedly urged closer cooperation with neighbouring Russia on defence technology. They were also the most unequivocal defenders of the current disarmament agreements in the face of US plans to establish a comprehensive missile defence system.

Further information on the International European Security and Defence Assembly can be found online at:

www.bundestag.de/htdocs_e/internat/index.html

and

www.weu.int

Its main focus now is on providing input and support at parliamentary level with respect to the many activities which the EU has now developed within the framework of European Security and Defence Policy.



The Mother of the UN and the League of Nations: the IPU

When, at the end of the First World War, the League of Nations was born as a result of a project initiated by the Allies, the event was heralded the world over as a breakthrough on the path to a future “world government”. A worldwide organisation with clearly defined responsibility for resolving conflicts now finally existed, a body which established unequivocally who was in the right and who was in the wrong in international disputes. Yet the League of Nations foundered less than 20 years later due to its lack of authority: the USA had never joined, whilst Germany and the Soviet Union had only become members late on. Fascist Italy and National Socialist Germany demonstrated in terrifying fashion just how toothless this “League of Nations” was.

Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

The IPU was founded as early as 1889. It is an international association of parliaments established with the aim of safeguarding peace, promoting an understanding of democracy throughout the world and upholding human rights. 143 sovereign states are currently represented in the IPU, which meets twice yearly at the Inter-Parliamentary Conference.

Few people are aware that the League of Nations had an early predecessor at parliamentary level, namely the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), which still exists today; the IPU, in contrast to the League of Nations, survived two world wars. It was founded in 1889 by the French economist, writer and pacifist Frédéric Passy (1822–1912), who had been born into a political dynasty, and his British colleague William Randal Cremer (1828–1908), a trade unionist who came from the most humble of backgrounds, indeed one of almost abject poverty. Both became parliamentarians in their countries, the most important world powers of the era, and both men were later awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their work.

Cremer and, in particular, Passy, known in his home country as the “apostle of peace”, sought to gain the support of the governments of the world for the idea of an international court of arbitration. And, at the dawn of the 20th century, several international agreements were indeed reached in The Hague which, for the first time, at least established rules on wartime

conduct – the 1907 Hague Regulations, for example. Yet it was only in the aftermath of the catastrophic First World War that a court of arbitration was created to mediate between governments locked in dispute with one another. It was parliamentarians who tirelessly highlighted the need for such an institution and prepared the ground for it intellectually and politically.

The failed League of Nations was replaced in 1945 by the United Nations, following the second great catastrophe of the century. Like the League of Nations, the UN is a purely intergovernmental organisation with no parliamentary dimension. The IPU has always sought to become a kind of “parliamentary assembly” for the United Nations and its subsidiary bodies. The decision taken by the UN General Assembly in 2002 to grant observer status to the IPU was a major step in this direction. A parliamentary dimension would benefit the UN: true international democratisation can only be achieved by means of parliamentary representation in the system of global governance.

The IPU’s very format means that it is designed to tackle global problems: the international financial order, AIDS, terrorism and many other issues. The IPU deliberates on such issues, adopting resolutions and producing reports on them. Naturally, these resolutions lack the binding character of resolutions adopted by the UN Security Council, for example. Yet they are intended to encourage national parliaments to adopt resolutions themselves. The IPU often deals with new topics, such as the internet or genetic engineering, earlier than do some national parliaments, and is thus able to provide some guidance. President of the Bundestag Dr Norbert Lammert, who heads the German delegation to the IPU, believes that the IPU’s real importance lies not in passing resolutions, of which he says, “the impact is exhausted at the latest when they are adopted”, but rather in its function as a forum for parliamentarians to



UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan addressing the Bundestag in February 2002

United Nations (UN)

The United Nations (UN) is an intergovernmental association of 191 countries and enjoys unequivocal recognition as a global international organisation. It was founded in 1945 by 51 countries. The organisation’s main tasks are safeguarding world peace, upholding international law, defending human rights and promoting international cooperation.



**Dr Norbert Lammert,
President of the Bundestag**

"The true importance of the IPU lies not so much in passing resolutions as in its function as a forum for parliamentarians to establish contacts with one another and network."



**The Inter-Parliamentary
Union building**

establish contacts with one another. Moreover, the IPU is one of the few bodies in which dialogue between North and South takes place on a regular basis. The developing countries in particular benefit from this and thus attach particular importance to the IPU. The fact that the IPU has set itself the goal of spreading the parliamentary idea and knowledge of parliamentary procedures may not be so important for stable democracies. Yet it allows knowledge to be transferred from North to South and rich to poor, something which should by no means be taken for granted. Wherever in the world parliamentarians are hindered in their work, treated as criminals or persecuted, they can rely on the solidarity of their colleagues in the IPU. A special committee on the human rights of parliamentarians successfully uses the instruments of quiet and public diplomacy. The IPU has, incidentally, been working for decades to promote gender equality. It is the only inter-parliamentary assembly which imposes sanctions on delegations which do not include women – or, for that matter, men: such delegations receive one less vote.

The IPU's members are not individual parliamentarians, but rather whole parliaments. The German Bundestag sends eight Members nominated by the parliamentary groups to the IPU's annual spring meeting and five to its autumn meeting. Three parliamentarians from each member state belong to the "Council", which prepares the IPU's resolutions. Three standing committees – on peace and security, development and finance and democracy and human rights – meet during the two annual meetings. In addition, special meetings on important topics take place. The organisation has its headquarters in Geneva, once the birthplace of the League of Nations. In 2000, the IPU organised the First World Conference of Speakers of Parliaments, which was followed by the Second World Conference of Speakers in 2005; these conferences are now to take place at regular intervals.

Further information on the Inter-Parliamentary Union can be found online at:

www.ipu.org

and

www.bundestag.de/htdocs_e/internat/index.html

The Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly Partnership between the Mediterranean Region and Europe



On 1 May 2004, ten new members joined the European Union. With the accession of Cyprus and Malta, the region of the southern Mediterranean and the countries of the Middle East have moved another step closer to Europe.

The European Union has always actively supported a peaceful and just solution to the Middle East conflict. It is not least as a result of this commitment that the EU is respected and accepted as a partner for dialogue and negotiations in the southern Mediterranean countries. The EU has recognised this opportunity and is aware that its Mediterranean policy can make an important contribution to peace and stability in the 21st century.

The "Barcelona Process" launched in 1995 is particularly important for the partnership between the Mediterranean region and Europe. This process stands for cooperation between the EU and the Mediterranean countries on an equal footing in the areas of politics and security, economic affairs and social, cultural and human affairs. In 2010, this cooperation is to lead to a Euro-Mediterranean Free Trade Area. The countries involved include Algeria, the Autonomous Palestinian Territories, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria and Tunisia. With some of these states, the EU had already concluded association, partnership or cooperation agreements. The long-term goal is to create a zone of prosperity and stability in the Mediterranean region.



The annual plenary session of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly in Brussels in 2006 with President Josip Borrell

Originally, from 1998 onwards, the Barcelona Process was accompanied at parliamentary level by the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Forum. In December 2003, the parliamentarians decided to transform it into a permanent assembly, thus giving it institutional status. This has strengthened and enhanced the status of the Barcelona Process overall.

In March 2004, the Bundestag decided to join the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA). In April 2004, the inaugural session took place and, in September 2004, the EMPA's first committee meetings were held. The Assembly has since met once a year in one of the member states. The Assembly is made up of 240 parliamentarians, half of them from the partner countries in the Mediterranean region and the other half from European Union countries (75 representatives of the national parliaments of the EU's 25 member states and 45 Members of the European Parliament). Germany has three seats.

The goal of the EMPA is to promote stability in the Mediterranean and to foster the exchange of ideas and dialogue between the parliaments of the partner countries. The idea is to give fresh impetus to Euro-Mediterranean cooperation as a whole by placing the parliamentary dimension on a more institutionalised footing. Beyond this, the members of parliament aim to carefully scrutinise EU expenditure in this area.

The Bundestag joined the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly in 2004 and has three seats.

Further information on the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly can be found online at:

www.bundestag.de/htdocs_e/internat/index.html

Not to be forgotten: the Regions

Seen on a globe, Europe appears to form a reasonably coherent unit. Admittedly, no clear geographical border can be identified to the east. In the other three directions, though, the coasts clearly define where our part of the planet ends. This bit is Europe, that bit is Asia, that bit is Africa – every schoolchild divides the world into continents.

Yet the map of the world can also be seen from a completely different perspective. Oceans, which we see as dividing the different parts of the world, also link them. In historical terms, the Mediterranean became a cultural area with strong unifying characteristics far earlier than the region which is today the EU. The old Romans looked far more to Carthage, close to present-day Tunis, or to the coasts of Anatolia, than to the marshes of Germania. The Mediterranean was more of a unifying element than a dividing force.

Ever since the Middle Ages, large numbers of Germans, Danes and Swedes have voyaged to the Baltic states across the Baltic Sea, leaving traces still visible today as part of these countries' cultural and architectural heritage. The Hanseatic League set up numerous branches across the whole of the Baltic region and, through the thriving trade in goods, created a shared seafaring culture. In 1991, parliamentarians from all Baltic Sea states established the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference in order to unite a region which had common cultural roots, yet had been divided for many years after the Second World War. The conference was intended to provide a forum for discussion and for addressing the pressing environmental problems in the Baltic Sea which can only be tackled jointly. At the same time, the idea was to help the economically less developed countries of the former Eastern bloc to comply with Western shipping safety standards, in order to prevent shipping accidents which could trigger an environmental disaster affecting the entire region.



The Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference is a forum for addressing the pressing environmental problems in the Baltic Sea which can only be tackled jointly.

Likewise, the Black Sea region, which has suffered from numerous internal conflicts in the recent past, is shaped by a joint cultural identity and economic ties going back centuries. In addition, the Black Sea has become an important transit route for oil, which is being pumped in the Caspian Sea. It is thus all the more important for the eleven countries in the Black Sea region to cooperate closely and to contain the flames of potentially explosive issues before they take hold. The world can do without another region of oil-fuelled crisis.

The Bundestag sends a delegation of Members to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC). Like the French and the Israelis, they have observer status there.

Further information on the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference can be found online at:

www.bspsc.net

and

www.bundestag.de/htdocs_e/internat/index.html

Further information on the Black Sea Economic Cooperation can be found at:

www.pabsec.org

and

www.bundestag.de/htdocs_e/internat/index.html

Amongst Friends: the Parliamentary Friendship Groups

When Members are not busy debating in the plenary chamber, studying legislative bills or focusing on constituency matters, they work in a wide variety of bodies. The Bundestag has permanent committees, which frequently establish sub-committees, along with committees of inquiry, study commissions – and the parliamentary friendship groups.

Undoubtedly, parliamentary friendship groups are the most vibrant link between the Bundestag and other countries. In the 15th electoral term, they held over 900 meetings and discussions. Members who are particularly interested in a certain country or region – not only politically, but also culturally – get involved in the relevant parliamentary friendship group. Party political allegiance rarely plays a role in interparliamentary work. Each of the parliamentary friendship groups has an executive, however, in which all the parliamentary groups are as a matter of principle represented. The parliamentary friendship groups are not wholly informal bodies. They are formally established in every electoral term by the President of the Bundestag. It is up to the parliamentary friendship groups themselves to decide on their programme of work; generally, current political developments dictate their agenda. One thing is certain, though – they can count on immense good will for all projects. Simply by joining parliamentary friendship groups, Members demonstrate their interest and liking for the partner country concerned. Members choose to get involved rather than being obliged to do so; this creates a positive atmosphere which is beneficial to all the discussions and visits. Members who remain in the Bundestag for more than one electoral term tend to remain faithful

Parliamentary Friendship Groups

Parliamentary friendship groups, which foster bilateral contacts with the national parliaments of one or several partner countries, have existed since as long ago as the 3rd electoral term of the German Bundestag (1957–1961). The groups seek every opportunity to hold talks with the members of parliament and other representatives of partner countries in order to exchange information, opinions and experiences. Many partner parliaments have equivalent parliamentary friendship groups for Germany which have the same goal for their national parliament.

to “their” partner country. They often outlast several ambassadors and foreign ministers and therefore become influential experts on the partner country concerned. Parliamentary friendship group members generally have privileged access to information. They get to know foreign ministers, heads of government and party chairs personally and receive reliable and often confidential answers to their questions.

German–French Relations

The German–French Parliamentary Friendship Group is one of the most active groups and reflects the close relations between the two countries. It organises meetings such as the Paris–Berlin colloquium attended by politicians, academics and representatives of civil society. Parliamentary relations were given an important boost by the joint session of both parliaments held in Versailles in January 2003 to mark the 40th anniversary of the Elysée Treaty, which has led to enhanced cooperation between the presidiums and committees.

The oldest of the parliamentary friendship groups, the German–French Parliamentary Friendship Group, dates back to 1957 and plays a prominent role. As well as visiting and receiving visitors from France, the parliamentary friendship group is involved in numerous activities to intensify cooperation between the two parliaments. The annual Paris–Berlin colloquium alternates between Germany and France and examines topical issues of interest in the two societies. Alongside parliamentarians, representatives from the academic world, the business community and civil society participate in the colloquium to discuss issues of interest to people in both countries.

The closest form of cooperation was the establishment of the first joint parliamentary body, made up of German and French members of parliament and tasked with evaluating the Franco–German Youth Office. After nine months of intense cooperation, a joint report was produced in both languages, prompting the governments to revise the framework for the Franco–German Youth Office.

A parliamentary friendship group can play a particularly important role at times when relations between the governments in question are in crisis. Parliamentarians are able to speak more frankly to one another, whilst retaining a friendly tone. Even in spring 2003, for example, when relations between the German and US governments had reached a low point as a



The Paris-Berlin colloquium staged by the German-French Parliamentary Friendship Group on "The role of the German-French partnership in the enlarged Europe".

result of the Iraq war, the German-US Parliamentary Friendship Group invited the US Congress Study Group on Germany to attend the annual meeting, to discuss the differences of opinion which existed. This was despite the fact that many bilateral contacts had been put on hold at that time. Parliamentarians can also, incidentally, cultivate ties with territories not recognised as states, such as Taiwan. As far as the Federal Government is concerned, there is only one Chinese state; it therefore has no official contacts with Taiwan. The Bundestag, on the other hand, has a Berlin-Taipei Parliamentary Circle of Friends, which allows the exchange of opinions and information at parliamentary level.

Most of the parliamentary groups, especially the largest ones, deal with relations to countries with which the Federal Government also has particularly close ties, such as France, the other EU countries or Russia. Even so, the work these groups do is often invaluable. In the German-Korean Parliamentary Friendship Group, for example, there are plans to possibly invite parliamentarians from both North and South Korea to Berlin for a joint meeting and discuss with them the challenges and opportunities of reunifying a country. It will be a long time before a government is able to do something of this kind. Dia-

logue with parliamentarians from Islamic states also plays an important role – something in which the Parliamentary Friendship Group for Relations with Arabic-Speaking States in the Middle East, the German–Egyptian Parliamentary Friendship Group, the Parliamentary Friendship Group for Relations with the Maghreb States and the Parliamentary Friendship Group for Relations with the States of South Asia are particularly involved.

The German–Romanian Parliamentary Friendship Group has set itself the objective of supporting Romania in building a sta-



Members of parliament from France, the United Kingdom and Russia at an event in the German Bundestag marking the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War.

ble democracy. The level of trust which exists is so high that Members of the Bundestag provide advice to their Romanian colleagues who, for their part, contact their German colleagues directly when problems arise in connection with EU accession. German and Dutch parliamentarians, meanwhile, jointly organised a conference on euthanasia, a topic on which views differ widely between these two neighbouring states bound by close

ties of friendship. There can be no forum better suited for such a frank exchange of views in an atmosphere of trust than a parliamentary friendship group. The German–Turkish Parliamentary Friendship Group, too, helped to persuade the Turkish parliament of the need for legislation to ameliorate the human rights situation. Only as a result of this change in thinking did the most recent reforms initiated by Turkey in preparation for EU accession become possible.

Parliamentarians from Germany and partner states sometimes even take joint decisions, which then enjoy a great deal of support in the parliaments concerned. Following the disastrous floods which occurred in Eastern Germany in summer 2002, parliamentarians in the Japanese partner group spontaneously decided to make a generous private donation. Normally, though, it is difficult to measure the results of discussions – let alone in euros and cents.

Parliamentary friendship groups are entitled to visit the partner country or region concerned once per electoral term



The Chair of the Parliamentary Friendship Group for Relations with the SADC States, Herta Däubler-Gmelin, welcomes the Namibian President of State Hifikepunye Pohamba.

The Chair of the Japanese–German Friendship Group, Yoshtsugo Harada, hands over a donation from Japanese parliamentarians for the victims of the Oder floods in 2002 to the Chair of the German–Japanese Parliamentary Friendship Group, Horst Friedrich.



with a delegation of currently seven people. By the same token, they may invite their colleagues from abroad to visit Germany once over this period of time. Budgetary resources are available to them to allow them to take part in trips and receive guests. Such visits often take the form of mini-conferences and also attract attention at governmental level. Frequently, foreign heads of government visiting Berlin express wishes which were originally discussed during a visit by parliamentarians.

During the 16th electoral term (which began in 2005), there are 51 parliamentary friendship groups, plus the Berlin–Taipei Parliamentary Circle of Friends. There are also parliamentary friendship representatives for Bosnia and Herzegovina and for the Republic of Moldova. Since some of the parliamentary friendship groups deal with whole regions – such as Central America, West and Central Africa or the Baltic states – the Bundestag has ties to virtually all the world’s national parliaments by means of bilateral or multilateral parliamentary friendship groups.

Further information on the parliamentary friendship groups can be found online at:

www.bundestag.de/htdocs_e/internat/index.html

Presidents and Speakers: How Parliaments Are Organised

As well as parliamentarians from different countries, the speakers and presidents of parliaments also come together to discuss political issues of mutual interest or to deepen their understanding of each other's countries. The President of the Bundestag has regular meetings with foreign counterparts in the European Union, in the Council of Europe, at G8 level and in the context of Euro-Mediterranean cooperation between the EU and the countries of the Mediterranean, as well as maintaining a large number of bilateral contacts.

These meetings have more than purely ceremonial importance. Speakers and presidents of parliament throughout the world are responsible for the administrative, organisational and technical aspects of running a modern parliament. What information needs to flow and through what channels? What support do parliamentarians need in order to make responsible decisions? Who has experience of truly tamper-proof electronic voting systems? Should it be possible to issue "yellow cards" during particularly turbulent meetings? These are only some of the questions which can be more easily answered through an international exchange of experience and which regularly appear on the agendas of presidents of parliament. The ongoing consultation process lends an international dimension to a parliamentary system which is national by its very nature, so that rather than going in different directions, ideas on parliamentary democracy can be further developed on a collaborative basis.

The annual Conference of the Presidents of Parliaments of the EU Member States is known in European jargon as the "restricted" conference, while the biennial Council of Europe's Conference of Speakers and Presidents of the European Parliamentary Assemblies involving all 46 member states is termed the "extended" conference. The President of the EU Parliament attends both these conferences. The speakers or presidents of a

The regular meetings of presidents and speakers give national parliamentary systems an international dimension.

President of the Bundestag Dr Norbert Lammert and the Speaker of the Indian Parliament, Somnath Chatterjee



second chamber, where there is one – for example the presidents of the German and Austrian Bundesrats, the lord speaker of the British House of Lords and the president of the Eerste Kamer in the Netherlands – are also invited to both conferences.

The emphasis of the “extended” conference of the presidents of the parliaments of the member states of the Council of Europe and the European Assemblies held in Strasbourg or a member country, which is geared to seminar-style exchanges of opinion laced with touches of symbolism, is on deepening cooperation. The young East European democracies in particular are often confronted here with new questions.

Like the heads of state and government of the G8 countries, the presidents of the parliaments of the leading industrialised countries (USA, France, United Kingdom, Japan, Canada, Italy, Russia and Germany) meet once a year to exchange ideas. The very topical question of how parliaments can continue to work under the acute threat of terrorism was dealt with at the meeting of the G8 Presidents of Parliaments held in Chicago in 2004.

As a sign that the European Union fosters cooperation in and with other regions, the Presidents of Parliaments also meet in the context of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, known in international diplomatic jargon as the Barcelona Process. The members of the Barcelona Process, established in 1995, are the 12 countries which made up the EU in 1995 and the countries of Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Jordan, Malta, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey, which border the Mediterranean.

Further information on all the conferences of the Presidents of Parliaments can be found online at:

www.bundestag.de/htdocs_e/internat/index.html

Broadening Horizons: the Exchange Programmes

There is no better way of getting to know a foreign country than through an exchange. Foreign exchanges provide a means of continuing to work or study but simply doing so in a foreign country. Each day brings new experiences and highlights differences, broadening the national perspective of those involved.

The Bundestag offers the following exchange programmes for school students, young professionals, university graduates and also young German and foreign parliamentary employees:

For high school students and young professionals: the CBYX

The “Congress–Bundestag Youth Exchange Program” (CBYX), which each year gives up to 300 high school students between the ages of 15 and 17 and up to 100 young professionals aged 22 and under from Germany the chance to go to the USA to either study or work there, has a very broad impact. There are roughly ten applications from school students for each scholarship, while an average of four young people applies for each work placement. The same number of young Americans come to Germany.

Students interested in taking part apply to one of five experienced exchange organisations (depending on their constituency), which make a preliminary selection. A different organisation handles the young professionals. The organisations select the most suitable candidates from each constituency. The final selection is then made by the “sponsor” – i.e. the member(s) of parliament in the constituency in which the applicant lives. Only those who make it through the preliminary selection by the independent exchange organisation stand a chance.

Places on the exchange programmes are highly coveted: there are ten applicants for each scholarship and four for each work placement.

As far as the students are concerned, the CBYX is similar to private exchange programmes except in two noteworthy respects: the selection is made not only on the basis of school achievement and knowledge of English, but also according to the applicant's level of social commitment and knowledge of politics. Those who are interested in current affairs in their country and also demonstrate active involvement have the best prospects of being selected. The Bundestag pays the costs of the preparatory and follow-up seminar, as well as air travel, insurance and programme expenses. Over and above this, the sponsors make an effort to keep in contact with the young exchange students. In quite a few cases the experience awakens an interest in politics in those participating in the scheme. Two present-day Members of Parliament from Alliance 90/The Greens, Anna Lührmann and Alexander Bonde, are former CBYX students who spent time in the USA.

The part of the CBYX programme designed for young professionals is unique and, for those taking part, the experience of a lifetime. "My year in America opened doors for me," says Alexander Holst from Berlin. Holst was a 20-year-old intermediate secondary school graduate and had just qualified as an industrial clerk when he went to a community college "somewhere in the back of beyond in Virginia" for an initial six months. He can think of no other way that he could have learned so much of the language and gained so much self-confidence. His exchange year made him curious about the wider world. He has now become a business consultant and has worked for two years each in England and Spain. He also liked the fact that for his second six months in the USA, he had to look for a job himself, albeit with some help. "I wrote 200 applications," he says. Finally, after working for a major German company, he ended up in a tiny travel agency in Florida where he got to know a completely different working environment.



**Anna Lührmann,
Member of the
Bundestag**

"The CBYX consolidates the transatlantic relationship and strengthens the intercultural dialogue. I benefited hugely from my one-year stay in Syracuse, NY; it made me more tolerant, self-confident and open-minded. And my fluency in English helps me a great deal in my day-to-day life as a member of parliament."

President of the Bundestag Dr Norbert Lammert welcomes the 600 participants in the Youth Media Days and 370 young Congress-Bundestag scholarship winners from the USA to the Bundestag.



The CBYX was inaugurated by the German Bundestag and US Congress in 1983 to mark the 300th anniversary of the first German emigration to the New World – some 50 million Americans have German ancestors. Of course the programme also serves to underscore the traditionally good relations between the two countries.

CDU/CSU Member of the Bundestag Wolfgang Börnsen, who acts as rapporteur for the programme in parliament, is proud of the young Americans and Germans: "They take their role as their countries' ambassadors very seriously and put their heart and soul into it. And they make an important contribution in this respect to conveying a nuanced and up-to-date picture of America and of Germany to their peers."

Further information can be found online at:

www.bundestag.de/htdocs_e/internat/internat_austausch/index.html

and

www.exchanges.state.gov/education/citizens/students/europe/german.htm

An application form can be downloaded from the German web page.

International Parliamentary Scholarship (IPS): Getting to know the Bundestag up close

Millions of people each year visit the centre of German politics in the Bundestag in Berlin. For those who want to broaden their horizons, however, and learn what German democracy really looks like and how it works from the inside, the International Parliamentary Scholarship (IPS) offers a unique opportunity. Every year the Bundestag gives around 100 university graduates from 21 countries the chance to experience democracy up close.

The IPS is the only scholarship programme of its kind in the world. The programme, of which the President of the Bundestag is patron and which is run in cooperation with Berlin's universities, gives the leaders and managers of the future the chance to look behind the scenes of German politics. They learn about Germany's social and cultural life and forge valuable contacts with people from a wide range of countries. Getting to experience Germany and its democracy so intensively and so close up is, without doubt, a unique opportunity.

What began as a relatively small project with the USA in 1986 has developed over the years into an extensive scholarship programme, which now also includes the countries of Central, Eastern and Southeast Europe. Serbia and Montenegro joined the programme in 2004; Georgia and Kazakhstan participated for the first time in 2005. Just how international the IPS now is can be seen from the list of participating countries, which includes Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine and the USA.

Jacob Comenetz, a college graduate from the USA, was accepted for the programme and arrived in Germany along with 94 other IPS winners on 1 March 2005. During the first few weeks he got to know Berlin and other German cities and attended study seminars at the political foundations and Berlin's three universities. Afterwards he began the long-awaited process of putting theory into practice. In



Vice-President of the Bundestag Dr h.c. Susanne Kastner and Wolfgang Börnsen, Member of the Bundestag, with scholarship winners from Georgia and Kazakhstan.

April he began the main part of his IPS programme – the four-month internship in the office of a Member of the Bundestag.

During his internship he met many interesting and prominent figures from German politics. Jacob's enthusiasm grew a little more each day: "To be able to follow life in a foreign parliament at first hand is an opportunity only available to one in Germany," he says. "For me this is evidence that German democracy is one of the most transparent and open democracies in the world. My duties as an



In Berlin at last: the IPS scholarship winners for 2006 in front of the Reichstag Building.

intern are varied and demanding. I work on my Member's website and translate speeches and letters. During the weeks in which the Bundestag is sitting I accompany the Member to committee meetings and different working groups."

Just how important taking part in the programme can be for scholarship winners can be seen in the career of Rachid Kassyanov from Samara in Russia. He took part in the programme in 1999. Two years later he stood as a candidate in elections for district chairman

in his home town and has now been elected thanks to the experience he gained through the programme. On his website he writes about what he learned from his internship for the benefit of anyone who may be interested – perhaps future participants – and to pass on his first-hand impressions.

Today the IPS programme brings people from the most varied regions of the world together to live and learn and even to forge lifelong friendships. Young citizens from established and newly



emerging democracies meet in Germany to gain experience which will help them to participate in shaping the future in their own countries as well as in the wider world.

Further information can be found online at:

www.bundestag.de/htdocs_e/internat/internat_austausch/index.html and

www.aia.hu-berlin.de/int/parlprakt/index_html

Staff Exchange and Inter-Parliamentary Training Programme

The German Bundestag conducts bilateral staff exchanges with the parliaments of a number of countries. A programme takes place with the USA in both directions every year. One-week bilateral programmes take place each year with France, Italy, Poland, Israel, the United Kingdom and Ireland, with the Bundestag and the partner parliament taking it in turns to host the programme.

The administrative staff who take part in this exchange between parliaments learn in discussions with their foreign colleagues about the structure and working methods of the partner parliament. The personal contacts that are forged also strengthen working relations between the administrative staff and the parliaments on a lasting basis.

The Bundestag Administration has been conducting fact-finding interparliamentary training programmes since 1984. These are targeted at parliamentary staff from African, Asian, Latin-American and European countries which are either emerging democracies or are undergoing restructuring.

The Bundestag Administration concentrates these programmes on specific regions and topics. Up to 1989 they focused exclusively on countries belonging to what was then termed the Third World. Since 1990 the focus has shifted towards Central and Eastern European countries and the CIS States and since 2001 to the Southeast European countries of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, as well as Kosovo.

The seminars provide an overview of the structure and working methods of the Bundestag Administration, as well as the status and duties of parliament in a modern parliamentary democracy. The programmes can be tailored to particular areas of parliamentary work in line with special requests in order to provide guests with specific practical assistance and suggestions relating to the organisation of parliamentary work.

The fact-finding programmes are designed particularly for countries which are undergoing transformation.



Vice-President of the Bundestag Dr h.c. Wolfgang Thierse meets staff from the US Congress during a staff exchange visit to the Bundestag.

Berlin is not Babylon The Bundestag has an interpreter for every language

Georgian? No problem. Even an interpreter for Mongolian can be found in the German capital. Malay sometimes poses a problem depending on the dialect and it took quite a while to find a translator for Khmer, the language of Cambodia. But in terms of everyday work, English is the main language. The fact that German Members of Parliament can converse with colleagues from all over the world is not something that happens automatically. Each year the Language Service of the German Bundestag is called on to deal with around 600 interpreting assignments and as many as 2000 requests for written translations.

**Georgian, Khasi,
Singhalese – even
exotic languages
pose no problem
to the Bundestag.**

The Language Service maintains an invaluable index which holds the names of translators and interpreters of the most unusual languages. Those whose names are listed belong to the cream of the profession. Political translations are particularly delicate. Even a small error can lead to serious or, at least, annoying misunderstandings: an experienced interpreter from the German Bundestag's Language Service recalls how an entire delegation sat brooding over a cryptic ordinance about what was generally assumed to be cereal, but which turned out to be simply maize – a mistranslation of the American word "corn" was the cause of the misunderstanding.

Good interpreters are not just experts on terminology and syntax; they are also familiar with conditions in the country of the person for whom they are translating. They can read between the lines when during a discussion on waste separation, for example, an Algerian member of parliament says that his parliament has "other priorities" to deal with. A competent interpreter will recognise in this remark an expression of bitterness that the problem of terrorism in Algeria is not being adequately perceived outside the country.

Increasing numbers of parliamentarians speak and understand English well, both Germans and their foreign colleagues – the primary conference language is becoming the worldwide lingua franca. But the Bundestag’s translators and interpreters need never fear they will be out of work, since international encounters have expanded even more than knowledge of foreign languages.



An interpreter in action at a meeting between President of the Bundestag Dr Norbert Lammert and his French counterpart, Jean-Louis Debré.

Not all terms, it should be said, can be translated word-for-word. The use of the word “fractions” in the Bundestag for the German “Fraktionen”, for example, can be somewhat puzzling: a British person thinks of a “split” or “schism” whereas the term simply means a “parliamentary group”. And it is even more confusing for Anglophone colleagues when the Germans talk about “diets”, a literal translation from the German “Diäten”, i.e. remuneration for members of parliament. Do they really have such a serious problem with their waistlines? Similarly, when they say they studied for their school-leaving examinations at a “gymnasium” school, which for Germans is the equivalent of a grammar school, English speakers imagine them having their lessons in a sports hall. The Germans, for their part, tend to make unusual associations when French colleagues innocuously refer to a completely chaste meeting as a “rendezvous” or call innocent work colleagues “collaborators”.

The terminology database can be accessed at:

tms.bundestag.de

Language Service

Each year the 13 members of staff of the Language Service of the German Bundestag deal with 2000 translations and around 600 interpreting assignments for Members, committees and the Bundestag Presidium. The bulk of the translating and interpreting work involves German, English, French and Spanish. Since 2006 a terminology database containing more than 60,000 parliamentary terms in German, English and French has been available to everybody on the internet.

The German delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the WEU Assembly

As at June 2006

Head

Joachim Hörster (CDU/CSU)

Deputy head

Dr Wolfgang Wodarg (SPD)

CDU/CSU members

Ulrich Adam
Hubert Deittert
Anke Eymer
Holger Haibach
Joachim Hörster
Eduard Lintner
Ingo Schmitt

CDU/CSU substitutes

Veronika Bellmann
Monika Brüning
Axel E. Fischer
Herbert Frankenhauser
Peter Götz
Jürgen Herrmann
Bernd Heynemann

SPD members

Doris Barnett
Gerd Höfer
Walter Riester
Marlene Rupprecht
Christoph Strässer
Dr Wolfgang Wodarg

SPD substitutes

Kurt Bodewig
Prof. Herta Däubler-Gmelin
Detlef Dzembitzki
Angelika Graf
Johannes Pflug
Dr Hermann Scheer

FDP members

Harald Leibrecht
Sabine Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger

FDP substitutes

Birgit Homburger
Burkhardt Müller-Sönksen

The Left Party members

Hüseyin-Kenan Aydin
Alexander Ulrich

The Left Party substitutes

Paul Schäfer
To be appointed

ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS member

Rainder Steenblock

ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS substitute

Marieluise Beck

The German delegation to the Nato Parliamentary Assembly

As at June 2006

Head

Dr Karl A. Lamers (CDU/CSU)

Deputy head

Markus Meckel (SPD)

CDU/CSU members

Thomas Kossendey

Dr Karl A. Lamers

Ruprecht Polenz

Kurt J. Rossmanith

Anita Schäfer

CDU/CSU substitutes

Ernst-Reinhard Beck

Wolfgang Börnsen

Dr Wolfgang Götzer

Jürgen Herrmann

Robert Hochbaum

Hans Raidel

Bernd Siebert

SPD members

Lothar Ibrügger

Markus Meckel

Ursula Mogg

Andreas Weigel

SPD substitutes

Rainer Arnold

Dr Hans-Peter Bartels

Kurt Bodewig

Jörn Thießen

FDP member

Dr Rainer Stinner

FDP substitutes

Elke Hoff

Dr Werner Hoyer

Hellmut Königshaus

The Left Party member

Paul Schäfer

The Left Party substitute

Heike Hänsel

ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS member

Winfried Nachtwei

ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS

substitute

Kerstin Müller

The German delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE

As at June 2006

Head

Dr h.c. Wolfgang Thierse (SPD)

Deputy head

Willy Wimmer (CDU/CSU)

CDU/CSU members

Ralf Göbel
 Manfred Grund
 Thomas Kossendey
 Hans Raidel
 Willy Wimmer

CDU/CSU substitutes

Monika Brüning
 Hermann Gröhe
 Jens Koeppen
 Sibylle Pfeiffer
 Kurt J. Rossmanith

SPD members

Doris Barnett
 Dr h.c. Wolfgang Thierse
 Hedi Wegener
 Prof. Gert Weisskirchen
 Uta Zapf

SPD substitutes

Uwe Beckmeyer
 Monika Griefahn
 Rolf Kramer
 Johannes Pflug
 Axel Schäfer

FDP member

Michael Link

FDP substitute

Dr. Rainer Stinner

The Left Party member

Prof. Norman Paech

The Left Party substitute

To be appointed

ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS member

Marieluise Beck

ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS substitute

Rainder Steenblock

The German delegation to the IPU

As at June 2006

Head

Dr Norbert Lammert (CDU/CSU)

Deputy head

Monika Griefahn (SPD)

CDU/CSU members

Hans-Joachim Fuchtel

Dr Norbert Lammert

Hans Raidel

CDU/CSU substitutes

Wolfgang Börnsen

Monika Brüning

Maria Eichhorn

Axel Fischer

Dr Michael Fuchs

Hermann Gröhe

Dr Klaus W. Lippold

Dr Georg Nüßlein

Daniela Raab

Dr Andreas Scheuer

Karl-Georg Wellmann

SPD members

Monika Griefahn

Johannes Pflug

SPD substitutes

Doris Barnett

Petra Ernstberger

Angelika Graf

Petra Heß

Angelika Krüger-Leißner

Christoph Strässer

FDP member

Dr Werner Hoyer

FDP substitute

To be appointed

The Left Party member

Bodo Ramelow

ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS member

Josef Philip Winkler

The German delegation to the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly	
Head Hans Raidel (CDU/CSU)	Deputy head Dr Lale Akgün (SPD)
CDU/CSU members Carl-Eduard von Bismarck Hans Raidel	CDU/CSU substitutes Joachim Hörster Dr Andreas Schockenhoff
SPD member Dr Lale Akgün	SPD substitutes Josip Juratovic
FDP substitute Dr Karl Addicks	The Left Party substitute Prof. Hakkı Keskin
	ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS substitute Rainder Steenblock

German delegation to the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference	
Head Franz Thönnes (SPD)	
CDU/CSU members Ulrich Adam Ingbert Liebing	CDU/CSU substitutes Susanne Jaffke Jürgen Klimke
SPD members Franz Thönnes Kurt Bodewig	SPD substitutes Markus Meckel Steffen Reiche
FDP member Dr Christel Happach-Kasan	FDP substitute Christian Ahrendt



Afghanistan



Albania



Algeria



Andorra



Angola



Antigua and Barbuda



Argentina



Armenia



Australia



Austria



Azerbaijan



Bahamas



Bahrain



Bangladesh



Barbados



Belarus



Belgium



Belize



Benin

Executives of the parliamentary friendship groups in the 16th electoral term

Parliamentary Friendship Group for Relations with Arabic-Speaking States in the Middle East

(Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, working group on Palestine)

Chair: Joachim Hörster (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Edelgard Bulmahn (SPD)

Deputy chair: Dr Volker Wissing (FDP)

Deputy chair: Heike Hänsel (The Left Party)

Deputy chair: Priska Hinz (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

Parliamentary Friendship Group for Relations with the ASEAN States

(Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam)

Chair: Dr Klaus W. Lippold (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Holger Ortel (SPD)

Deputy chair: Jürgen Koppelin (FDP)

Deputy chair: Heike Hänsel (The Left Party)

Deputy chair: Margareta Wolf (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

Parliamentary Friendship Group for Relations with Australia and New Zealand (Australia, New Zealand)

Chair: Nina Hauer (SPD)

Deputy chair: Bernd Heynemann (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Birgit Homburger (FDP)

Deputy chair: Sevim Dagdelen (The Left Party)

Deputy chair: Anja Hajduk (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

German–Austrian Parliamentary Friendship Group

Chair: Georg Brunnhuber (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Brunhilde Irber (SPD)

Deputy chair: Franz Schäffler (FDP)

Deputy chair: Wolfgang Nešković (The Left Party)

Deputy chair: Irmingard Schewe–Gerigk (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)



Bhutan



Bolivia



Bosnia and Herzegovina



Botswana



Brazil



Brunei Darussalam



Bulgaria



Burkina Faso



Burundi



Cambodia



Cameroon



Canada



Cape Verde



Central African Republic



Chad



Chile



China



Colombia

Parliamentary Friendship Group for Relations with the Baltic States

(Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania)

Chair: Dr Christel Happach-Kasan (FDP)

Deputy chair: Antje Blumenthal (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Gerd Höfer (SPD)

Deputy chair: Frank Spieth (The Left Party)

Deputy chair: Irmingard Schewe-Gerigk (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

German-Belarusian Parliamentary Friendship Group

Chair: Uta Zapf (SPD)

Deputy chair: Robert Hochbaum (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Uwe Barth (FDP)

Deputy chair: Marieluise Beck (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

Parliamentary Friendship Group for Relations with Belgium and Luxembourg

Chair: Markus Löning (FDP)

Deputy chair: Julia Klöckner (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Achim Großmann (SPD)

Deputy chair: Dr Gesine Lötzsch

Deputy chair: Ulrike Höfken (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

German-Brazilian Parliamentary Friendship Group

Chair: Kurt J. Rossmannith (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Dr Carl-Christian Dressel (SPD)

Deputy chair: Joachim Günther (FDP)

Deputy chair: Alexander Ulrich (The Left Party)

Deputy chair: Bärbel Höhn (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

German-British Parliamentary Friendship Group

Chair: Karl Theodor Freiherr zu Guttenberg (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Ursula Mogg (SPD)

Deputy chair: Carl-Ludwig Thiele (FDP)

Deputy chair: Dr Lukrezia Jochimsen (The Left Party)

Deputy chair: Matthias Berninger (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)



Comoros



Congo



Democratic Republic of the Congo



Cook Islands



Costa Rica



Croatia



Cuba



Cyprus



Czech Republic



Côte d'Ivoire



Denmark



Djibouti



Dominica



Dominican Republic



Ecuador



Egypt



El Salvador



Equatorial Guinea

German–Bulgarian Parliamentary Friendship Group

Chair: Michael Stübgen (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Klaus Uwe Benneter (SPD)

Deputy chair: Michael Link (FDP)

Deputy chair: Roland Claus (The Left Party)

Deputy chair: Undine Kurth (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

German–Canadian Parliamentary Friendship Group

Chair: Klaus–Peter Flosbach (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Dagmar Freitag (SPD)

Deputy chair: Sibylle Laurischk (FDP)

Deputy chair: Sabine Zimmermann (The Left Party)

Deputy chair: Anja Hajduk (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

Parliamentary Friendship Group for Relations with the

States of Central America (Belize, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Panama)

Chair: Wolfgang Gehrcke (The Left Party)

Deputy chair: Hubert Hüppe (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Dr Sascha Raabe (SPD)

Deputy chair: Miriam Größ (FDP)

Deputy chair: Markus Kurth (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

Parliamentary Friendship Group for Relations

with the States of Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan)

Chair: Hedi Wegener (SPD)

Deputy chair: Dr Wolf Bauer (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Patrick Meinhardt (FDP)

Deputy chair: Sabine Zimmermann (The Left Party)

Deputy chair: Birgitt Bender (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

German–Chinese Parliamentary Friendship Group

Chair: Johannes Pflug (SPD)

Deputy chair: Dr Hans–Peter Uhl (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Dr Rainer Stinner (FDP)

Deputy chair: Dr Martina Bunge (The Left Party)

Deputy chair: Hans–Josef Fell (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)



Eritrea



Estonia



Ethiopia



Fiji



Finland



France



Gabon



Gambia



Georgia



Germany



Ghana



Greece



Grenada



Guatemala



Guinea



Guinea-Bissau



Guyana



Haiti



Holy See (Vatican City)

German-Croatian Parliamentary Friendship Group

Chair: Klaus-Peter Willsch (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Johannes Jung (SPD)

Deputy chair: Horst Meierhofer (FDP)

Deputy chair: Rainer Steenblock (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

German-Cypriot Parliamentary Friendship Group

Chair: Dr Dietmar Bartsch (The Left Party)

Deputy chair: Klaus Brähmig (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Dr Lale Akgün (SPD)

Deputy chair: Michael Kauch (FDP)

Deputy chair: Rainer Steenblock (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

German-Czech Parliamentary Friendship Group

Chair: Petra Ernstberger (SPD)

Deputy chair: Klaus Hofbauer (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Heinz-Peter Haustein (FDP)

Deputy chair: Dr Ilja Seifert (The Left Party)

Deputy chair: Elisabeth Scharfenberg (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

Parliamentary Friendship Group for Relations

with the States of East Africa (Burundi, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda)

Chair: Patrick Meinhardt (FDP)

Deputy Chair: Dr Ralf Brauksiepe (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Dr Axel Berg (SPD)

Deputy chair: Sabine Zimmermann (The Left Party)

Deputy chair: Elisabeth Scharfenberg (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

German-Egyptian Parliamentary Friendship Group

Chair: Dr Uschi Eid (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

Deputy chair: Michael Hennrich (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Simone Violka (SPD)

Deputy chair: Marina Schuster (FDP)

Deputy chair: Cornelia Hirsch (The Left Party)



Honduras



Hungary



Iceland



India



Indonesia



Iran



Iraq



Ireland



Israel



Italy



Jamaica



Japan



Jordan



Kazakhstan



Kenya



Kiribati



Democratic People's
Republic of Korea



Republic of Korea

German–French Parliamentary Friendship Group

Chair: Dr Andreas Schockenhoff (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Monika Griefahn (SPD)

Deputy chair: Ernst Burgbacher (FDP)

Deputy chair: Ulrich Maurer (The Left Party)

Deputy chair: Volker Beck (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

German–Greek Parliamentary Friendship Group

Chair: Doris Barnett (SPD)

Deputy chair: Olav Gutting (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Mechthild Dyckmans (FDP)

Deputy chair: Inge Höger (The Left Party)

Deputy chair: Kai Gehring (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

German–Hungarian Parliamentary Friendship Group

Chair: Eckart von Klaeden (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Michael Roth (SPD)

Deputy chair: Jens Ackermann (FDP)

Deputy chair: Lutz Heilmann (The Left Party)

German–Indian Parliamentary Friendship Group

Chair: Sebastian Edathy (SPD)

Deputy chair: Willy Wimmer (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Jörg van Essen (FDP)

Deputy chair: Sabine Zimmermann (The Left Party)

Deputy chair: Josef Philip Winkler (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

German–Iranian Parliamentary Friendship Group

Chair: Dr Rolf Mützenich (SPD)

Deputy chair: Dr Christian Ruck (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Elke Hoff (FDP)

Deputy chair: Heike Hänsel (The Left Party)

Deputy chair: Claudia Roth (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)



Kuwait



Kyrgyzstan



Lao People's
Democratic Republic



Latvia



Lebanon



Lesotho



Liberia



Libyan Arab Jamahiriya



Liechtenstein



Lithuania



Luxembourg



Former Yugoslav
Republic of Macedonia



Madagascar



Malawi



Malaysia



Maldives



Mali



Malta

German-Irish Parliamentary Friendship Group

Chair: Dr Lukrezia Jochimsen (The Left Party)

Deputy chair: Axel E. Fischer (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Marion Caspers-Merk (SPD)

Deputy chair: Ina Lenke (FDP)

Deputy chair: Bärbel Höhn (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

German-Israeli Parliamentary Friendship Group

Chair: Jerzy Montag (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

Deputy chair: Gitta Connemann (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Thomas Oppermann (SPD)

Deputy chair: Dirk Niebel (FDP)

Deputy chair: Jan Korte (The Left Party)

German-Italian Parliamentary Friendship Group

Chair: Ulla Burchardt (SPD)

Deputy chair: Manfred Kolbe (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Daniel Bahr (FDP)

Deputy chair: Dr Lukrezia Jochimsen (The Left Party)

Deputy chair: Wolfgang Wieland (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

German-Japanese Parliamentary Friendship Group

Chair: Horst Friedrich (FDP)

Deputy chair: Thomas Silberhorn (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Jörn Thießen (SPD)

Deputy chair: Cornelia Hirsch (The Left Party)

Deputy chair: Matthias Berninger (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

German-Korean Parliamentary Friendship Group

Chair: Hartmut Koschyk (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Johannes Pflug (SPD)

Deputy chair: Detlef Parr (FDP)

Deputy chair: Dr Petra Sitte (The Left Party)

Deputy chair: Peter Hettlich (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)



Marshall Islands



Mauritania



Mauritius



Mexico



Federated States
of Micronesia



Moldova



Monaco



Mongolia



Montenegro



Morocco



Mozambique



Myanmar



Namibia



Republic of Nauru



Nepal



Netherlands



New Zealand



Nicaragua

Parliamentary Friendship Group for Relations

with the Maghreb States (Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia)

Chair: Hüseyin-Kenan Aydın (The Left Party)

Deputy chair: Hans Raidel (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Ute Kumpf (SPD)

Deputy chair: Patrick Döring (FDP)

Deputy chair: Christine Scheel (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

German-Maltese Parliamentary Friendship Group

Chair: Ernst-Reinhard Beck (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Dieter Grasedieck (SPD)

Deputy chair: Patrick Meinhardt (FDP)

Deputy chair: Silke Stokar von Neuforn (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

German-Mexican Parliamentary Friendship Group

Chair: Lothar Mark (SPD)

Deputy chair: Jürgen Klimke (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Dr Claudia Winterstein (FDP)

Deputy chair: Sevim Dagdelen (The Left Party)

Deputy chair: Cornelia Behm (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

German-Netherlands Parliamentary Friendship Group

Chair: Britta Haßelmann (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

Deputy chair: Jens Spahn (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Dr Hans-Ulrich Krüger (SPD)

Deputy chair: Otto Fricke (FDP)

Deputy chair: Dr Gesine Lötzsch (The Left Party)

German-Nordic Parliamentary Friendship Group

(Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden)

Chair: Franz Thönnies (SPD)

Deputy chair: Gero Storjohann (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Hans-Michael Goldmann (FDP)

Deputy chair: Anna Lührmann (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)



Niger



Nigeria



Niue



Norway



Oman



Pakistan



Palau



Panama



Papua New Guinea



Paraguay



Peru



Philippines



Poland



Portugal



Qatar



Romania



Russian Federation



Rwanda



Samoa

German–Polish Parliamentary Friendship Group

Chair: Markus Meckel (SPD)

Deputy chair: Georg Schirmbeck (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Cornelia Pieper (FDP)

Deputy chair: Cornelia Behm (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

German–Portuguese Parliamentary Friendship Group

Chair: Christian Lange (SPD)

Deputy chair: Marco Wanderwitz (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Heinz Lanfermann (FDP)

Deputy chair: Dr Barbara Höll (The Left Party)

German–Romanian Parliamentary Friendship Group

Chair: Dr h.c. Susanne Kastner (SPD)

Deputy chair: Erich G. Fritz (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Joachim Günther (FDP)

Deputy chair: Krista Sager (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

German–Russian Parliamentary Friendship Group

Chair: Prof. Gert Weisskirchen (SPD)

Deputy chair: Bernhard Kaster (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Harald Leibrecht (FDP)

Deputy chair: Katja Kipping (The Left Party)

Deputy chair: Marieluise Beck (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

Parliamentary Friendship Group for Relations with the SADC States

(Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe)

Chair: Dr Herta Däubler-Gmelin (SPD)

Deputy chair: Maria Eichhorn (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Hans-Joachim Otto (FDP)

Deputy chair: Prof. Norman Paech (The Left Party)

Deputy chair: Winfried Nachtwei (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)



San Marino



São Tomé and Príncipe



Saudi Arabia



Senegal



Serbia



Seychelles



Sierra Leone



Singapore



Slovakia



Slovenia



Solomon Islands



Somalia



South Africa



Spain



Sri Lanka



St. Kitts and Nevis



St. Lucia



St. Vincent and the Grenadines



Sudan

German–Slovak Parliamentary Friendship Group

Chair: Bartholomäus Kalb (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Dieter Garsedieck (SPD)

Deputy chair: Jörg van Essen (FDP)

Deputy chair: Hans-Josef Fell (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

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Deputy chair: Horst Friedrich (FDP)

Deputy chair: Sylvia Kotting-Uhl (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

Parliamentary Friendship Group for Relations with the States of

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Deputy chair: Rainer Steenblock (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

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Deputy chair: Dr Michael Fuchs (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Sebastian Edathy (SPD)

Deputy chair: Ulrike Flach (FDP)

Deputy chair: Prof. Norman Paech (The Left Party)

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South–Eastern Europe (Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia)

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Deputy chair: Peter Weiß (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Dr Christel Happach–Kasan (FDP)

Deputy chair: Wolfgang Nešković (The Left Party)

Deputy chair: Marieluise Beck (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)



Suriname



Swaziland



Sweden



Switzerland



Syrian Arab Republic



Tajikistan



Tanzania



Thailand



Timor-Leste



Togo



Tonga



Trinidad and Tobago



Tunisia



Turkey



Turkmenistan



Tuvalu



Uganda



Ukraine



United Arab Emirates

Parliamentary Friendship Group for Relations with the States of the Southern Caucasus

(Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia)

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Deputy chair: Dr Ole Schröder (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Michael Link (FDP)

Deputy chair: Dr Barbara Höll (The Left Party)

Deputy chair: Rainer Steenblock (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

German-Spanish Parliamentary Friendship Group

Chair: Bodo Ramelow (The Left Party)

Deputy chair: Enak Ferlemann (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Niels Annen (SPD)

Deputy chair: Dr Claudia Winterstein (FDP)

Deputy chair: Cornelia Behm (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

German-Swiss Parliamentary Friendship Group

Chair: Thomas Dörflinger (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Christel Riemann-Hanewinkel (SPD)

Deputy chair: Hartfrid Wolff (FDP)

Deputy chair: Dr Diether Dehm (The Left Party)

Deputy chair: Christine Scheel (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

German-Turkish Parliamentary Friendship Group

Chair: Thomas Kossendey (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Johannes Kahrs (SPD)

Deputy chair: Mechthild Dyckmans (FDP)

Deputy chair: Sevim Dagdelen (The Left Party)

Deputy chair: Claudia Roth (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

German-Ukrainian Parliamentary Friendship Group

Chair: Dr Bärbel Kofler (SPD)

Deputy chair: Hans Michelbach (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Harald Leibrecht (FDP)

Deputy chair: Hans-Kurt Hill (The Left Party)

Deputy chair: Katrin Göring-Eckardt (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)



United Kingdom



United States of America



Uruguay



Uzbekistan



Vanuatu



Venezuela



Viet Nam



Yemen



Zambia



Zimbabwe

German–US Parliamentary Friendship Group

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Deputy chair: Ursula Heinen (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Dr Werner Hoyer (FDP)

Deputy chair: Monika Knoche (The Left Party)

Deputy chair: Alexander Bonde (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

Parliamentary Friendship Group for Relations with the States of West and Central Africa

(Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo/Brazzaville, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea–Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo)

Chair: Hartwig Fischer (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Gabriele Groneberg (SPD)

Deputy chair: Dr Karl Addicks (FDP)

Deputy chair: Hüseyin–Kenan Aydin (The Left Party)

Deputy chair: Dr Uschi Eid (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

Berlin–Taipei Parliamentary Circle of Friends

Chair: Wilhelm Josef Sebastian (CDU/CSU)

Deputy chair: Angelika Krüger–Leißner (SPD)

Deputy chair: Hans–Joachim Otto (FDP)

Deputy chair: Irmingard Schewe–Gerigk (ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS)

Parliamentary friendship representatives in the 16th electoral term

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Dr Rainer Stinner (FDP)

Republic of Moldova: Manfred Grund (CDU/CSU)

Published by
The German Bundestag
Public Relations Division
Platz der Republik 1
11011 Berlin

Coordinated by
Michael Reinold
Public Relations Division

Designed by
Marc Mendelson, Berlin

Edited by
Georgia Rauer, Berlin

Translated by
Language Service of the German
Bundestag in cooperation with
Elizabeth Doyle

Printed by
SDV Saarländische
Druckerei & Verlag GmbH

1st edition 2006

Went to press
15 September 2006

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Berlin 2006
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This brochure is published by the German Bundestag in the framework of its parliamentary public-relations activities. Political parties, parliamentary groups, Members or election candidates may not use its content in their own public-relations activities, particularly those related to electoral canvassing.

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International contacts are important, particularly in politics. But what are parliamentary assemblies and parliamentary friendship groups? How do they help to forge contacts and make politics more transparent? This brochure provides a detailed overview of the work of the Members of the German Bundestag in interparliamentary bodies.

