

This is an original manuscript of a chapter published by Peter Lang in the edited volume *Over the Atlantic: Diplomacy and Paradiplomacy in EU and Latin America* (Astroza Suarez, P. et al., 2023). The final version of the chapter is available at: <https://doi.org/10.3726/b20853>.

Parliamentary diplomacy in practice: the role of the European Parliament delegations in the modernization of the Global Agreement between the European Union and Mexico

Mónica Velasco-Pufleau (European Institute of International Studies, Sweden)

Parliaments today are more than deliberative institutions. They have become relevant world actors by conducting parallel diplomatic relations, or what the literature refers to as “parliamentary diplomacy”.¹ In Stavridis’ words: “As such, parliamentary diplomacy challenges the classic definition of diplomacy, which focuses so tightly on the international role of governments, ministries and other executive agencies”.²

The European Parliament (EP) alone has more than forty standing delegations aiming to maintain and develop its contacts with third countries, regions, and organizations globally.³ Notably, these delegations also enhance the European Union’s (EU) role and visibility around the world, including the values on which it is founded, such as democracy and respect for human rights.⁴

Specifically, nine EP standing delegations exist for maintaining relations with Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries.⁵ The mission, composition, organizational structure and activities of these delegations varies according to their type. The Delegation to the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly (DLAT), for example, contributes to provide a parliamentary dimension to the EU-LAC Bi-regional Strategic Partnership since 2006.⁶

¹ A. Malamud and S. Stavridis, *Parliaments and Parliamentarians as International Actors*, In Reinalda, B. (ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Non-State Actors*, Ashgate, Farnham, 2011, pp. 101-115.

² S. Stavridis, *Conclusions: Parliamentary Diplomacy as a Global Phenomenon*, In S. Stavridis and D. Jančić (eds.), *Parliamentary Diplomacy in European and Global Governance*, Brill-Nijhoff, Leiden, 2017, p. 387.

³ European Parliament (EP), *Decision of 17 April 2019 on the number of interparliamentary delegations, delegations to joint parliamentary committees and delegations to parliamentary cooperation committees and to multilateral parliamentary assemblies*, doc. No. P8_TA(2019)0408, Strasbourg, 2019.

⁴ EP, Conference of Presidents, *Decision on the Implementing provisions governing the work of delegations and missions outside the European Union*, doc. No. PE 422.560/CPG, Brussels, 2015, Article 3(1).

⁵ EP Delegations, *List of delegations by region. Latin American and Caribbean*. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/delegations/en/list/byregion?filter=SOAMER>, last access: 25 June 2022.

⁶ J.J. Fernández Fernández, *La Asamblea parlamentaria Euro-Latinoamericana (EUROLAT) y la dimensión parlamentaria de la Asociación Estratégica Birregional UE-ALC: Evolución y Perspectivas* VI Congreso CEISAL Independencias - Dependencias - Interdependencias, Toulouse, 2010, p. 2.

Contrastingly, other EP delegations for relations with LAC countries have been established in connection with specific EU international agreements. Among these, the Delegation to the EU-Mexico Joint Parliamentary Committee (D-MX) which, together with its Mexican counterpart (a delegation composed of fourteen members of the Mexican Congress), has the role of considering all aspects of EU-Mexico relations.⁷ This primarily includes the implementation of the 1997 “Global Agreement” (GA),⁸ which entered into force in 2000, and the 2008 EU-Mexico Strategic Partnership. To this end, both delegations usually meet twice per year, alternating between Mexico and one of EP’s working places, under the umbrella of the EU-Mexico Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC).⁹ Since its constituent meeting in 2005 up to the writing of this contribution in June 2022, the JPC has held 27 meetings; the last one in Brussels on 3rd February 2020. This meeting took place before the outbreak of SARS-CoV-2 (the virus causing COVID-19 illness) led to lockdowns, travel restrictions, and border closures worldwide. The D-MX also holds independent ordinary meetings in Brussels or Strasbourg on a regular basis, with over eighteen in the last parliamentary term (2014-2019).¹⁰

This contribution aims to shed light on how the D-MX has fulfilled its abovementioned role in practice. Particularly, regarding the process to modernize the GA announced in 2013 within the framework of the first EU-Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) Summit (Santiago de Chile, January 2013).¹¹ Several studies have examined this modernization from inter-governmental or trade perspectives,¹² yet studies using an inter-parliamentarian one are conspicuously lacking.¹³ The present work contributes to fill in this gap in the literature on EU external relations and the EP diplomacy, by providing an in-depth inter-parliamentarian analysis. From a political point of view, this is relevant and timely, especially since the renewed agreement shall be ratified by the EP (and by the parliaments of all EU Member States and some regions, when appropriate)¹⁴ prior to conclusion by the Council of the EU. From the Mexican side, the Senate’s ratification would be also needed.

⁷ EU-Mexico Joint Parliamentary Committee (EU-Mexico JPC), *Rules of Procedure*, doc. No. PE 364.442/BUR/ANN, Strasbourg, 2005, Rule 1.

⁸ *Economic Partnership, Political Coordination and Cooperation Agreement between the European Community and its Member States, of the one part, and the United Mexican States, of the other part*, [2000] OJ L 276/45.

⁹ EU-Mexico JPC, *Rules of Procedure*, cit., Rule 5.

¹⁰ On these meetings, see <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/delegations/en/archives/8/d-mx/home>, last access: 25 June 2022.

¹¹ Council of the EU, *Santiago Declaration*, doc. No. 5747/13, Santiago de Chile, 2013, point 22.

¹² Among others, see L. Ruano, *The “Modernisation” of the Global Agreement between Mexico and the EU*, In A. Mori (ed.), *EU and Latin America: A stronger relationship?*, Ledizioni, Milano, 2018, pp. 56-59; R. Torrent and R. Polanco, *Analysis of the upcoming modernisation of the trade pillar of the European Union-Mexico Global Agreement*, doc. No. PE 534.012, EU, Brussels, 2016.

¹³ On an exception, see M. Velasco-Puffleau, *Parliamentary dialogue and the role of the Joint Parliamentary Committee*, In EU (ed.), *The Modernisation of the European Union-Mexico ‘Global Agreement’*, doc. No. PE534.985, Brussels, 2015, pp. 37-54, 57-59, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2014/534985/EXPO_STU\(2014\)534985_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2014/534985/EXPO_STU(2014)534985_EN.pdf), last access: 25 June 2022.

¹⁴ Although the GA is a “mixed” agreement, the European Commission (EC) has already suggested that the renewed agreement could be split into three parts (a “mixed” Political and Cooperation Agreement, a “EU-only” Free Trade Agreement and a “mixed” Investment Protection Agreement) in a view of its ratification. See M. Banchón, *Entre la UE y México hay un Acuerdo Global que dormita*, Deutsche

In particular, the contribution joins the scholarly debate about the effectiveness of the EP in shaping EU inter-governmental relations with third countries through parliamentary diplomacy.¹⁵ The latter understood here *stricto sensu*, that is as the EP's international relations *per se*.¹⁶ It asks: Has the D-MX been able to shape the GA's modernization process? If so, in which way(s)?

The case under analysis is intriguing for several reasons, including that the GA, along with the 2002 EU-Chile Association Agreement (AA),¹⁷ is the first to be modernized in the Latin America region. Yet, unlike Chile, Mexico is a EU strategic partner. Moreover, Mexico is a country where human rights are severely curtailed,¹⁸ which makes the case conducive to valuable insights on the EP delegations' efforts to uphold respect for human rights worldwide.

To fulfill its purposes, this work is mainly based on documents produced by the EP due to the lack of research on the issue in question. It is divided into five sections. Following this introduction, section two provides a concise historical overview of the EP's parliamentary diplomacy efforts to shape EU's external relations since the 1957 Treaty of Rome that established the European Economic Community (EEC), when, as stated by Giuliana Laschi, a formalized foreign policy did not even exist.¹⁹ Section three addresses the GA's modernization process in a nutshell, including the EP's involvement as a whole institution, that is plenary level. Section four examines the D-MX's role in this process, principally within the context of the EU-Mexico JPC. Finally, conclusions are presented in section five, including avenues for further research.

Welle, 2022, <https://p.dw.com/p/47d75>, last access: 25 June 2022. However, the Mexican Government supports the signature of a single (mixed) agreement at the time of writing. See Cámara de Diputados, *Conferencia internacional: Hacia la Modernización del Acuerdo Global*, Mexico City, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s1eSSYYR-qw>, last access: 25 June 2022. On the division of competences between the EU and its Member States concerning next generation trade and investment agreements, see Court of Justice of the EU, *Opinion 2/15 of the Court (Full Court)*, Luxembourg, 2017, <https://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=190727&doclang=EN>, last access: 25 June 2022.

¹⁵ Among others, see D. Jančić, *The transatlantic connection: Democratizing Euro-American relations through parliamentary liaison*, In S. Stavridis and D. Irrera (eds.), *The European Parliament and its International Relations*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2015, pp. 178-191; S. Stavridis, *Conclusions: The international role and impact of the European Parliament*, In *ibidem*, pp. 294-295; V. Rita Scotti, *The EU-Turkey Joint Parliamentary Committee and Turkey's Accession Process*, In S. Stavridis and D. Jančić (eds.), *Parliamentary Diplomacy in European and Global Governance*, cit., pp. 115-133; M. Velasco-Pufleau, *The Impact of Parliamentary Diplomacy, Civil Society and Human Rights Advocacy on EU Strategic Partners: The Case of Mexico*, In *ibidem*, pp. 134-155.

¹⁶ D. Jančić, *World Diplomacy of the European Parliament*, In *ibidem*, p. 21.

¹⁷ *Agreement establishing an association between the European Community and its Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Chile, of the other part* [2002] OJ L 352/3.

¹⁸ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, *Mexico's relentless wave of human rights violations*, Geneva, 2015, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/newsevents/pages/hcmexicovisit.aspx>, last access: 25 June 2022.

¹⁹ G. Laschi, *Il potere dei senza potere. Il Parlamento europeo e le relazioni esterne della Cee*, In P. Caraffini et al. (eds.), *Il Parlamento europeo e le sue sfide. Dibattiti, proposte e ricerca di consenso*, FrancoAngeli, Milano, 2020, p. 164.

The European Parliament's parliamentary diplomacy efforts to shape European Union's external relations: a historical overview²⁰

Throughout the past six decades, the EP developed a sophisticated system of delegations covering relations with almost all third countries in the world. This holds true despite the fact that the "European Parliamentary Assembly" did not have formal powers in external relations, according to the 1957 Treaty of Rome that established the EEC, aside from a consultation role in the conclusion of AAs.²¹ Within that context, for example, the EP created a first JPC²² with the Hellenic parliament already in 1962 under the first ever AA signed by the EEC with a third country, that was Greece, in 1961.²³ Soon, a second JCP was established with the Turkish parliament in 1965 under the so-called "Ankara Agreement".²⁴ These bodies enabled the EP to participate in the implementation of both international agreements even in the absence of specific prerogatives in this regard,²⁵ in particular by examining the annual reports submitted by the relevant association councils on which the EP issued recommendations.²⁶

Prior to direct elections, the EP established at least seven delegations to maintain regular inter-parliamentary contacts with third countries or groups of countries either within or beyond the umbrella of AAs.²⁷ Considering the geographical scope of this work, the Delegation for relations with Latin America merits mentioning, which participated in the inter-parliamentary conferences initiated with the Latin American Parliament in 1974 before any political dialogue was institutionalized at the bi-regional level.²⁸ Concluded in 2005, these inter-parliamentary conferences gave way to the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly or EUROLAT in 2006, in which the DLAT is currently a party. This shows that the EP has also been a "prime mover" in the EU's external relations,²⁹ whilst showing interest in following developments in these relations.

²⁰ This section is partly based on M. Velasco Pufleau, *La Diplomacia Parlamentaria Euro-Mexicana: Trabajos de la Comisión Parlamentaria Mixta 2005-2011*, PhD dissertation [unpublished], University of Barcelona, 2012.

²¹ See Article 238 du Traité instituant la Communauté Économique Européenne, 1957.

²² In this case, called "*Commission Parlementaire d'Association*" (or Association Parliamentary Committee).

²³ EP, *Résolution sur la création d'une commission parlementaire d'association avec la Grèce*, [1962] OJ P 116/2676.

²⁴ EP, *Résolution tendant à la création d'une Commission parlementaire mixte C.E.E.-Turquie*, [1965] OJ P 96/1703.

²⁵ M. Chauchat, *Le contrôle politique du Parlement Européen sur les exécutifs communautaires*, Librairie Générale de Droit et de Jurisprudence, Paris, 1989, p. 118.

²⁶ Among others, see Conseil d'Association C.E.E.-Turquie, *Premier rapport d'activité du Conseil d'Association à la Commission Parlementaire d'Association (1er décembre 1964 - 31 décembre 1965)*, <http://aei.pitt.edu/42352/1/A5875.pdf>, last access: 25 June 2022.

²⁷ R. Corbett, *The European Parliament's role in EU closer integration*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1998, p. 85.

²⁸ J.A. Sanahuja Perales, *25 años de cooperación parlamentaria entre la Unión Europea y América Latina*, doc. No. PE167.204, Parlamento Europeo, Luxembourg, 1999, p. 135.

²⁹ C. Dri, *The European Parliament and regional cooperation: The case of Latin America*, In S. Stavridis and D. Irrera (eds.), *The European Parliament and its International Relations*, cit., pp. 161-177; S. Stavridis, *Conclusions: The international role and impact of the European Parliament*, In *ibidem*, p. 286.

It is precisely in those remote years that the EP carried out its first contacts with the Mexican Congress.³⁰ However, these contacts were not institutionalized until 1997, leading to the organization of five inter-parliamentary meetings by 2003. Building on this experience, the EU-Mexico JPC was established in 2005.³¹

The first direct EP elections in 1979 were a turning point in the EP's system of delegations. Importantly, because thereafter, the number of delegations increased in an unprecedented way, reaching over twenty.³² Additionally, since they were granted with a specific legal basis in the EP's rules of procedure that incorporated them to the EP's institutional structure as from 1981.³³ Subsequently, decision powers pertaining the creation, numerical composition and general competences of the delegations became responsibility of the Plenary, which adopted a first decision in this regard on 22nd April 1982.³⁴ These internal changes made the EP delegations an essential element of the EP's external relations,³⁵ coming to be perceived by EP members as "[...] one of the most valuable instruments of foreign action that the EP has".³⁶

The changes mentioned above were heavily motivated by the EP's ambition to increase its influence on the EEC's institutional framework, with a view of redressing the widely perceived democratic deficit, as contended by the literature analyzing the EP's role in European integration.³⁷ This included the field of external relations that almost entirely escaped parliamentary oversight due to the EP's extremely limited powers in the matter. In words of a key staff member of the EP dealing with international contacts in the 1970s:

For the EP, it is understood that either at community level or national level, it is the Executive that is competent in directing external relations. That said, it must be equally understood that either at community level or national level, it is the Parliament that controls, sustains and censures the Executive and that it monitors, supports or criticizes the external relations conducted by the Executive.

In the Community, the Commission has powers of initiative, negotiation and management in the field of external relations, in which the Council has the power of decision. The Commission

³⁰ M. Chauchat, *Le contrôle politique du Parlement Européen sur les exécutifs communautaires*, cit., p. 123.

³¹ See M. Velasco-Pufleau, *Parliamentary dialogue and the role of the Joint Parliamentary Committee*, cit., p. 38.

³² On these delegations, see EP, Bureau élargi, *Extrait du procès-verbal no. 210/79 de la réunion du 23 octobre 1979*, doc. No. PE60.637/BUR/extr., Strasbourg, 1979.

³³ See EP, Commission du règlement et des pétitions, *Rapport sur la révision générale du règlement du Parlement européen*, doc. No. 1-926/80, 1981, p. 125.

³⁴ EP, *Decision setting up interparliamentary delegations*, [1982] OJ C 125/113.

³⁵ O. Costa, *Le Parlement européen, assemblée délibérante*, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, Brussels, 2001, p. 221.

³⁶ A. Herranz, *The Inter-parliamentary Delegations of the European Parliament: National and European Priorities at Work*, In M.E. Barbé Izuel et al. (eds.), *The Role of Parliament in European Foreign Policy: Debating on Accountability and Legitimacy*, Oficina D'Informacio del Parlament Europeu, Barcelona, 2005, chapter 5.

³⁷ J.P. Jacqué, *L'évolution du triangle institutionnel communautaire depuis l'élection du Parlement européen au suffrage universel directe*, In P. Manin et al. (coords.), *Mélanges offerts à Pierre-Henri Teitgen*, Pedone, Paris, 1984, pp. 183-184; O. Costa, *Le Parlement européen, assemblée délibérante*, cit., p. 64.

is accountable before the European Parliament to which it reports on all its activities, including external relations. The European Parliament, in turn, must ensure that the external policy decided by the Council and implemented by the Commission clearly expresses the interest of the Community as a whole and of its peoples, before any particular national interest.³⁸

Not surprisingly, the first EP decision on its standing delegations adopted on 22nd April 1982 explicitly established “the provision of parliamentary backing for the EEC’s external policies” as part of their tasks.³⁹ Similarly, the next decision of this kind adopted by the EP in 1984 would partly ground the number and numerical composition of these delegations in “[...] the need to preserve the democratic element in the Community’s external relations by ensuring the direct involvement of the representatives elected by the peoples of Europe”.⁴⁰

Soon after, Mathias Chauchat was one of the first scholars to acknowledge that like EP standing committees, delegations are “[...] important means of political control” at the disposal of the EP in practice in the late 1980s. Fundamentally, he contended that delegations function as “collective research methods” gathering crucial information for the EP to have its own political position on EEC’s external relations, so that it does not solely rely on the information provided by the executive bodies that it tries to control. Thanks to this unique information, he argued, the EP examines and, if appropriate, criticizes the acts carried out by the Executives in foreign policy, thereby exerting political control over them.⁴¹ Three decades later, the notion that “[...] the link between parliamentary diplomacy and the traditional role of parliaments in the *political accountability for foreign and security policies* [...]” continues to be recognized as a main function of the EP’s parliamentary diplomacy by leading scholars in the field.⁴²

However, the function of “parliamentary control of foreign policy” is not the only one that delegations may perform in the EP’s efforts to shape EU’s external relations. Notably, the entry into force of the Treaty of Maastricht in 1993, which established a common foreign and security policy partly with the aim of consolidating and developing the Union’s founding principles (called “values” after the Lisbon Treaty), gave the EP the opportunity to link the work of its delegations to the implementation of this policy. Accordingly, the current provisions governing the activities of EP delegations expressly provide that these delegations shall “[...] contribute to promoting in third countries the values on which the European Union is founded, namely the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law (Article 6 of the Treaty on European Union) (sic)”.⁴³ From a scholarly perspective,

³⁸ T. Junker, *Cinq années de relations interparlementaires Parlement européen - Congrès des États-Unis (1972-1977)*, *Revue du Marché Commun*, no. 205, mars 1977, pp. 121-122 (author’s translation). Also cited in M. Chauchat, *Le contrôle politique du Parlement Européen sur les exécutifs communautaires*, cit., p. 122.

³⁹ EP, *Decision setting up interparliamentary delegations*, cit., point 1(a).

⁴⁰ EP, *Decision concerning the interparliamentary delegations for relations with third countries*, [1984] OJ C 300/50.

⁴¹ M. Chauchat, *Le contrôle politique du Parlement Européen sur les exécutifs communautaires*, cit., pp. 10, 75-76, 139-142.

⁴² S. Stavridis, *Conclusions: Parliamentary Diplomacy as a Global Phenomenon*, cit., p. 375; see also D. Jančić, *World Diplomacy of the European Parliament*, cit.

⁴³ EP, Conference of Presidents, *Decision on the Implementing provisions governing the work of delegations and missions outside the European Union*, cit., Article 3(1).

this value-oriented diplomacy⁴⁴ relates to the function of parliaments acting as “moral tribunes” in international relations, by introducing “[...] important normative elements far from the traditional premises and prescriptions of realism while considering human rights and democratization as components of a more human and moral international system, if only at a discursive level in many cases”.⁴⁵ More specifically, such diplomatic efforts can be related to a democracy promotion function of parliamentary diplomacy. This function may be conducted in various ways, including technical cooperation, socialization processes or acting as “transmission belts” between the executives and civil society actors.⁴⁶

The Global Agreement’s modernization process in a nutshell

As previously noted, the EU and Mexico agreed to explore viable options for updating the GA within the framework of the first EU-CELAC Summit held in Santiago de Chile in January 2013. Many reasons drove this decision, principally market access related ones. Following Cecilia Malmström, EU Commissioner for Trade in those days:

As a bilateral free trade agreement, the EU-Mexico deal was something pioneer. Today almost all countries are negotiating these agreements. Moreover, the nature of these agreements has changed. The kinds of trade deals that the European Union and Mexico are negotiating today are very different to what we agreed on all those years ago. They remove many more types of barriers, making them much more effective at opening markets. [...] We both know that the relationship between our two economies is too important to leave to a free trade agreement from another era. [...] We should be aiming for an EU-Mexico deal that is comparable to our deal with Canada and to what the TTIP [Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership] will become.⁴⁷

As a result, the EU and Mexico agreed in 2013 to establish a joint working group, composed of three sub-groups, to examine the possibilities for modernizing the GA in its three pillars (political dialogue, cooperation and trade). This work led to a joint vision report laying down the aims that modernization should attain, endorsed by the seventh EU-Mexico Summit (Brussels, June 2015) in 2015.⁴⁸

The Council ultimately⁴⁹ authorized the opening of negotiations to modernize the GA in May 2016. A set of factors contributed to the acceleration of the negotiation process regarding the trade pillar. Most notably, the United States protectionist trade policy under the Trump administration (2017-2021) that led to freezing negotiations with the EU on the TTIP; and the

⁴⁴ D. Jančić, *World Diplomacy of the European Parliament*, cit., pp. 29, 39.

⁴⁵ S. Stavridis and I. Fernández Molina, *El Parlamento Europeo y el conflicto de Libia (2011): ¿una tribuna moral eficiente?*, Revista CIDOB d’Afers Internacionals, no. 101, p. 154 (author’s translation).

⁴⁶ S. Stavridis, *Conclusions: Parliamentary Diplomacy as a Global Phenomenon*, cit., p. 380.

⁴⁷ C. Malmström, *EU-Mexico Trade: Modernising our Relations* [speech], Brussels, 2015, https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2015/may/tradoc_153433.pdf, last access: 25 June 2022.

⁴⁸ F. del Río and R. Saavedra Cinta, *Modernización de los capítulos de diálogo político y cooperación del Acuerdo Global México-Unión Europea*, Revista Mexicana de Política Exterior, no. 112, enero-abril 2018, p. 41.

⁴⁹ On the many institutional steps taken by the EC ahead of the opening of negotiations, see G. Grieger, *Modernisation of the trade pillar of the EU-Mexico Global Agreement*, doc. No. PE 608.680, EP Research Service, Brussels, 2020, pp. 8-9.

re-negotiation of the 1992 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to which Mexico was a party.⁵⁰ In this light, the EU and Mexico reached an “agreement in principle” on the new trade pillar in April 2018, formally concluding negotiations in April 2020.⁵¹

Negotiations on the GA’s political dialogue and cooperation pillars also started in 2016, being mainly concluded in November 2017. Among others, strengthening the institutional structure of the new agreement through the fully integration of the EU-Mexico Summit (biennial), the EU-Mexico JPC (biannual)⁵² and civil society participation was agreed.⁵³

The signature of the modernized GA is expected to take place once the translation (into the 24 EU official languages) and legal revision of the outcome of negotiations is concluded, including deciding on its final legal architecture. At the time of writing, the European Commission (EC) supports to split such outcome into three different agreements (*a priori*, a Political and Cooperation Agreement,⁵⁴ a Free Trade Agreement and an Investment Protection Agreement). However, the Mexican Government refuses this approach, instead standing up for signing a single agreement of comprehensive character such as the GA. Both the EU and Mexico have shown political willingness to sign the new deal in 2022 or 2023, but this remains to be seen.⁵⁵

The EP’s involvement as a whole institution (that is, plenary level), in the GA’s modernization process has been rather modest to date. This holds especially true if this modernization is compared with that relating to the EU-Chile AA, within which framework the EP has already adopted a specific document containing recommendations to the Council, the EC and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on the negotiations of the agreement’s trade pillar.⁵⁶ Conversely, the modernization of the GA’s trade pillar has been primarily addressed at plenary level on the basis of a parliamentary question for oral answer to the EC. This question was tabled on behalf of the EP Committee on International Trade (INTA)

⁵⁰ L. Ruano, *The “Modernisation” of the Global Agreement between Mexico and the EU*, cit. In 2020, the NAFTA was replaced by the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement or USMCA.

⁵¹ See G. Grieger, *Modernisation of the trade pillar of the EU-Mexico Global Agreement*, cit., pp. 1, 8-9.

⁵² Unlike other JPCs, such as that created under the EU-Chile AA, the EU-Mexico JPC lacks a binding legal basis in the text of the GA, being established on the basis of a joint declaration annexed to the GA’s Final Act ([2000] OJ L 276/66) that only refers to the advisability of institutionalizing a political dialogue at inter-parliamentary level.

⁵³ See F. del Río and R. Saavedra Cinta, *Modernización de los capítulos de diálogo político y cooperación del Acuerdo Global México-Unión Europea*, cit., pp. 44-45.

⁵⁴ Another name for this agreement could be “Strategic Partnership Agreement”, covering political and cooperation aspects, considering that Mexico is one EU’s strategic partner.

⁵⁵ M. Banchón, *Entre la UE y México hay un Acuerdo Global que dormita*, cit.; Cámara de Diputados, *Conferencia internacional: Hacia la Modernización del Acuerdo Global*, cit.; V. Dombrovskis, *Answer given by the Executive Vice-President Dombrovskis on behalf of the European Commission*, no. E-000567/2022, Brussels, 2022; B. Glynn, *WebStreaming of the AFET meeting of 12 May 2022* [speech], Brussels, 2022, https://multimedia.europarl.europa.eu/en/webstreaming/committee-on-foreign-affairs_20220512-0900-COMMITTEE-AFET, last access: 25 June 2022.

⁵⁶ See EP, *Recommendation of 14 September 2017 to the Council, the Commission and the European External Action Service on the negotiations of the modernisation of the trade pillar of the EU-Chile Association Agreement*, doc. No. P8_TA(2017)0354, Strasbourg, 2017.

in October 2013⁵⁷ and debated in the January 2014 sitting in Strasbourg.⁵⁸ The GA's modernization has also been raised as part of some EP resolutions (e.g., the 2017 Resolution on EU political relations with Latin America and the 2018 Resolution on the Annual report on the implementation of the Common Commercial Policy)⁵⁹ and plenary debates (such as that on the outcome of the December 2020 EU-LAC Ministerial Conference).⁶⁰ Nevertheless, these resolutions and debates are not specific to EU-Mexico relations, neither do they contain a set of specific recommendations on negotiations such as those issued in relation to the EU-Chile AA.

Importantly, the EP will have a key opportunity to discuss the GA's proposed modernization within the framework of its ratification process. The EP cannot amend the proposal, yet still holds the power to reject it, in which case the Council cannot adopt the decision(s) concluding the new agreement(s).⁶¹ Despite the still rather marginal room for the EP's input in foreign policy decision-making, this "right of veto" should not be underestimated, as the EP has already used it in a number of cases, including highly salient international agreements, such as the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement.⁶² In October 2020, for example, the EP also anticipated that it would not ratify the new agreement between the EU and the Southern Common Market (Mercosur) as it currently stands.⁶³

The D-MX and the Global Agreement's modernization process

Historically, the D-MX and its Mexican counterpart, gathered under the umbrella of the JPC, have been very active in monitoring EU-Mexico relations and trying to influence their development in line with the *raison d'être* of these inter-parliamentary bodies.⁶⁴ Accordingly, the two delegations demonstrated a strong interest in the GA's modernization very early in the process, pioneering EP discussions on the issue. The JPC raised this modernization already at its fifteenth meeting (Mexico City and Cuernavaca, May 2013) as part of its evaluation of the GA's implementation during its first 15 years. This meeting was held months before INTA tabled the aforesaid parliamentary question for oral answer to the EC in October 2013. From the beginning, both delegations stood in favor of the GA's modernization, highlighting the need to develop simultaneously and in coherence with the TTIP negotiations to be launched that same year.⁶⁵

⁵⁷ See V. Moreira and G. Sabin Cutaş, *Question for oral answer to the Commission: Modernisation of the trade title of the EU-Mexico Economic Partnership, Political Coordination and Cooperation Agreement*, no. O-000115/2013, Brussels, 2013.

⁵⁸ On the full content of this debate, see https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-7-2014-01-15-ITM-021_EN.html, last access: 25 June 2022.

⁵⁹ G. Grieger, *Modernisation of the trade pillar of the EU-Mexico Global Agreement*, cit., p. 8.

⁶⁰ On the full content of this debate, see https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-9-2021-01-19-ITM-010_EN.html, last access: 25 June 2022.

⁶¹ Article 218 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, consolidated version, 2012.

⁶² D. Jančić, *World Diplomacy of the European Parliament*, cit., pp. 24-26, 39-40.

⁶³ EP, *Resolution of 7 October 2020 on the implementation of the common commercial policy – annual report 2018*, doc. No. P9_TA(2020)0252, Brussels, 2020, point 36.

⁶⁴ See M. Velasco-Puffleau, *Parliamentary dialogue and the role of the Joint Parliamentary Committee*, cit.

⁶⁵ EU-Mexico JPC, *15th Meeting of the EU-Mexico Joint Parliamentary Committee. Joint Declaration*, doc. No. PE446.825, Cuernavaca, 2013, points 6 and 7.

The JPC discussed the GA's modernization in depth as a specific agenda item of its sixteenth meeting (Strasbourg, November 2013) merely six months later, which took place prior to the January 2014 plenary debate of the INTA parliamentary question. The JPC addressed the three pillars of the agreement, showing itself in favor of that the GA's modernization reached all of them, unlike the predominant place of the trade pillar in the process given by the EU and Mexico executives and the EP standing committees.⁶⁶ Within that context, the JPC unequivocally expressed its desire to be regularly informed on the progress made by the aforementioned EU-Mexico joint working group responsible for examining the possibilities for updating the GA.⁶⁷ As part of its firm commitment to participate in the process, the JPC also agreed to request an independent expert study. This study aimed to assess the GA's implementation and proposed recommendations on possible options for its modernization from a parliamentary perspective. Additionally, it examined the JPC's role in fulfilling its mission, including recommendations to strengthen its participation in the GA's modernization process.⁶⁸ The study, eventually commissioned by the EP Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) on the initiative of the then Chair of the D-MX Ricardo Cortés Lastra (Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats – S&D, Spain),⁶⁹ was published in January 2015. This constitutes the first policy input of this nature regarding the GA's modernization in the EP,⁷⁰ reiterating the JPC's (including the D-MX) innovative role in the process within this EU institution. From the sixteenth meeting (Strasbourg, November 2013), the JPC addressed the GA's modernization in all its meetings held until 2020; most of the time, as a specific agenda item for discussion.⁷¹

Furthermore, the JPC showed a special interest in involving and considering points of views outside of parliaments while discussing the renewal of the GA from the outset. To this end and on the initiative of the D-MX, a joint seminar on the GA's modernization and the JPC's role in the negotiation process took place at the aforesaid sixteenth meeting (Strasbourg, November 2013). Different stakeholders from the EU and Mexico participated as speakers, namely representatives of the European External Action Service (EEAS), the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), the Mexican Government and the academic sector as well as an independent expert. Notably, the idea of requesting the independent expert study on the GA's

⁶⁶ EP, Delegation to the EU-Mexico Joint Parliamentary Committee (D-MX), *XVI Reunión de la Comisión Parlamentaria Mixta México-Unión Europea. Declaración Conjunta*, Strasbourg, 2013, point 4.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, point 6.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, point 7; see also EU-Mexico JPC, *17th meeting of the EU-Mexico Joint Parliamentary Committee. Joint Declaration*, doc. No. PE503.026v01-00, Strasbourg, 2014, point 15. The study's first part was written by R. Dominguez and the second one by M. Velasco-Puffleau. See EU (ed.), *The Modernisation of the European Union-Mexico 'Global Agreement'*, cit.

⁶⁹ EP, Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) Enlarged Bureau, *Record of Decisions of 21 January 2014*, Brussels, 2014, pp. 1-2, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/commissions/afet/coordinateurs/01-21/AFET_CORD\(2014\)01-21_XL.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/commissions/afet/coordinateurs/01-21/AFET_CORD(2014)01-21_XL.pdf), last access: 25 June 2022.

⁷⁰ Later, the Committee on International Trade (INTA) commissioned another independent expert study on the modernization of the GA's trade pillar. See R. Torrent and R. Polanco, *Analysis of the upcoming modernisation of the trade pillar of the European Union-Mexico Global Agreement*, cit.

⁷¹ Except from the twentieth (Mexico City and San Miguel de Allende, February 2016), twenty-fourth (Mexico City, February 2018) and twenty-seventh (Brussels, February 2020) JPC meetings. Nevertheless, all the joint declarations of these JPCs referred to the GA's modernization.

modernization resulted from this seminar.⁷² Later, for example, the EESC was again invited to join other JPC meetings, such as that in which José Rodríguez García-Caro, rapporteur of the EESC opinion on the review of the GA,⁷³ participated in Strasbourg in 2015.⁷⁴ In line with his presentation, the joint declaration adopted at the end of the JPC underlined the importance of creating “ [...] a body representing civil society organizations from both parties in order to monitor the Agreement”, which should include representatives from the EESC on the European side.⁷⁵ In particular, the JPC acted as a “transmission belt” between EU and Mexico executives and the EU organized civil society represented by the EESC, to the extent that the JPC joint declarations are meant to be transmitted to such executives. More broadly, this JPC request voiced concerns from Mexican civil society actors, which have called for the establishment of a joint body for civil society participation within EU-Mexico relations for at least two decades.⁷⁶ In fact, the 2015 meeting held in Strasbourg was not the first time that the JPC referred to this body in its joint declarations. References in this regard can be traced back at least to 2010.⁷⁷ In addition, EESC representatives have occasionally appeared at the D-MX ordinary meetings.⁷⁸

The JPC started to adopt recommendations on each pillar of an updated GA as from 2014 within the framework of its seventeenth meeting (Strasbourg, April 2014),⁷⁹ two years before the Council of the EU approved the mandate for negotiations with Mexico. As previously noted, issuing recommendations is one of the oldest competences of JPCs in the EP, which remains valid to date.⁸⁰ In practice, the EU-Mexico JPC includes its recommendations in its joint declarations adopted at the end of each meeting. These recommendations are not binding and shall be supported by the majority of each of the two delegations to be approved.⁸¹

Since that year of 2014, the JPC recommendations have become regular instruments to express viewpoints on the modernization by the D-MX and its Mexican counterpart with a view of shaping its content. In a way, these JPC recommendations have partly filled the discussed gap left by the EP plenary, which has not adopted any text containing specific recommendations on the renewal of the GA to the Council of the EU, the EC or the High Representative of the Union

⁷² EP, D-MX, *Proyecto de Acta. XVI Reunión de la CPM UE-México*, doc. No. PE503.023v00-00, Strasbourg, 2013, pp. 6-8.

⁷³ [2016] OJ C 13/121.

⁷⁴ EP, D-MX, *19th meeting of the EU-Mexico Joint Parliamentary Committee. Minutes of the meetings of 7-9 July 2019*, doc. No. PE543.303v01-00, Strasbourg, 2015, pp. 8-9.

⁷⁵ EU-Mexico JPC, *Joint Declaration. 19th Meeting of the EU-Mexico Joint Parliamentary Committee*, doc. No. PE543.300v01-00, Strasbourg, 2015, point 46.

⁷⁶ Among others, see M. Atilano et al. (eds.), *1er Foro de Diálogo con la Sociedad Civil México-Unión Europea en el Marco del Acuerdo de Asociación Económica, Concertación Política y Cooperación entre la Unión Europea y México (Acuerdo Global). Memoria*, Brussels, 2002.

⁷⁷ See EP, D-MX, *Acta de la reunión de los días 12, 13 y 14 de mayo de 2010*, doc. No. PE432.103v01-00, Sevilla, 2010, Anexo II, point 15bis.

⁷⁸ See M. Appel, *Europa: Impugnan representatividad de ONG mexicanas*, Proceso, 2013, <https://www.proceso.com.mx/internacional/2013/9/20/europa-impugnan-representatividad-de-ong-mexicanas-123671.html>, last access: 25 June 2022.

⁷⁹ See EU-Mexico JPC, *17th meeting of the EU-Mexico Joint Parliamentary Committee. Joint Declaration*, cit.

⁸⁰ On the JPC’s power to put forward recommendations, see EU-Mexico JPC, *Rules of Procedure*, cit., Rule 4.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, Rule 4(2).

for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to date, despite it having the right to do so.⁸² The absence of these plenary recommendations is regrettable, since they are one of the few means available for the EP to state its political position and try to exert influence on EU international agreements before their conclusion by the Council. As previously highlighted, even if the aforesaid power of consent (which enables the EP to approve or reject certain EU international agreements) gives the EP a right of veto on such agreements, the institution cannot amend the text.⁸³ Moreover, the EP does not directly partake in the drafting and approval of negotiating directives or negotiations as such; it is only informed during the procedure.⁸⁴ This makes the recommendations issued by the JPC highly valuable in the GA's modernization process to date.

During the inter-governmental negotiations, a number of JPC recommendations on the content of an updated GA appeared to be taken into account,⁸⁵ for example providing the JPC with a clear legal basis directly in the text of the agreement, creating institutionalized mechanisms for civil society participation, and incorporating strong and extensive provisions relating to sustainable development into the new trade pillar.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, it is difficult to assert whether these recommendations were actually accepted because of the JPC's influence, and the degree to which other factors accounted for their acceptance.⁸⁷ Taking as a sample the three recommendations mentioned, for instance, it cannot be ignored that all of them were aligned with EU existing policies and practices shaping contractual relations with third countries, making their implementation rather simple and even desirable for EU negotiators to update the GA in accordance with these policies and practices.

In particular, engaging in face-to-face dialogue with representatives from the executive bodies of the EU and Mexico has been at the core of the D-MX's individual role in the GA's modernization. Notably, these encounters have facilitated the D-MX to gather first-hand information on the inter-governmental process, which *a priori* should be reported to EP relevant committees (and the EP plenary, upon request) when the encounters take place within the framework of JPC meetings.⁸⁸ These encounters have additionally enabled D-MX members belonging to different EP political groups to question and express point of views on the actions

⁸² See EP, *Rules of Procedure 9th parliamentary term*, September 2021, Article 114(4).

⁸³ At the most, the EP committee responsible for the recommendation to approve or reject the proposed legally binding act may “[...] if necessary, table a report, including a motion for a non-legislative resolution setting out the reasons why Parliament should give or refuse its consent and, where appropriate, making recommendations for the *implementation* of the proposed act”. Ibidem, Article 105(2), emphasis added. It remains to be seen whether this will be applied to the outcome of the negotiations to renew the GA.

⁸⁴ D. Jančić, *World Diplomacy of the European Parliament*, cit., p. 26.

⁸⁵ See F. del Río and R. Saavedra Cinta, *Modernización de los capítulos de diálogo político y cooperación del Acuerdo Global México-Unión Europea*, cit., pp. 44-45; G. Grieger, *Modernisation of the trade pillar of the EU-Mexico Global Agreement*, cit., p. 10.

⁸⁶ Among others, see EU-Mexico JPC, *Joint Declaration. 19th Meeting of the EU-Mexico Joint Parliamentary Committee*, cit., points 12, 45-46; EU-Mexico JPC, *Joint Declaration. 20th Meeting of the EU-Mexico Joint Parliamentary Committee*, doc. No. PE543.310v01-00, Mexico City and San Miguel de Allende, 2016, points 5, 23; EU-Mexico JPC, *Joint Declaration. 21st Meeting of the EU-Mexico Joint Parliamentary Committee*, doc. No. PE543.318v01-00, Brussels, 2016, points 25-26, 36.

⁸⁷ On this issue on the literature, see S. Stavridis, *Conclusions: The international role and impact of the European Parliament*, cit., p. 294.

⁸⁸ EP, Conference of Presidents, *Decision on the Implementing provisions governing the work of delegations and missions outside the European Union*, cit., Articles 18(1)(2) and 19(2)(3).

undertaken by the EU and Mexico, contributing to exert parliamentary oversight over them. During the eighth parliamentary term (2014-2019), for example, the D-MX met in Mexico with representatives from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Economy, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fisheries and Food.⁸⁹ In Europe, it held over eight parliamentary exchanges of views with the EEAS, the EC Directorate-General for Trade (DG Trade) and/or Mexico's Mission to the EU as part of its ordinary meetings in Brussels and Strasbourg.⁹⁰ Furthermore, it participated in the organization of a public audience where the then Commissioner on Trade, Cecilia Malmström, was a speaker; alongside representatives of the EEAS, the EP and the business sector.⁹¹ More broadly, the D-MX members were also debriefed on the GA's modernization within the framework of their work in other EP delegations, such as the DLAT. The ordinary meeting held in March 2018, in which Cecilia Malmström also took part, illustrates this excellently.⁹²

Encounters between the D-MX and officials from the EU and Mexico have continued in the ongoing ninth parliamentary term (2019-2024). So far, for example, the D-MX has met with representatives from the EEAS, the DG Trade, the 2021 Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the EU and Mexico's Mission to the EU in Europe.⁹³ Besides, some D-MX members met with Mexican officials as part of a small delegation that visited the country in October 2021 with a view to fostering inter-parliamentary relations and exploring positions on the ratification of the renewed GA. Massimiliano Smeriglio (S&D, Italy), the Chair of the D-MX at the time of writing, led such delegation.⁹⁴ The GA's modernization has also been addressed within the AFET and INTA's parliamentary activity in which some D-MX members participated.⁹⁵

In the same vein, EU and Mexican representatives have appeared before the JPC, which has the right to invite them to attend and speak at its meetings.⁹⁶ The case of the joint seminar held at the sixteenth meeting (Strasbourg, November 2013) has been already mentioned in this work.

⁸⁹ On examples of these meetings, see EP, D-MX, *Draft Minutes. 18th Meeting of the EU-Mexico JPC 18-20 February 2015*, doc. No. EP/503.036, Mexico City, 2015; T. Jiménez Becerril, *Informe de Misión a raíz de la XXII Reunión de la Comisión Parlamentaria Mixta México-UE y las reuniones conjuntas con la Delegación de la Comisión de Comercio Internacional*, doc. No. PE543.334v01-00, Brussels, 2017.

⁹⁰ On examples of these meetings, see EP, D-MX, *Minutes of the meeting of 21 April 2016*, doc. No. PE543.313v01-00, Brussels, 2016; EP, D-MX, *Minutes of the meeting of 7 July 2016*, doc. No. PE543.315v01-00, Strasbourg, 2016.

⁹¹ Redacción, *La UE insiste en "oportunidad" de cerrar cuanto antes el acuerdo con México*, La Vanguardia, 2017, <https://www.lavanguardia.com/politica/20171018/432168203105/la-ue-insiste-en-oportunidad-de-cerrar-cuanto-antes-el-acuerdo-con-mexico.html>, last access: 25 June 2022.

⁹² EP, Delegation to the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly (DLAT), *Acta de la reunión del 14 de marzo de 2018*, doc. No. PE581.885v01-00, Strasbourg, 2018, pp. 2-3.

⁹³ On an example, see EP, D-MX, *Draft Agenda. Semi-remote meeting 18 March 2021*, doc. No. PE611.583v01-00, Brussels, 2021.

⁹⁴ EP, AFET, *Eurodiputados viajan a México para fortalecer la diplomacia parlamentaria*, Brussels, 2021, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/es/press-room/20211026IPR15801/eurodiputados-viajan-a-mexico-para-fortalecer-la-diplomacia-parlamentaria>, last access: 25 June 2022.

⁹⁵ On examples of these meetings, see EP, AFET, *Minutes of the Meeting of 22 and 23 February 2021*, doc. No. PE689.580v02-00, Brussels, 2021, p. 3; EP, AFET, *Draft Agenda. Meeting 11 May and 12 May 2022*, doc. No. PE731.736v02-00, Brussels, 2022; EP, INTA, *Draft Agenda. Meeting 24 January and 25 January 2022*, doc. No. 703.246v01-00, Brussels, 2022.

⁹⁶ EU-Mexico JPC, *Rules of Procedure*, cit., Rule 6.

Other examples include the twenty-fifth (Brussels, July 2018) and the twenty-sixth (Mexico City, February 2019) meetings, both held during the eighth parliamentary term (2014-2019).⁹⁷ It should not go unnoticed, however, that members of the D-MX or its Mexican counterpart were not invited to any negotiating round or meeting of the joint working group assigned to analyze options for the GA's modernization so that they could state parliamentary positions. This also holds true for meetings of the joint bodies responsible for the GA's implementation (this is the EU-Mexico Joint Council and the EU-Mexico Joint Committee), regardless of the many calls made by the JPC in this regard over time.⁹⁸ Unlike other JPCs, the JPC does not receive an annual report on the functioning and progress of the GA by the EU and Mexico executives either.⁹⁹

Moreover, the D-MX has actively monitored human rights in Mexico during the GA's modernization process, especially in light of the precarious situation and the EP's engagement to uphold these rights worldwide, including through its delegations.¹⁰⁰ Within that context, the D-MX has extensively discussed the issue with its parliamentary counterpart and Mexican and European officials in both sides of the Atlantic.¹⁰¹ It has also met with a wide range of human rights organizations and victims of human rights violations in Mexico, acting (again) as a "transmission belt" of non-state actors' concerns vis-à-vis the EU and Mexico executives. The JPC joint declaration of the eighteenth meeting (Mexico City, February 2015) offers an outstanding example of such communicative function performed by the D-MX; in this case, with the support of its Mexican counterpart.¹⁰² Likewise, these concerns have been voiced into the EP parliamentary activity, especially that of standing (sub-)committees, with rather remarkable results.¹⁰³ The D-MX was also joined by an *ad hoc* delegation from the EP Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI) that visited Mexico in February 2016, demonstrating

⁹⁷ See EP, D-MX, *Acta de la reunión de los días 11 y 12 de julio de 2018*, doc. No. PE611.563v01-00, Brussels, 2018, pp. 4-5; EP, D-MX, *Acta de la reunión de los días 7 y 8 de febrero de 2019*, doc. No. PE611.565v01-00, Mexico City, 2019, pp. 3-4.

⁹⁸ Among others, see EP, D-MX, *XVI Reunión de la Comisión Parlamentaria Mixta México-Unión Europea. Declaración Conjunta*, cit., point 29; EP, D-MX, *Draft Minutes. 18th Meeting of the EU-Mexico JPC 18-20 February 2015*, cit., annex Joint Declaration, point 61.

⁹⁹ On an example, see European Economic Area Joint Parliamentary Committee, *Resolution adopted pursuant to Rules 11 and 13 of the Rules of Procedure on 13 March 2019, Strasbourg, France, on the Annual Report of the EEA Joint Committee on the Functioning of the EEA Agreement in 2018*, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/162246/ResolutionontheEEAJointCommitteAnnualReport2018\(final\).pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/162246/ResolutionontheEEAJointCommitteAnnualReport2018(final).pdf), last access: 25 June 2022.

¹⁰⁰ Among others, see L. Feliu and F. Serra, *The European Union as a 'normative power' and the normative voice of the European Parliament*, In S. Stavridis and D. Irrera (eds.), *The European Parliament and its International Relations*, cit., pp. 18-34.

¹⁰¹ Among others, see EP, D-MX, *Draft Minutes. 18th Meeting of the EU-Mexico JPC 18-20 February 2015*, cit.; T. Jiménez Becerril, *Informe de Misión a raíz de la XX Reunión de la Comisión Parlamentaria Mixta México-UE y las reuniones conjuntas con la Delegación de la subcomisión de Derechos Humanos*, doc. No. PE543.312v01-00, Brussels, 2016. On an example in the EU, see EP, D-MX, *Minutes of the meeting of 23 October 2014*, doc. No. PE503.039v01-00, Strasbourg, 2014.

¹⁰² See EP, D-MX, *Draft Minutes. 18th Meeting of the EU-Mexico JPC 18-20 February 2015*, cit., annex Joint Declaration, points 23-24.

¹⁰³ Among others, see *Letter sent by Elena Valenciano, Chairwoman of DROI, to Andrew Stanley, Head of the EU Delegation to Mexico*, dated 9 March 2015, doc. No. EXPO-A-DROI-D(2015)9673.

further collaboration ties between EP delegations and standing (sub-)committees when human rights are at stake.¹⁰⁴

But far from acting as a unified body, the D-MX members have adopted different positions in relation to the GA's modernization and the precarious human rights situation in Mexico, aligned with those of their political groups. One case in particular brought to light these divisions, known as the "Ayotzinapa case", involving the disappearance and murder of unarmed civilians with the participation of state forces in the State of Guerrero (Mexico) in September 2014.¹⁰⁵ On the one hand were those, such as the S&D and the Group of the European People's Party (EPP), which supported the modernization to help the country overcome its human rights challenges. Contrarily were those, such as the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA) and the Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL) that suggested to freeze the process.¹⁰⁶

Although all the EP political groups mentioned above seem to have ended up by supporting the renewal of the GA over time, it remains to be seen whether and to what extent the specific positions of these (and other) groups regarding human rights in Mexico will have an impact on the ratification of the new agreement. For example, some D-MX members belonging to the Greens/EFA expressed that they would only ratify the agreement under certain conditions, including strengthening mechanisms to enforce the human rights clause contained in the GA.¹⁰⁷ Conversely, Massimiliano Smeriglio (S&D, Italy), as with other chairs of the D-MX in the past (especially, Teresa Jiménez-Becerril, EPP, Spain) strongly supports the modernization in line with the majoritarian position of the EP. Accordingly, he already publicly encouraged both the Mexican Senate and the EP to "[...] ratify the agreement with the broadest support and with the greatest celerity so that the new agreement can enter into force as soon as possible" together with his Mexican peer at the JPC.¹⁰⁸

Finally, besides human rights issues, the D-MX's involvement in the GA's modernization was heavily shaped by Donald Trump's rise to the United States presidency, especially in the last years of the eighth parliamentary term (2014-2019). On the one hand, the D-MX members showed solidarity with Mexico considering Trump's constant attacks, including the introduction of increasingly restrictive policies towards migrants and asylum seekers, alongside the expansion of the border wall between both countries.¹⁰⁹ On the other hand, the protectionist

¹⁰⁴ See E. Tournier, *Human Rights Delegation to Mexico and Guatemala*, EP Press service, 2016, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20160212IPR14154/human-rights-delegation-to-mexico-and-guatemala>, last access: 25 June 2022.

¹⁰⁵ On this case, see the three reports issued by the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts (GIEI by its Spanish acronym) available at <https://www.oas.org/en/iachr/activities/giei.asp>, <https://serapaz.org.mx/informe-3-giei-caso-ayotzinapa/>, last access: 25 June 2022.

¹⁰⁶ See M. Velasco-Puffleau, *The Impact of Parliamentary Diplomacy, Civil Society and Human Rights Advocacy on EU Strategic Partners: The Case of Mexico*, cit., pp. 148-149.

¹⁰⁷ Among others, see EP, D-MX, *XXIV Reunión de la Comisión Parlamentaria Mixta UE-México. Acta*, doc. No. PE611559v01-00, Mexico City, 2018, p. 6.

¹⁰⁸ C. Hernández Mora and M. Smeriglio, *Declaration by the Co-Chairs of the EU-Mexico JPC on the conclusion of the Global Agreement*, doc. No. PE611.552, Brussels, 2020.

¹⁰⁹ Among others, see European People's Party (EPP), *Los eurodiputados del PP expresan su respaldo a México ante los ataques de Trump*, Brussels, 2017, <https://www.eppgroup.eu/es/como-trabajamos/con-los-paises-de-la-ue/espana/noticias/eurodiputados-pp-respaldan-a-mexico-ante->

trade policy of Trump's presidency gave momentum to the EU-Mexico new trade deal within the D-MX members, fostering closer collaboration with INTA. Accordingly, the D-MX was joined by a first INTA ad hoc delegation to Mexico¹¹⁰ during its mission to participate in the twenty-second JPC (Mérida, February 2017). Resulting from this JPC, both the D-MX and its Mexican counterpart expressly welcomed the EU and Mexico's agreement to speed up their trade negotiations.¹¹¹ On that occasion, Sorin Moisă (S&D, Romania), then INTA standing rapporteur for Mexico, served as EP guest rapporteur for the topic related to the GA's modernization.¹¹² This was the first time that an INTA standing rapporteur for Mexico participated as a EP main speaker on this issue at the JPC.¹¹³ Later, for example, Inmaculada Rodríguez-Piñero (S&D, Spain), current INTA standing rapporteur for Mexico, also served as EP rapporteur on the ratification process of the modernized GA at the twenty-fifth JPC (Brussels, July 2018),¹¹⁴ following the aforementioned "Agreement in principle" on the renewed trade pillar reached by the EU and Mexico in April 2018.

Nevertheless, the D-MX faces serious challenges to continue its work under the JPC following the last twenty-seventh meeting held in Brussels in February 2020. The reasons behind this include the COVID-19 pandemic and organizational issues,¹¹⁵ to name but a few. The fact is that no JPC meeting has taken place in over two years, and even the last one was highly criticized by different observers.¹¹⁶ At the time of writing, the long overdue twenty-eighth JPC is expected to take place in the first half of 2022,¹¹⁷ although by remote participation only, considering that the aforementioned small delegation led by Massimiliano Smeriglio (S&D, Italy) visited Mexico in 2021.¹¹⁸ Following the twenty-eighth JPC, the next (face-to-face) JPC meeting should take place in one of the EP's places of work, according to the EP Conference of Presidents.¹¹⁹ However, as with the official signature of the modernized GA in 2022 or 2023,

ataques-de-trump, last access: 25 June 2022; EP, D-MX. *Acta de la Reunión del 16 de febrero de 2017*, doc. No. PE543.332v01-00, Strasbourg, 2017.

¹¹⁰ EP, INTA, *Mission report following the ad-hoc delegation to Mexico (Mexico City) from 20 to 22 February 2017*, doc. No. PE599.859v01-00, Brussels, 2017, p. 2.

¹¹¹ T. Jiménez Becerril, *Informe de Misión a raíz de la XXII Reunión de la Comisión Parlamentaria Mixta México-UE y las reuniones conjuntas con la Delegación de la Comisión de Comercio Internacional*, cit., annex Joint Declaration, point 56.

¹¹² See T. Jiménez Becerril, *ibidem*, pp. 15-16.

¹¹³ Previously, this INTA rapporteur had debriefed the D-MX on the modernization in the EP's working places at least on two occasions. See EP, D-MX, *Minutes of the meeting of 21 May 2015*, doc. No. PE543.296v02-00, Strasbourg, 2015, p. 2; EP, D-MX, *Minutes of the meeting of 7 July 2016*, cit., p. 2.

¹¹⁴ See EP, D-MX, *Acta de la reunión de los días 11 y 12 de julio de 2018*, cit., p. 4.

¹¹⁵ Among others, see EP, Conference of Presidents, *Minutes of the ordinary meeting of Wednesday 12 January 2022*, doc. No. PE 700.194/CPG, Brussels, 2022, p. 53.

¹¹⁶ See M. Appel, *La 'súper aburrida' (sic) reunión entre legisladores mexicanos y europeos*, Proceso, 2020, <https://www.proceso.com.mx/opinion/2020/2/7/la-super-aburrida-reunion-entre-legisladores-mexicanos-europeos-238236.html>, last access: 25 June 2022.

¹¹⁷ By the end of June 2022, a formal EU-Mexico JPC has not taken place. Instead, a number of D-MX members has only welcomed three members of the Mexican Senate at a "joint meeting" (to paraphrase the Secretariat of the D-MX) in the EP on 13 June 2022. EP, D-MX, *Incoming delegation visit from the Congress of the United Mexican States*, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/delegations/en/d-mx/activities/inter-parliamentary>, last access: 25 June 2022.

¹¹⁸ In fact, the EP Conference of Presidents originally authorized this delegation to participate in the twenty-eighth JPC in Mexico, but this JPC did not occur. See Conference of Presidents, *Minutes of the ordinary meeting of Wednesday 12 January 2022*, cit., p. 53.

¹¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

all the former remains to be seen. Meanwhile, INTA continues to invest resources to follow the ratification process of the renewed GA's trade pillar in Mexico in view of its role on the consent. Recently, for example, a new *ad hoc* delegation from this EP committee visited the country in February of this year.¹²⁰

Conclusions

This work shed light on the EP delegations' role in the modernization of EU international agreements, thereby advancing the literature on EU external relations and EP diplomacy. It joins the scholarly debate about the effectiveness of the EP in shaping EU inter-governmental relations through parliamentary diplomacy, with a focus on the renewal of the GA between the EU and Mexico. The findings allow for some conclusions to be drawn both regarding the EU-Mexico case and (the EP) parliamentary diplomacy in general.

Overall, the D-MX has been very active in trying to influence the GA's modernization from a parliamentary perspective within and beyond the EP institutional framework, showing that standing delegations continue to be important means for the EP to participate in the development of EU's external relations to date. Remarkably, the D-MX enabled (inter-)parliamentary (May 2013) and multi-stakeholder (November 2013) discussions and provided expert independent analysis (January 2015) prior to any other EP body, voicing a wide range of viewpoints outside the executive branch into the modernization process in collaboration with its Mexican counterpart.

Within that context, the D-MX proved to be particularly effective in exerting one of the classic JPC's competences in the EP together with its parliamentary peer, which is issuing recommendations to executive bodies of the EU and the third country concerned. While some of these recommendations seem to have been adopted during the inter-governmental negotiations to update the GA, more research is needed to assess whether and to what extent the (inter-)parliamentary input decisively accounted for this outcome. This confirms that the evaluation of the impact of parliamentary diplomacy on international relations remains problematic,¹²¹ meriting further attention in the literature. In this case, such recommendations were especially relevant since they partly filled in the gap left by the EP plenary in this regard. The latter poses an interesting research question: Are standing delegations carrying out tasks in practice that should rather be performed by the plenary sitting in the field of EU's external relations?

Additionally, the D-MX exerted parliamentary oversight through frequent engagement in face-to-face dialogue with representatives of the EU and Mexico executives, thus allowing EP members to convey positions in a direct way, besides gathering first-hand information on the process conducted by these executives. The same holds true for members of the Mexican Congress when encounters with the EU and Mexico executives took place under the umbrella of the JPC. In this way, the D-MX facilitated the enhancement of democratic practices in both

¹²⁰ Ibidem, p. 28. See also EP, INTA, *Mission report following the INTA mission to Mexico City, Mexico, from 21 to 25 February 2022*, doc. No. PE729.860v02-00, Brussels, 2022.

¹²¹ See S. Stavridis, *Conclusions: The international role and impact of the European Parliament*, cit., p. 294.

sides of the Atlantic to some extent. This is in line with the key functions of parliamentary diplomacy identified by the literature, to which this work already referred. More broadly, this shows that standing delegations do contribute to promote EU's founding values as the own EP has envisaged, not only in third countries but in the EU as well. Nevertheless, there are still aspects that may be strengthened in the executive-parliamentary relationship, such as the participation of JPC members in EU-Mexico inter-governmental meetings, even if only as observers. Namely, the invitation to the EP chairs of EUROLAT and the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, among others, to attend the Berlin ministerial conference between the EU and LAC countries held in December 2020 serves as an important example in this regard.¹²²

Closely related to the previous point, the D-MX was also crucial in providing regular human rights inputs into the modernization process, both at (inter-)governmental and (inter-)parliamentary levels, due to its numerous meetings with human rights organizations and victims of human rights violations in Mexico. In this way, it acted as a "transmission belt", while engaging in human rights promotion in Mexico. Within that context, the D-MX showed a plurality of positions, which may shape the ratification of the GA.

Finally, the present analysis highlighted that the D-MX closely collaborated with EP standing committees to perform its mission of examining EU-Mexico relations, including the GA's modernization. Yet, while some of these committees (e.g., INTA) continue to play a relevant role in the process, the D-MX struggles to carry out its work under the umbrella of the JPC. This has been partly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but also to recent organizational issues. In this respect, future research should further examine the influence of structural and agency-driven factors on the development of parliamentary diplomacy, including why some parliamentary diplomacy actors have been more resilient to the pandemic-induced constraints than others and how to improve resilience of these actors in times of crises in general.

¹²² See J. Borrell Fontelles, *Debate - Enhancing EU's external action in Latin America and the Caribbean following the latest EU-LAC ministerial conference* [speech], Brussels, 2021, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-9-2021-01-19-ITM-010_EN.html, last access: 25 June 2022.