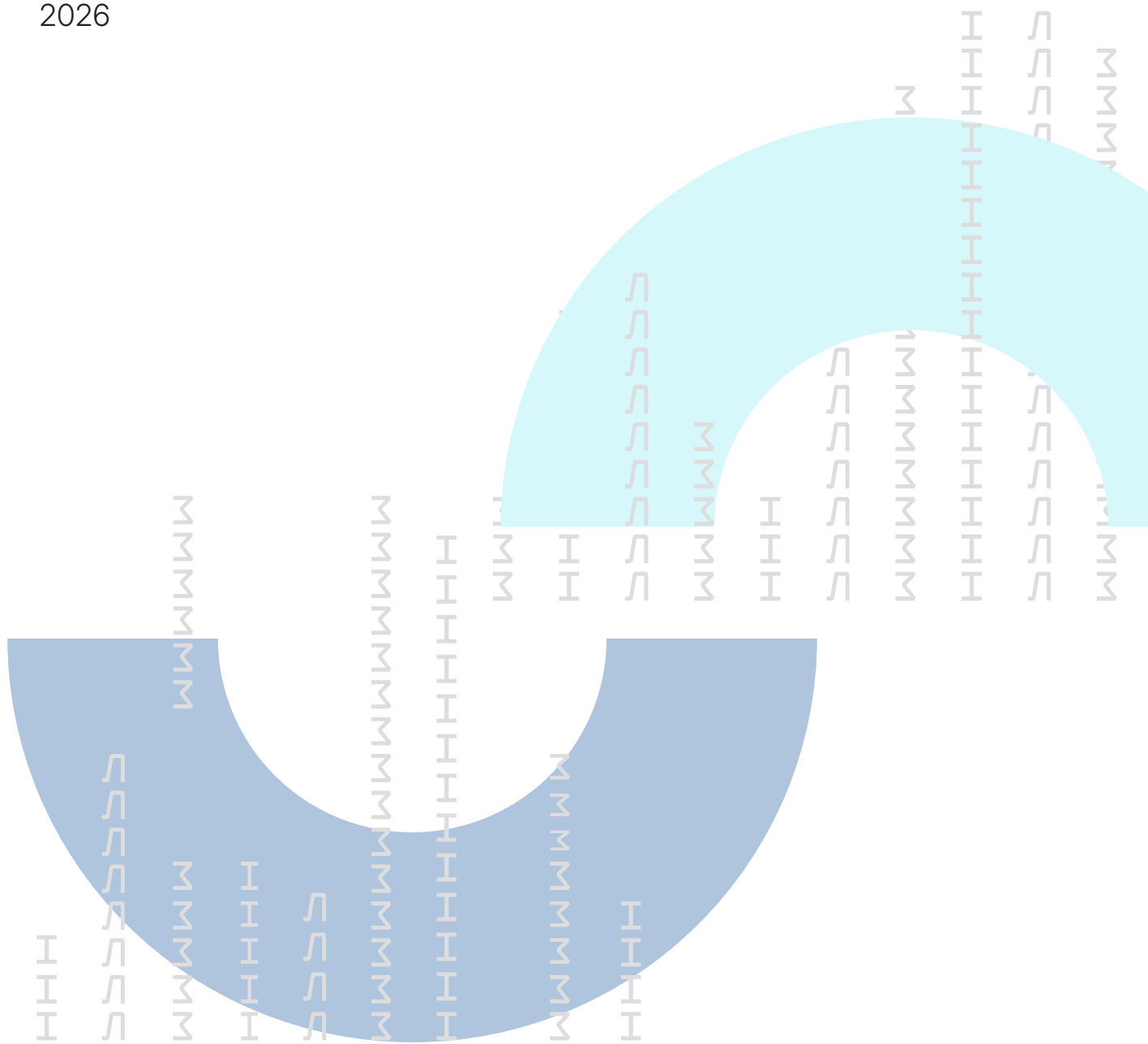


A Study of the Functioning of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine's Interparliamentary Relations Groups

2026



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Foreword by Oleksandr Merezhko,

Chair of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine
Committee on Foreign Policy and
Interparliamentary Cooperation

Parliamentary diplomacy is a unique instrument that enables the state to broaden its scope for political manoeuvre by engaging dozens of elected representatives in advocating and lobbying for Ukraine's interests worldwide. MPs ensure Ukraine's presence on global and local platforms, ranging from the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to the Parliamentary Assembly of La Francophonie and countries as distant as Mozambique or Uruguay. The role of parliamentary diplomacy can hardly be overstated in the context of the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Through MPs' activity on the international stage, Ukraine's voice has gained friends and support in parliaments on every continent, in countries both large and small. Parliamentarians' distinctive diplomatic capacity, grounded in shared values, enthusiasm for engaging in international relations and flexibility on political issues, helps strengthen the state's position and advance democracy worldwide.

Interparliamentary relations groups occupy an important place within the broader framework of parliamentary diplomacy, as they bring together like-minded people, create additional channels of communication and help identify genuine allies and reliable partners. The number of interparliamentary relations groups in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine of the ninth convocation continues to grow each year, demonstrating Ukraine's enduring interest in the world and the world's interest in Ukraine. Through these groups, Ukrainian parliamentarians continue, in concert with the diplomacy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to establish new contacts and expand the coalition supporting Ukraine in the Global South. Despite the achievements and accumulated experience of interparliamentary relations groups, their functioning continues to face a number of challenges related to material, human and financial resources.

This study by the Agency for Legislative Initiatives **presents, for the first time, a comprehensive** picture of how interparliamentary relations groups operate. It is highly valuable and timely, as it provides an extensive account of the experience and practices developed by groups in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine of the ninth convocation, including good practices, stories of success and failure and systemic shortcomings and difficulties. For MPs of the ninth convocation, it may serve as a basis for reflection and prompt an in-depth discussion of the role of parliamentary diplomacy and interparliamentary relations groups, stronger coordination, exchange of experience and responses to existing challenges. For future convocations, the study will have practical value as a guide to developing interparliamentary cooperation. The experience collected and analysed will help preserve institutional memory and draw attention to problems affecting the operation of interparliamentary relations groups.



Foreword by Ivanna Klympush-Tsintsadze,

Chair of the Verkhovna Rada
of Ukraine Committee on Ukraine's Integration
into the European Union

Parliamentary diplomacy is one of the democratic instruments through which Ukraine not only defends its interests internationally but also affirms that it belongs to the European political community. It is effective where the task is not merely to reiterate the state's official position but to find the right tone in dialogue with partners, dispel doubts and influence decisions needed by Ukraine. During the full-scale war, the quality of this work directly affects whether we can sustain our partners' attention to Ukraine, explain our needs, counter Russian narratives and safeguard the international support already secured. In this context, interparliamentary relations groups are an important channel of communication between the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine and the parliaments of other states.

On Ukraine's path towards membership of the European Union (EU), interparliamentary relations groups can become a genuine channel of influence. They make it possible to maintain a continuous political dialogue with EU Member States, explain Ukraine's position and exchange experience and good practices in implementing EU decisions. Interparliamentary relations groups operate alongside other formats, including intercommittee cooperation, official delegations and parliamentary assemblies. Unlike these more institutionalised formats, however, both the work and effectiveness of interparliamentary relations groups depend on the initiative of their members, their ability to identify and create new opportunities and their efforts to develop bilateral relations.

The functioning of interparliamentary relations groups depends on the country concerned, the political context, the group's composition, the activity of its leadership, MPs' level of preparation, the availability of contacts and the capacity to turn individual meetings into sustained engagement. The Agency for Legislative Initiatives focuses on these aspects and on the gap between the groups' potential and their operation in practice. Work that relies on the activity and initiative of only a few MPs and on the capacity of their teams requires sustainable mechanisms for coordination, transfer of accumulated knowledge and resources. The ALI study draws attention to these problems and asks how parliamentary diplomacy can become less dependent on particular individuals and more sustainable across future convocations. It also offers recommendations that may stimulate a new discussion within the Verkhovna Rada.

Executive Summary

The study analyses the activities of interparliamentary relations groups in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine during the full-scale war and amid the growing importance of parliamentary diplomacy. Following the start of Russia's invasion, interparliamentary contacts became an important channel for advancing Ukraine's foreign policy interests. At the same time, the study shows that this instrument operates unevenly, as its effectiveness depends to a considerable extent on the personal engagement of individual MPs, the availability of contacts and resources, coordination with other institutions and the capacity to record the results of the work undertaken.

Interparliamentary relations groups are formally an instrument of bilateral interparliamentary cooperation. In practice, however, their institutional capacity varies considerably. The groups are established on a voluntary basis, and their activities depend largely on the initiative of their leadership and an active core of members.

The process of forming groups and electing their leadership combines personal, factional and resource-related considerations. For some MPs, participation in a group reflects previous experience of working with a particular country, knowledge of the relevant language and professional specialisation. For others, it is a means of strengthening their international profile or gaining access to an important area of parliamentary diplomacy. Competition for leadership positions is particularly visible in groups dealing with countries of strategic importance to Ukraine, as these groups provide access to important communication channels, visits and contacts with partners.

One of the study's central findings is the **personalised nature of interparliamentary contacts**. A considerable proportion of relationships are built through (1) MPs' personal histories of engagement with particular countries, (2) repeated meetings, (3) participation in international platforms and (4) informal communication. Such contacts can be highly effective, but they are rarely transferred between MPs, groups or convocations. As a result, Parliament only partially converts MPs' personal international capital into a shared institutional resource.

The activities of interparliamentary relations groups are not thematically standardised. They depend on the partner country, the political context and the specialisation of individual MPs. In relations with EU Member States, European integration serves not only as a separate topic but as a broader framework through which MPs explain reforms, communicate Ukraine's needs and advocate support for Ukraine's EU membership.

Reporting on group activities remains a weak link in parliamentary diplomacy. Some reports document how friendship groups work, while others focus more on a general overview of bilateral relations or the political context. At the same time, parliamentary diplomacy does not always produce rapid or readily measurable results. Reporting should therefore perform both oversight and coordination functions.

The analysis of the activities of interparliamentary relations groups identifies five key problems:

The first problem is funding. Interparliamentary relations groups do not have sufficient guaranteed budgetary support for their activities. Their activities are financed through (1) MPs' own resources, (2) partner countries and (3) donors. This model leads to uneven activity, limits long-term planning and creates a risk that the availability of resources to individual MPs, rather than strategic priorities, will determine the group's work.

The second problem is reporting. The system for recording, analysing and transferring the results of parliamentary diplomacy is generally weak. Reports are often submitted in an unstructured format and do not always make it possible to understand exactly with whom communication took place, which issues were raised, what agreements were reached and what next steps are planned. Moreover, MPs do not always see how submitted reports are subsequently used. Reporting is therefore perceived as a formality, while Parliament loses the opportunity to build institutional memory and coordinate further action more effectively.

The third problem is coordination. Interaction between the groups and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), embassies, relevant ministries and other public authorities often depends on the initiative of an individual MP or group leader rather than an established procedure. Some groups receive talking points, analytical materials or support from diplomatic missions, while others operate almost autonomously. This widens disparities in levels of preparation and weakens the integration of parliamentary diplomacy into the state's broader foreign policy strategy. Internal coordination within the groups is also uneven: communication, sharing of accumulated knowledge and planning vary from one group to another.

The fourth problem is competence. Effective parliamentary diplomacy depends on language skills, knowledge of the international context, negotiating capacity and the ability to represent state interests. Insufficient language proficiency or subject-matter expertise limits effective participation in parliamentary diplomacy. This problem is particularly evident when the composition of delegations is determined by political or organisational arrangements rather than relevance to the subject matter or the expertise required.

The fifth problem is communication and competition. The principle of speaking with one voice works best on issues relating to countering Russia, support for Ukraine, sanctions and military assistance. Across the broader field of international communication, however, consistency among MPs depends on the political context, personal relationships and the level of internal trust. The initial informal unity that emerged after the start of the full-scale invasion has gradually weakened over time, particularly in informal communication with partners. This creates a risk that domestic political competition will spill over into the foreign policy sphere. Competition is also evident in contests for leadership positions, participation in delegations and control over contacts, which are often treated as a political resource rather than a shared asset of Parliament.

Research Methodology

The study analyses the activities of interparliamentary relations groups in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine during the full-scale war and amid the growing role of parliamentary diplomacy. Despite the importance of interparliamentary contacts for Ukraine's international representation, interparliamentary relations groups remain insufficiently studied in both the Ukrainian and international contexts. There is no systematic understanding of how such groups organise their work, which resources they use or how they coordinate with other foreign policy actors. This gap is particularly evident during the full-scale war, when interparliamentary engagement has become one of the most important channels of international support for Ukraine. The absence of systematic analysis makes it difficult to assess the groups' actual potential and identify the constraints affecting their operation.

The study focuses on the following questions:

1. What place do interparliamentary relations groups occupy within Ukraine's overall system of parliamentary diplomacy?
2. How is the work of interparliamentary relations groups organised in practice, and what results does it produce?
3. Why do some interparliamentary relations groups not report systematically?
4. How do interparliamentary relations groups interact with executive authorities in pursuing foreign policy objectives?
5. Which thematic areas predominate in the activities of interparliamentary relations groups with the parliaments of EU Member States?
6. Which organisational and analytical tools could improve the effectiveness of interparliamentary relations groups?

The methodology combines desk research and empirical components. The desk research comprises a comparative analysis of international experience in parliamentary diplomacy and an analysis of available reports by interparliamentary relations groups in Ukraine and EU countries, with a view to identifying the principal elements of reporting by interparliamentary relations groups. A review of the literature and international practice informed the analytical framework used to assess the functioning of interparliamentary relations groups in Ukraine.

The empirical component is based on 17 semi-structured interviews focusing on practical experience, organisational constraints, coordination mechanisms and respondents' perceptions of the results achieved by interparliamentary relations groups. The interviews were conducted with leaders and active members of interparliamentary relations groups (14 interviews), a Ukrainian ambassador to an EU Member State (one interview) and representatives of partner-country parliaments (two interviews). The analysis combines a qualitative thematic analysis of the interviews with a comparative interpretation of the desk research findings.

Direct quotations from interviews used in the text are placed in single quotation marks and italicised to distinguish them from the main body of the study.

1. The Role of Parliamentary Diplomacy in Ukraine's Foreign Policy

1.1. *Parliamentary Diplomacy as a Feature of Democracy*

Parliamentary diplomacy enables parliamentarians to influence international relations, develop cooperation with other states and advance national and personal interests and values. Interparliamentary cooperation is characteristic of democratic countries, where parliament is a strong and independent institution capable of exercising its powers, including in the sphere of foreign relations.



Parliamentary diplomacy is the clearest and most visible sign to our international partners that Ukraine is not an authoritarian country in which one person alone decides everything.¹



In democratic countries, parliaments influence the decisions of their governments because they form those governments. Following the same logic, we can advance certain decisions and ideas that we need.

As 'diplomats with a democratic mandate', MPs:

- acquire the knowledge and experience needed to scrutinise the government's foreign policy;
- create additional channels of communication in bilateral relations;
- complement traditional diplomacy and advance a democratic agenda.

Compared with conventional intergovernmental diplomacy, parliamentary diplomacy has a number of advantages and distinctive features. MPs identify (1) greater flexibility in resolving contentious issues, (2) a plurality of views and approaches, (3) closer coordination with civil society, (4) freedom to express their views and (5) the ability to engage a wider range of partners and expand networks of personal contacts. A distinctive feature of parliamentary diplomacy is that it is shaped more by values than by strategic vision or national interests. This allows parliamentarians to retain independence in their statements but can also result in parliamentary diplomacy diverging from official foreign policy and operating as a separate, parallel track².



MPs, you know, sometimes have greater political freedom, I believe, than state authorities, including the MFA, and they can broaden the scope for political manoeuvre.

¹ All quotations in the remainder of the text are placed in single quotation marks and italicised.

² A study of friendship groups in the Czech Parliament conducted in 2017–2019 showed that the Chamber of Deputies of a pro-Western country that is a member of the EU and NATO retained an eastward orientation: the largest and most active friendship groups were those with Russia and China. Source: Mochtak, M., & Diviak, T. (2019). Looking Eastward: Network Analysis of Czech Deputies and Their Foreign Policy Groups. *Problems of Post-Communism*, 66(6), 418–433.



What works better and more effectively in parliamentary diplomacy is a strong personal connection between MPs, who then carry the work forward within their factions or committees.

Globally, the 'parliamentarisation' of diplomacy was driven by globalisation and the growing number of international institutions, to which parliamentary formats of engagement provide greater legitimacy and inclusiveness. Since the 2000s, the Inter-Parliamentary Union³ and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe⁴ have encouraged parliamentarians to devote greater attention to transnational issues, including conflict resolution. They have also encouraged parliaments to establish friendship groups and facilitate MPs' participation in international relations in order to promote democratic values, protect human rights and exchange experience and good practices. One example is the 'Parliamentarians Protect Parliamentarians' initiative⁵, launched in the German Bundestag in 2003 to support persecuted parliamentarians and civil society activists whose lives are at risk.

In Ukraine, MPs became more active internationally following Russia's full-scale invasion. Parliamentary diplomacy had previously been unsystematic and unstructured and was perceived more as parliamentary tourism than as an instrument for advancing national interests. Since 2022, however, the voice of the Verkhovna Rada has acquired greater weight.⁶ Parliamentarians have significantly expanded both the range of platforms on which they are represented and the geographical scope of their engagement. They have also improved coordination within Parliament and with other foreign policy actors.



Then, finally, from the spring of 2022, it seems to me that parliamentary diplomacy began to flourish.

³ [Parliamentary Involvement in International Affairs. A report by the Inter-Parliamentary Union \(IPU\) to the Second World Conference of Speakers of Parliaments. 2005.](#)

⁴ [Resolution 1773 \(2010\), final version, 'Promoting parliamentary diplomacy'. Parliamentary Assembly, 2010.](#)

⁵ [Programm „Parlamentarier schützen Parlamentarier“. Deutscher Bundestag.](#)

⁶ [Experience of Women and Men MPs Working under Martial Law in Ukraine / Agency for Legislative Initiatives. 2024, p. 36.](#)

1.2. Who Represents the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine Internationally?

Interparliamentary cooperation encompasses numerous formats and opportunities, ranging from more institutionalised arrangements such as permanent delegations to friendship groups that operate solely on the initiative of MPs themselves.

The highest and most formal level is the **work of the Chairman (Speaker) of the Verkhovna Rada**, who is vested with representative functions under the Constitution of Ukraine.⁷ Unlike individual MPs, who speak only on their own behalf, the Speaker is authorised to speak on behalf of the Verkhovna Rada as a whole. The Chairman participates in major global summits and conferences, such as the G7 Parliamentary Speakers' Summit and the Parliamentary Summit of the Crimea Platform. MPs note, however, that parliamentarians are generally not involved in this aspect of the work.



The Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada is still, in my view, the key figure in this context. He sets the tone.

Participation in **permanent delegations** enables a broader range of parliamentarians to exert influence internationally. MPs represent Ukraine in key interparliamentary institutions, including the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE PA) and others. Parliamentary assemblies provide multilateral platforms where MPs not only discuss a common agenda and current issues in international relations and formulate decisions in the form of resolutions, but also establish personal contacts and friendships. MPs describe this level of interparliamentary cooperation as more effective and visible.



Our delegation to PACE is very strong, in my view. It is the key, principal platform for conveying information to our colleagues.



I believe that these organisations, whether PACE, the OSCE or NATO delegations, naturally have more extensive connections.

Cooperation between parliamentary committees is another important area. It allows parliamentarians to discuss sector-specific issues related to their areas of specialisation, study other countries' experience in drafting and implementing legislation and share their own good practices.



There are regular meetings between committees, especially those dealing with defence, European affairs and foreign policy. They meet quite frequently. Other committees meet too. I would like committees dealing with other issues, such as agriculture or trade, to meet more often.

⁷ Constitution of Ukraine: Law of Ukraine No. 254k/96-VR of 28 June 1996. Article 88.



This is a very important area, and the relevant committees [...] travel to the European Parliament and study the practical experience of other countries' European integration. They are informed about the requirements and the importance of implementing particular problematic laws.

In the Verkhovna Rada, such cooperation has been established with individual countries and with the European Parliament. Specifically, the Committee on Ukraine's Integration into the European Union may participate in the Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs of Parliaments of the European Union (COSAC),⁸ a special format of cooperation among the European affairs committees of EU Member States. Parliamentarians note that, even without voting rights on this platform, they can influence both the discussion agenda and the Conference's concluding documents, which consistently support Ukraine on its path towards the EU. In the European integration context, the **EU-Ukraine Parliamentary Association Committee** is particularly important. Since 2015, it has held semi-annual meetings at the Verkhovna Rada and the European Parliament, overseeing implementation of the Association Agreement and supporting the EU accession negotiation process.

To institutionalise cooperation with individual countries, MPs form **bilateral or trilateral parliamentary assemblies**. The Verkhovna Rada has established such assemblies with the Sejm and Senate of Poland and the Seimas of Lithuania. It also participates in trilateral assemblies with both chambers of the Polish Parliament and the Lithuanian Seimas, and with the parliaments of Georgia and Moldova. Unlike friendship groups, assemblies have statutes and operate according to more established practices of engagement. They develop positions on specific issues in the form of statements, declarations and appeals. Similar assemblies also operate between other national parliaments, such as the Franco-German Parliamentary Assembly, reflecting the development of more institutionalised cooperation between countries that share borders, history and challenges. Ukrainian MPs see value in creating new assemblies to strengthen cooperation with Ukraine's closest partners.



What might I like to improve? There are several initiatives that would be worth implementing. One is a parliamentary assembly bringing together the leadership of our parliaments.

Interparliamentary cooperation also extends to the regional level, complementing regional institutions such as the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean. The Parliamentary Assembly of La Francophonie and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries bring parliaments together on the basis of language. Despite the narrower focus of their cooperation, these formats of parliamentary diplomacy remain inclusive by allowing participation with observer status. MPs regard joining these assemblies as an important achievement of parliamentary diplomacy that enables Ukraine's voice to be heard in the most distant parts of the world.

⁸ The Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs (COSAC) plays an important role in EU interparliamentary cooperation, as established by the Treaty of Lisbon. Its purpose is to facilitate the exchange of information and good practices among national parliaments. Although its concluding documents are not binding, they are taken into account by the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of the EU.



We gained access and observer-country status in the Parliamentary Assembly of the CIS countries (Commonwealth of Independent States) and in the Parliamentary Assembly of La Francophonie, something that had been attempted for more than a decade. We were invited as an observer to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries. The final formalisation of our observer status in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth countries is currently under consideration.

The initiative and motivation of parliamentarians are the driving force of parliamentary diplomacy. **Their individual work on the international stage**, therefore, encompasses a range of formats and areas. MPs:

- maintain communication with the Ukrainian diaspora;
- provide comments and interviews to foreign media;
- join government delegations;
- participate in thematic conferences, such as the United Nations Climate Change Conference;
- join various parliamentary networks, such as the Women's Parliamentary Network on Security, Defence and Peace (WLID);
- cooperate with academic and analytical institutions abroad, such as St Antony's College, University of Oxford, the German think tank LibMod (Zentrum Liberale Moderne) and the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House;
- engage with civil society organisations, such as the Slovak-European Cultural Association Feman and the Slovak civic association Mier Ukrajinie ('Peace for Ukraine')⁹.

MPs establish inter-factional associations (IFAs) to support countries with which Ukraine has no diplomatic contacts, including the IFAs 'For a Democratic Belarus', 'For a Free Cuba' and 'Free Venezuela'. Although no information is available on the activities of these IFAs, they may, in practice, provide an alternative to friendship groups for establishing informal ties. Parliamentarians from democratic countries also actively participate in election observation or peacekeeping groups, including the Ukrainian parliamentary delegation's observation mission to the 2021 parliamentary elections in Bulgaria¹⁰ and the 2024 presidential election in Moldova¹¹.

⁹ Information obtained from interview materials and an analysis of reports by interparliamentary relations groups.

¹⁰ Information Department of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine Secretariat. 'Members of the Permanent Delegation of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to the OSCE PA, led by Deputy Head of the Delegation A. Herasymov, took part in observing the parliamentary elections in Bulgaria'. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2021. (accessed 13 July 2026).

¹¹ Press Service of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine Secretariat. 'Ukrainian parliamentarians observed the presidential election in Moldova — Mykhailo Radutskyi'. Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2024. (accessed 13 July 2026).



Every MP should build their own personal relationships and contacts with foreign MPs. This is also interpersonal interparliamentary diplomacy.



I call this the “information function”. For example, I give dozens of interviews, including to Al Jazeera, CNN and the BBC, and many members of our committee also give such interviews. This is very important because we are trying to engage in explanatory communication. I also believe that, during the war, this too is parliamentary diplomacy.

1.3. Interparliamentary Relations Groups as the Principal Instrument of Bilateral Interparliamentary Relations

Parliamentary groups on interparliamentary relations, or friendship groups, are the principal form of bilateral parliamentary diplomacy. They engage MPs on an equal and voluntary basis in developing relations with partner countries. Friendship groups are the most widespread instrument of interparliamentary cooperation, irrespective of a country's level of development or economic capacity.¹² Their establishment is primarily rooted in parliamentary traditions. For example, the Danish Folketing has no such groups,¹³ while the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye has established 147 friendship groups,¹⁴ and the French National Assembly has 157.¹⁵ The emergence of friendship groups is closely linked to the development of parliamentarism: the first groups appeared in the German Bundestag in 1957¹⁶ and in Estonia in 1993.¹⁷

Today, parliaments generally make active use of friendship groups to develop bilateral cooperation. Friendship groups create an additional channel of communication between countries outside formal diplomatic channels. For example, in their engagement with Taiwan, most countries follow the 'One China' policy and do not maintain diplomatic relations, yet parliamentarians actively use the friendship-group format. The Canada–Taiwan Friendship Group has operated since 1982, allowing contacts to be maintained systematically and interests to be advocated.¹⁸

The functioning of interparliamentary relations groups varies considerably between states. In the French National Assembly¹⁹ and the Croatian Parliament (Sabor)²⁰, group activities are clearly described and governed by rules specifying how groups are composed, how

¹² Giesen, M., Malang, T. (2022). Legislative communities. Conceptualising and mapping international parliamentary relations. *J Int Relat Dev* 25, 523–555.

¹³ Information obtained from interview materials and confirmed by the following source: Friendship Groups: Introductory Note for the Topical Discussion. ASGP.

¹⁴ Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi: Parlamentolararası Dostluk Grupları.

¹⁵ Assemblée nationale: Liste des groupes d'amitié.

¹⁶ Deutscher Bundestag. Weltweit vernetzt - die Parlamentariergruppen.

¹⁷ Riigikogu: Parlamendirühmad.

¹⁸ Hulme, M. (2011) The Canada–Taiwan Parliamentary Friendship Group. *Canadian International Council. Issues in Canada–China Relations*. PP. 41–67.

¹⁹ Assemblée nationale: Charte des groupes d'amitié et groupes d'études à vocation internationale.

²⁰ Pravilnik o osnivanju i djelokrugu rada skupina prijateljstva. Hrvatski sabor.

visits and receptions are planned and how reports are submitted. The French Parliament also applies criteria²¹ for establishing friendship groups. For countries that do not meet these criteria, it creates international study groups, which serve as counterparts to friendship groups. The German Bundestag²² likewise has a strategic vision of the international role of friendship groups and explains their importance in promoting democratic values worldwide. Members of the Bundestag establish not only bilateral groups but also cluster groups, for example, with the Baltic States. Most commonly, however, parliaments regulate only the procedure for establishing groups, through applications, group meetings or application forms, without restricting their activities.

Despite the differences found in international practice, friendship groups share several characteristic features and advantages:

1. First and foremost, they are **flexible and informal**. Limited regulation, or its complete absence, facilitates close personal relationships that develop outside official meetings and discussions.
2. The composition of the groups reflects the multiparty structure of parliaments. **Balanced political representation and the participation of both governing and opposition** representatives strengthen the groups' international legitimacy and increase partners' trust.
3. The groups' **inclusiveness and openness** make it possible to involve large numbers of MPs in parliamentary diplomacy and establish cooperation with new countries in Asia, Africa and South America.



This makes it possible to involve many more people in developing such personal contacts. In other words, a much larger number of politicians, stakeholders and decision-makers can be reached if a number of MPs are also engaged in this work.

All these advantages also characterise the activities of the Verkhovna Rada's interparliamentary relations groups. The ninth convocation has so far established 114 friendship groups. Some were formed after the full-scale invasion, including groups intended to develop cooperation with countries of the Global South such as the Philippines, the Dominican Republic, Nigeria and Guinea. The groups vary considerably in their level of activity and size, depending on the popularity of the countries concerned and the state of bilateral relations. Some therefore have more than 100 members, while others have no more than the minimum of five MPs. Practice shows that group size is not a measure of effectiveness. Large groups, such as those with China or the United States, are often relatively inactive, and members may join them 'just to tick a box'.

²¹ The following three criteria were established in 1981: the existence of a parliament, established diplomatic relations with France and UN membership, although exceptions apply. The National Assembly has established international study groups with Belarus, North Korea, Libya, Syria and Taiwan.

²² [Deutscher Bundestag. Weltweit vernetzt - die Parlamentariergruppen.](#)

MPs identify a number of factors affecting group activity:

- **the personal initiative of the group's chair and members** is the most important factor, as the groups rely on their ideas and proposals;
- **partners' approach to cooperation**, as they may not use formats such as friendship groups at all or may not establish such contacts, as in the case of the Danish Folketing;
- **the political context**, which may be relatively unfavourable towards Ukraine, as with the current convocation of the National Council of Slovakia or the previous convocation of Hungary's National Assembly, limiting communication channels to the parliamentary opposition or civil society representatives;
- **the need to advocate Ukraine's position**, which varies considerably between countries: while support remains consistently high in the Nordic countries, more contentious issues and disinformation arise in Germany, Czechia and Poland and need to be addressed through communication.

In MPs' view, 'the role of these parliamentary groups can hardly be overstated'. Through friendship groups, MPs amplify Ukraine's voice and secure international support, brief foreign colleagues, establish strong contacts and launch joint projects.



Friendship groups bring together people who are interested and have experience of particular countries. It is a kind of interest-based association, which is useful because Parliament is large.



This is very important because, during the war, friendship groups perform a special function. It is a function of communication and dialogue.

The informal and unrestricted nature of friendship groups allows them to create additional opportunities for parliamentary diplomacy. MPs actively engage not only with colleagues in foreign parliaments but also with government officials, civil society representatives and the media, and they develop contacts at the regional level. For example, the ninth convocation established a friendship group with the Vatican for the first time, even though the Vatican has no conventional parliament. Some groups also continue to operate even where the corresponding foreign parliament has not established a counterpart friendship group.



Within friendship groups, you mostly have to create opportunities, identify additional possibilities and then develop them.



The absence of this friendship group does not prevent me from working. Yes, it would help and speed up my work, but it does not actually prevent me from working. I can still make contact through diplomatic channels, and I do approach their governmental and non-governmental organisations on various issues.

Friendship groups operate inseparably from other formats of parliamentary diplomacy, making it difficult to trace and isolate their impact. An important factor is that members of friendship groups with Ukraine are often influential politicians who can relay Ukrainian colleagues' messages to their own parliaments, governments and societies.



On the one hand, through your visit, you can introduce a certain idea that they had not considered, discussed or previously heard from our perspective. They then communicate it to the Slovak society. Similarly, Slovaks come here, and we relay their views.



After the full-scale invasion began, when we discussed it for the first time at a plenary sitting and I was due to deliver a speech, I contacted my Ukrainian colleague [name] and asked what her message to [name of parliament] would be. I believed it would be better to use my role as chair of the friendship group to convey Ukraine's voice to [name of parliament]. In my view, this also made an impression on my colleagues.

2. Interparliamentary Relations Groups: Establishment, Organisation of Work and Funding

2.1. *Establishment of Interparliamentary Relations Groups*

The principal rules governing the establishment, organisation and reporting of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine's parliamentary groups on interparliamentary relations with foreign states are set out in the Regulation on Parliamentary Groups of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on Interparliamentary Relations with Foreign States. Under the Regulation, groups are formed through the voluntary association of Ukrainian MPs and operate on a collegial basis.²³ In practice, most groups are established at the beginning of each new parliamentary convocation. New groups may nevertheless be created during a convocation, while the membership and leadership of existing groups may change in response to MPs' initiatives or a political need to develop a particular area of cooperation. Groups may include MPs who already have experience of working with the relevant country or served in such groups during previous convocations, as well as newly elected MPs for whom group membership is one of their first forms of participation in parliamentary diplomacy.

At the same time, voluntary membership does not imply equal engagement by all group members. In practice, a distinction should be drawn between formal membership and the active core. Some MPs participate regularly, some engage occasionally, and others remain largely nominal members. The size of a group, therefore, does not in itself indicate its actual level of activity. Rather, it reflects the political importance MPs attach to the relevant country, their interest in the area or their expectations of future opportunities for engagement.



No, as a rule, not all MPs are active in the groups. There is always a core. People sign up to many groups; there is an active core, and there are others who join from time to time.

The Regulation defines the groups as an instrument of bilateral interparliamentary cooperation. Their tasks include:²⁴

- organising and coordinating cooperation with the parliaments of other states;
- analysing the development of interparliamentary relations;
- preparing proposals for their improvement;
- facilitating cooperation between parliamentary committees and commissions;

²³ Regulation on Parliamentary Groups of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on Interparliamentary Relations with Foreign States: Order No. 223 of the Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine of 22 June 2020.

²⁴ Regulation on Parliamentary Groups of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on Interparliamentary Relations with Foreign States: Order No. 223 of the Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine of 22 June 2020.

- exchanging information on parliaments' current legislative activities;
- interacting with diplomatic missions in Ukraine and abroad;
- facilitating the establishment of bilateral expert groups to draft legislation or discuss matters of common interest.

The groups are therefore established not as symbolic forums of friendship but as instruments for maintaining regular interparliamentary engagement. At the same time, they are based on MPs' voluntary participation and do not impose clearly defined individual duties on each member.

Procedurally, the formation of a group begins when MPs submit written applications to join it. The applications are registered and processed by the secretariat of the Committee on Foreign Policy and Interparliamentary Cooperation and referred to the Subcommittee on Interparliamentary Cooperation and Bilateral and Multilateral Relations.²⁵ The group is then established at an organisational meeting, and its membership is approved by an Order of the Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada on the basis of a submission from the relevant committee.²⁶ The Interparliamentary Relations Directorate of the Verkhovna Rada Secretariat informs the relevant foreign partners that the group has been established.²⁷

Within this procedure, the Verkhovna Rada Committee on Foreign Policy and Interparliamentary Cooperation plays a primarily constitutive and procedural role rather than managing groups on a day-to-day basis. The Committee helps formalise the creation of a group, provides procedural support and may advise on the political expediency of establishing new groups. Once a group has been formed, however, its work remains largely autonomous.



Our Committee [...] plays the role of a midwife. Our task is to create, or help create, a friendship group and then let it sail independently. We help establish it, but we do not manage it.



Our Committee does not oversee the activities of friendship groups. We do not tell them what to do. They are autonomous.

In practice, the formation of a group begins with an MP's initiative and self-nomination for the relevant area. An MP applies to join the group and, in some cases, immediately indicates the role they wish to hold within it. An organisational meeting and vote then take place, alongside informal arrangements among MPs concerning the leadership, co-chairmanship or other positions in the group.

²⁵ Regulation on Parliamentary Groups of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on Interparliamentary Relations with Foreign States: Order No. 223 of the Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine of 22 June 2020.

²⁶ Ibid. Section 3, para. 3.5.

²⁷ Ibid. Section 3, paras. 3.8–3.9.



At the beginning of a convocation, MPs apply to join one group or another. In the application, you state the position for which you wish to be nominated. There is then a real vote, competition and various negotiations.

Differences between higher- and lower-priority areas become apparent even at the group formation stage. Groups with countries regarded as Ukraine's strategic partners or having greater political, security or economic influence usually attract more attention from MPs and may become the subject of competition for leadership positions. By contrast, groups with countries that are lower priorities or have a more limited institutional presence in Ukraine may be harder to establish or remain less active after their creation.

Leadership of Interparliamentary Relations Groups

The organisational meeting at which a group is formed also determines its internal structure: a chair or co-chairs, deputies to the chair or co-chairs, secretaries and group members. Under the Regulation, the number of co-chairs and deputies depends on the group's size.

Groups with up to 75 members may have no more than two co-chairs and three deputies, while groups with more than 75 members may have no more than three co-chairs and four deputies. The leadership must include representatives of different parliamentary factions.²⁸ The group's ongoing work is supported not only by its leaders but also by **secretaries, who may be MPs, staff members of the Verkhovna Rada Secretariat or assistants-consultants to MPs.**²⁹

In practice, a significant proportion of a group's organisational work is often performed by **assistants to the chair or co-chairs**. They may handle day-to-day communication, help prepare meetings, collect information for reporting, coordinate documents and maintain contact with group members. A group's organisational capacity, therefore, depends not only on MPs' activity but also on whether its leadership has assistants who effectively perform secretarial functions.



The secretariats of friendship groups are mostly the assistants of the group leaders. They are not staff from the committee secretariats. This is how it works: your assistant becomes your secretary.

The Regulation separately sets out requirements for candidates seeking to lead a group, but this part contains a procedural inconsistency. On the one hand, a candidate must submit a letter to the Verkhovna Rada Committee on Foreign Policy and Interparliamentary Cooperation outlining the group's plans and priorities. On the other hand, where there are several candidates, preference is given to the person who presents the relevant Committee with a work plan for the group's cooperation with the country concerned, and the Committee decides by vote. It is therefore not entirely clear from the text of the Regulation whether submitting such a plan is mandatory for all candidates or merely provides an additional advantage where there is competition for a leadership position.³⁰ The Regulation also provides that knowledge of a foreign language and experience in activities relating to the relevant country constitute advantages for a candidate.³¹

²⁸ Regulation on Parliamentary Groups of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on Interparliamentary Relations with Foreign States: Order No. 223 of the Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine of 22 June 2020.

²⁹ Ibid. Section 3, para. 3.7.

³⁰ Ibid. Section 3, para. 3.7.

³¹ Ibid. Section 3, para. 3.7.

MPs may seek to lead a group for various reasons. For some, it is a continuation of previous work with a particular country, existing contacts or language and professional expertise. For others, it is a means of demonstrating expertise, strengthening their international profile or gaining access to an important area of parliamentary diplomacy. Competition for leadership positions therefore combines personal motivation, political ambition and a practical interest in channels of communication with foreign partners.



For every MP, [the desire to lead a group] was accompanied, in one way or another, by a personal wish to demonstrate: "I can do this; I know this country." The second factor was a degree of ambition.



A group is a voluntary association of people. These are people who submit a statement saying: I want to join the friendship group. They then meet. Someone says: I have been there, studied there and understand the country, so let me lead this work.

This is often because the prospective chair or co-chair initiates the establishment or revitalisation of the relevant area of work.



It is initiated by people who want to lead a friendship group for one reason or another, or who have some history of relations with a particular country, or something similar. They are the ones who initiate it.

The practical route to group leadership, therefore, often begins before its membership is formally approved. An MP must demonstrate an interest in a particular area, bring colleagues together around it, explain why they are suited to lead the work and secure internal agreement within the group. Such preparatory work requires the MP to advocate in advance for the establishment or revitalisation of the relevant group. In some cases, the Committee on Foreign Policy and Interparliamentary Cooperation may also help identify MPs who could potentially lead the relevant area.

At the same time, the formation of a group's leadership is not always determined solely by competence or previous contacts with the country concerned. In groups dealing with countries of the highest priority to Ukraine, including strategic partners and G7 countries, leadership carries additional political weight. These groups provide access to important communication channels, meetings and visits and offer opportunities to present Ukraine's position to partners. Competition, therefore, more often has a factional dimension: the parliamentary majority seeks representation in the leadership of these areas, while the opposition seeks to avoid being entirely excluded from communication with key partners.



In this convocation, as in most convocations, the important groups involving strategic partners were largely formed on the basis of loyalty. Representatives of the majority who had greater influence became the leaders of the more influential groups.

This demonstrates that leadership in priority groups has both an organisational and a political dimension. It is therefore important to distinguish several levels of competition for leadership positions.

Competition for Leadership Positions

Competition for leadership positions in interparliamentary relations groups is linked not only to the personal motivation of individual MPs, but also to factional interests and the political importance of the relevant area. At the individual level, the desire to lead a group may be based on previous experience of working with the country concerned, language skills, existing contacts, professional specialisation or a wish to strengthen one's international profile. **For parliamentary factions**, leadership of groups is a means of securing representation in important areas of interparliamentary cooperation, particularly where strategically important countries are concerned.

A leadership position also has value in terms of **access to resources**. The chair or co-chairs are more likely to be the first points of contact for foreign partners, embassies, the leadership of Parliament and the Committee on Foreign Policy and Interparliamentary Cooperation. They also have greater influence over the organisation of meetings and visits and over how the group's activities are presented. Competition for leadership, therefore, concerns not only formal status but also access to communication channels and the ability to influence how co-operation with the relevant country is structured. This is particularly important for opposition MPs, who may find it more difficult to coordinate internally with the leadership of the Verkhovna Rada and the Office of the President on positions, authorisations and arrangements concerning work with the relevant country, even where they have their own contacts abroad.



I understood perfectly well that, if I sought the position of chair of the friendship group, I was in opposition, particularly in 2019. I understood that, regardless of how many contacts I had in [country name], as a member of an opposition party, I would still have to engage with government offices and the Office of the President here in Ukraine.

In practice, competition for leadership is often resolved through co-chairmanship, deputy positions or other arrangements among candidates, making it possible to maintain a balance between several interested participants. Such arrangements may involve support for one candidate's leadership bid in exchange for another candidate receiving an active role in the group's work.



I had several competitors for [country name], so I found ways, as they say, to reach an amicable agreement: support me and, in return, the other candidate would become a very active deputy chair.

Such arrangements do not always determine the actual division of work within the group. A position as co-chair or deputy may form part of a compromise between candidates, while actual activity often depends not on a formal leadership title but on the willingness of particular MPs to maintain contacts and organise the work. A gap may therefore arise between the group's formal structure of positions and the active core that carries out its ongoing activities.

Limits on Group Membership and Transfers between Groups

Limiting the number of groups an MP may join is not merely a technical rule. It also responds to the problem of nominal membership and the use of groups as a formal basis for travel abroad. These restrictions have changed over time. Before 2014, the Regulation used the softer formulation 'as a rule'. A stricter limit was introduced in 2014, while the current model was established in 2017 and allows an MP to belong to no more than eight groups and hold no more than four leadership or co-leadership positions³².

³² On Amendments to the Regulation on Parliamentary Groups of the Verkhovna Rada on Interparliamentary Relations with Foreign States: Order No. 409 of the Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine of 10 October 2017.



In this convocation, a decision was taken that an MP may be a member, I believe, of eight friendship groups. This was the right decision because, unfortunately, some colleagues abused this in the past. If you are a member of dozens of friendship groups, it is impossible to work effectively, even as an ordinary member, so this is the right decision.

The argument in favour of limits is that substantive work in a group requires time, contacts and regular attention to the relevant area. An MP's membership of several groups at the same time does not mean that they can work equally actively in each. In this sense, the limit is regarded as a means of reducing the gap between formal membership and actual engagement, as well as a safeguard against using group membership as a formal justification for foreign travel without substantive work in the relevant area.



There is a limit of four chairmanships. I do not think it is possible to manage more than that effectively. So it is good that this limit exists.



I do not know any effective colleague who can be genuinely effective in relation to more than two countries.

A similar problem also arises in the work of friendship groups in other parliaments. A member of parliament from one of the EU Member States interviewed noted that, although they may formally belong to several groups, in practice they work intensively only in the group they chair.



I am a member of three groups and can say with certainty that it is impossible to be very active in all three because this is additional to other parliamentary work. [...] My activity is concentrated in the group that I chair; in the others, I am simply a member.

At the same time, views on such limits are not unanimous. Limits alone do not resolve problems concerning the quality of group activities if they do not take into account MPs' substantive engagement in the relevant area. From this perspective, quantitative restrictions are less important than supporting MPs who genuinely have connections with a particular country, understand its context and are willing to work in that area.



I do not think restrictions are the right approach here. What is very important is to support those people who genuinely have connections in particular countries and know those countries. That matters.

In practice, the membership limit not only restricts the number of groups but also creates a technical means of manoeuvring within the system. Where an MP has already reached the maximum permitted number but wishes to join a new area of work, they must leave one of their existing groups. Such transfers effectively allow MPs to work around the rigidity of the numerical limit without formally breaching the rule. They may reflect a change in an MP's priorities, inactivity in particular groups or a mismatch between a group's actual work and earlier expectations of cooperation.



I withdrew from some groups because there was cooperation with [country name] but no activity. Some groups, in my view, do not follow through on strategic agreements.

The membership limit, therefore, does not eliminate nominal membership, but it does require MPs to prioritise among different areas.

How MPs Select Friendship Groups

Several factors influence MPs' choice of interparliamentary relations groups. Most commonly, their choice is linked to an existing connection with the country or region: previous study or residence there, language skills, personal and political contacts, a long-standing interest in bilateral relations or knowledge of the local context.



I did not choose friendship groups at random. I chose countries whose context I understood, whose work I knew and whose agenda intersected with my domestic policy work.



I simply have a very long personal history with [country name]; half my life is connected with [country name]. I studied there and lived there for a significant part of my life, so it was a fairly logical choice for me.

An **MP's professional or political specialisation** is another factor. In such cases, the choice may be linked to work on European integration, digital transformation, defence, education or another area in which the relevant country has experience useful to Ukraine. Membership of the group then becomes an extension of the MP's existing parliamentary work rather than a separate international activity.



The choice was based on the fact that these were the most technologically advanced countries, because I served on the Committee on Digital Transformation. I was interested in those countries' experience of technology and innovation and their path towards an innovation-based or digital economy.

The **representative dimension** is another basis **for choosing a group**. For some MPs, what mattered was not only personal contacts or a professional subject area, but also the relevant country's connection with their constituents and communities or with humanitarian and political issues already forming part of their work.



Many of my constituents depend on relations with [country name], so I pay attention to this area.

The choice also has a pragmatic dimension. It concerns not only an interest in the country itself, but also whether the area offers genuine opportunities for work: regular contacts, invitations, visits, joint events and interaction with an embassy or other partners. More experienced MPs, therefore, tended to select countries of strategic importance to Ukraine where active communication channels or better conditions for cooperation already existed.



Those with greater experience immediately try to choose countries that are strategic partners and where favourable conditions for cooperation exist.

Alongside professional, political and representative considerations, there may be **less formal reasons for choosing a group**. The voluntary nature of participation leaves room for personal affinity with a country, expectations of travel or other motives not always directly linked to expertise or the strategic importance of the area.

The choice of a group, therefore, usually reflects an intersection of personal experience, professional specialisation, representative considerations, the country's political importance and practical opportunities for engagement.

2.2. Interparliamentary Contacts: Building, Maintaining and Transferring Relationships

Interparliamentary relations within interparliamentary relations groups are established largely through personal contact rather than solely through formal institutional channels. Such relationships may emerge even before an MP obtains a parliamentary mandate, through study or work in environments that provide experience of international engagement. Some MPs therefore enter Parliament with an established personal communication network built on accumulated contacts, communication skills and experience.

At the same time, contacts are also developed through parliamentary work. They usually emerge through repeated interaction on particular subjects and areas of work. Regular communication, participation in joint discussions and continued engagement with the same interlocutors gradually turn a formal acquaintance into a working channel. Embassies and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs may facilitate the initial contact, but the relationship's subsequent viability depends on MPs' capacity to maintain it independently.



With [country name], it happened that we established the friendship group on Tuesday. That same week, a delegation of parliamentarians from [country name] was in Kyiv. By Thursday, we had already met and become acquainted at the ambassador's residence.



I had no contacts at the level of national parliaments; I started from scratch. I built this network independently.

Participation in permanent delegations and work on international platforms, particularly within the Council of Europe, creates especially favourable conditions for building sustainable relationships. These formats provide more opportunities for long-term and repeated engagement than occasional bilateral contacts. As a result, interparliamentary relations depend to a considerable extent on MPs' individual communication skills: (1) the ability to establish contact, (2) inspire trust, (3) navigate informal rules of engagement, and (4) transform a one-off acquaintance into a sustainable working relationship.



The Inter-Parliamentary Union is an assembly where the whole world gathers. It is very important to engage with representatives of different countries not only during official events, which is effectively impossible, but also to have opportunities for informal, behind-the-scenes discussion.

The Personalised Nature of Interparliamentary Contacts

Within this logic, continuity of personnel is particularly important. A long parliamentary tenure is associated not only with the accumulation of political experience but also with the development of a particular form of capital: a combination of relationships, trust, reputation and practical understanding of how a specific partnership operates. Where an MP works with a particular country or political environment over several years, formal contacts may develop into stable personal relationships that begin to produce practical results over time. Long-term parliamentary service is one of the conditions for accumulating relationships that genuinely work. The practical strength of such a contact lies in its duration, repetition and proven record of engagement.

The reverse side is the system's sensitivity to changes in personnel. Where external channels are tied to particular individuals, the departure of an MP means not only losing one participant in the process but also weakening the relevant network. Established trust, direct access and contextual knowledge may disappear with that individual. Interparliamentary contacts within friendship groups should therefore be regarded as a personalised resource supported only partly by a formal institutional framework.



From this perspective, some continuity of personnel in Parliament clearly does matter. The simple fact that they have the telephone numbers of a large number of Members of the European Parliament naturally allows them to ask someone for something very quickly.

Limits to the Transfer of Contacts and Institutionalisation

Despite the value of interparliamentary relations, their transfer between parliamentary convocations remains limited and unsystematic. The principal reason is that **such contacts are regarded primarily as a personally developed resource** rather than as an institutional asset automatically passed from one MP to another.



They see this as their added value, which they do not simply want to hand over when you did not develop it yourself.

A second reason is that former parliamentarians may introduce their successors to colleagues in other parliaments, but an effective channel of communication cannot be transferred automatically without some loss. Where a relationship is based on repeated personal interaction and mutual recognition, it cannot be reproduced through formal succession alone. A new MP may gain access to the relevant area but does not inherit the same level of recognition and informal access as their predecessor.



To a large extent, these are personal contacts, and you cannot simply transfer them. They can develop into genuine friendships.

This illustrates the limits of institutionalising interparliamentary relations. The formal framework of friendship groups legitimises engagement and provides structural support. The institution can record the existence of a partnership, but it has considerably less control over the preservation and reproduction of the channels through which that partnership actually operates.

The group secretariat, the Verkhovna Rada Secretariat, or MPs' assistants may play an important but limited role in this process. They can maintain formal continuity by retaining documents, travel histories, contact lists and protocol information, but they cannot fully replace a personal relationship whose strength was based on informal trust between particular individuals. Parliament, therefore, only partially converts MPs' personal international capital into a shared resource, leaving the system vulnerable when Parliament's membership changes.

The experience described by a representative of a partner-country parliament is illustrative in this regard. Recounting the beginning of his work as chair of a friendship group with Ukraine, he noted that he received a significant proportion of his contacts from his predecessor and also relied on support from the Ukrainian embassy and his own parliament's secretariat, which already had established links with the Ukrainian side. This practice demonstrates a degree of continuity in international contacts and the transfer of informal diplomatic resources between generations of parliamentarians.

External Instability of Contact Networks: Electoral Cycles and Continuous Renewal

The instability of interparliamentary contacts also stems from the nature of parliamentary politics, in which elections, rotation and changes in membership are regular processes. Continuity is disrupted when the Ukrainian side changes, just as it is when significant changes occur in partner-country parliaments.



When I became chair of the friendship group, I had contacts in [country name] because a different political force was in power. I had relationships there. But another coalition came to power at the beginning of 2020. It is not a bad coalition; I simply have no personal contacts there, while the opposition has little influence.

Even where a degree of continuity is maintained on the Ukrainian side, internal political developments may substantially change the partner side, creating a need to rebuild contacts for a period. In such circumstances, engagement with what is formally the same partner country in practice requires renewed entry into an updated network of relationships.



[Continuity of contacts] does have an impact. It is good when MPs who are our friends are re-elected to the next convocation. But some friends were not re-elected, which is a great pity.

Interparliamentary work, therefore, cannot be reduced to a one-off accumulation of contacts. The existence of an established network does not mean that it will continue to function automatically. Many such relationships require ongoing confirmation, renewal and adjustment in response to political change. After each electoral cycle, it is necessary to identify again who the relevant interlocutors are, through whom access is obtained and who genuinely influences the parliamentary position. In this sense, interparliamentary contacts should be understood not as an end state but as a continuous process. They **must not only be established but also maintained through regular communication and a continuing presence in the relevant political environment.**

Contacts as a Resource: Competition, Monopolisation and the Limits of Shared Use

The weak transfer of interparliamentary contacts can also be explained by their political value. In a personalised system, a relationship with a partner-country parliamentarian or another influential actor in a particular country is a resource that strengthens the position of the MP concerned. In this logic, a contact takes on the characteristics of a political asset. Its value lies not only in the ability to communicate information or organise engagement, but also in the unequal distribution of opportunities it creates within Parliament. An MP with direct and trusted access to partners is in a stronger position than colleagues without such access. At the same time, the MP's interparliamentary work is also likely to be more effective.

This creates the possibility of monopolisation. Where a channel has already been developed and proven effective, there may be an incentive to keep it within a narrow circle rather than convert it into a shared parliamentary resource. The contact, therefore, retains individual value but functions less effectively as part of a collective infrastructure. Younger or less experienced MPs are consequently at a greater disadvantage at the beginning of each convocation. One practical attempt to improve the system is to involve the MFA, embassies and other central executive authorities with international cooperation departments in establishing initial contacts and introductions.

Weak continuity of contacts reveals a tension between individual rationality and institutional logic: **Parliament as a whole benefits when international relations become a shared resource, while individual MPs may benefit more from retaining them as a personal political advantage.**

2.3. *Funding the Activities of Interparliamentary Relations Groups*

Funding for interparliamentary relations groups concerns not only the cost of travel and accommodation but also the broader resource infrastructure on which the regularity, predictability and substantive effectiveness of interparliamentary engagement depend.

Resource provision affects the work of interparliamentary relations groups at several levels. It determines whether visits and the reception of delegations are possible, shapes the format of contacts and opens or restricts access to the informal dimension of parliamentary diplomacy. Accommodation, accompanying meetings, reception arrangements and other elements through which trust, continuity of contact and quality of communication are maintained are important in this context.

From Limited Support to a Hybrid Model

Before the full-scale war, interparliamentary relations groups operated with limited but institutionally established financial resources. The parliamentary budget for friendship groups covered selected visits and the reception of delegations, primarily in areas involving key partners. This indicates the existence of a minimal but predictable support model integrated into parliamentary practice. Its key feature was **the possibility of planning**. Basic funding reduced the dependence of international activities on external circumstances. At the same time, limited resources were combined with selectivity: funding was generally directed towards foreign policy priorities, reflecting a hierarchy of partnerships.

Formally, funding for the activities of interparliamentary relations groups is linked to the Indicative Plan of Interparliamentary Exchanges of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, which integrates such activities into Parliament's overall system for planning international engagement, and to the Indicative Plan for Financial Support of the Interparliamentary Activities of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine,³³ which forms part of it. Representation expenses, official travel and daily allowances were also funded and, despite uneven access, established friendship groups as a component of Parliament's expenditure.



Of course, before 2022, Parliament always had a budget for the work of friendship groups. It was envisaged that Parliament would always have a budget for friendship groups, especially those with key G7 countries, so that we could travel there once and receive their group here once. Since 2022, that budget no longer exists.

³³ Regulation on Parliamentary Groups of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on Interparliamentary Relations with Foreign States: Order No. 223 of the Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine of 22 June 2020.

Limited funding for parliamentary diplomacy is not specific to Ukraine. Research indicates that, in a number of parliaments, resources for interparliamentary activities remain limited and uneven. This affects the scale and sustainability of such activity and is regarded as one of the principal problems of parliamentary diplomacy generally.³⁴ **The pre-invasion funding approach may therefore be described as institutionally predictable, resource-constrained and selective according to priority.**

Following the start of the full-scale war, the funding opportunities previously available diminished. Funding for friendship groups was effectively not restored, while international travel by interparliamentary relations groups is generally not covered by the state. According to the budgets of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, expenditure on MPs' official travel between 2022 and 2026 did not exceed the 2021 allocation in nominal hryvnia terms.³⁵ Formal mechanisms for reimbursing certain expenses have survived only in fragmented form and do not constitute a stable support system. Among the instruments of parliamentary diplomacy, the absence of funding is most characteristic of friendship groups. According to MPs, permanent delegations have more resources allocated for their activities.



Colleagues now travel at their own expense. The friendship group and its leadership travel to Poland at their own expense as well. It is not funded.



In this convocation, particularly since the beginning of the war, this funding has essentially disappeared. For all our current visits, wherever they may be, we try to find external funding.

In these circumstances, the underlying principle of resource provision has changed. While the international activities of interparliamentary relations groups previously relied on at least a minimally predictable parliamentary framework, since 2022, they have depended on an ad hoc search for funds. The Verkhovna Rada's budget does not identify expenditure on the international activities of interparliamentary relations groups as a separate item, further weakening their institutional distinctness. As a result, fundraising has become a separate task within the operation of the groups.

What Interparliamentary Relations Groups Need Funding for in Practice

The need to fund friendship-group activities is not limited to formally enabling travel. In practice, it concerns a much broader range of resources without which interparliamentary engagement loses its regularity, flexibility and much of its political effectiveness. **Funding performs several functions** at once: it ensures physical mobility, access to informal communication formats, the ability to maintain contact after an initial meeting and a minimum level of representative capacity.

³⁴ Tiitinen S. (1996). 'Report on the Role of Parliament in the Conduct of Foreign Relations'. Constitutional and Parliamentary Information; Ohiri, C. A., & Nwali, U. (2026). 'Leveraging Parliamentary Friendship Groups to Strengthen Nigeria's Strategic Alliances: A Foreign Policy Perspective'. *Journal of Contemporary International Relations and Diplomacy*, 6(2), 96–111.

³⁵ On the Budget of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine for 2021: Draft Resolution of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine No. 4448 of 2 December 2020; Budget of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine for 2026: Annex to Resolution of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine No. 4696-IX of 3 December 2025.

At the most basic level, funding is needed to cover costs without which international engagement simply cannot take place: transport, accommodation and organisational logistics. In the absence of such coverage, participation in a visit, even where an invitation has been extended, or there is a clear political rationale, depends on the MP's personal financial means, the capacity of the host side or the ability to find third-party support. This has at least two consequences. First, **participation in visits becomes uneven**: MPs who can pay their own travel costs or have access to other sources of funding are in a better position than those for whom such costs are excessive. Second, **the geographical scope of contacts is restricted**: the more expensive and complex the destination, the less likely engagement is to be regular. This is particularly relevant to distant countries, where ticket prices are considerably higher. Significantly, even where the sums involved are not formally large, the absence of basic coverage changes the logic of decision-making. When an MP purchases a ticket with personal funds, the visit is assessed not only as part of the representative function but also as a private investment that must be justified by its results. This raises the cost of entry into interparliamentary activities and makes sustained participation less accessible.



Even if it is somewhere like Berlin, every time I have to think about setting aside money for food there and so on. It still costs something, particularly if you add travel and hotels.



I travelled to Latin American countries two years ago: [names of three countries]. It cost an enormous amount, paid from my own funds. I was not reimbursed. You are fortunate if the host side pays. Not every country can afford to do so.

Funding also determines access to the informal dimension of parliamentary diplomacy, which is a key mechanism for building trust and clarifying positions. This includes accompanying meetings, behind-the-scenes contacts and other non-protocol formats through which mutual understanding is deepened, and working relationships are established. In the absence of funding, access to this dimension of engagement is restricted. If the Ukrainian side cannot ensure sufficient flexibility, its participation may be reduced to the pattern of 'arrive, speak and return', without the time and space for what makes diplomatic contact genuinely productive. In this sense, funding provides access to informal spaces where informal decisions are made, intentions are tested, and relationships are established that may subsequently be used in more formal circumstances. This dimension also includes small representational elements that may appear secondary but are, in practice, part of diplomatic etiquette, such as gifts and other symbolic gestures of attention. Funding, therefore, performs not only a utilitarian function but also a trust-building one: it makes possible the aspect of interaction through which contacts cease to be purely formal.



It prevents the Ukrainian delegation from staying, for example, in the same hotels as our partner countries. This has a major impact because every assembly has its own particularities. There is informal communication, usually over breakfast when you have coffee together or in the evening when you return after events and sit in the hotel lobby. This is a highly effective form of informal, behind-the-scenes diplomacy. It has always worked.

A separate dimension concerns the **continuity of contacts**. The effectiveness of interparliamentary relations groups is based to a considerable extent on repeated engagement, which allows one-off meetings to develop into stable channels of communication. A single acquaintance, even a successful one, does not automatically create a sustainable channel. The absence of systematic funding makes this transition from event to channel more difficult because regular visits cannot be organised.

As a result, even successful visits do not always accumulate into an institutional resource. They may produce a short-term effect without becoming part of a longer-term trajectory of cooperation.

Receiving Delegations in Ukraine as a Separate Area of Expenditure

Receiving foreign delegations in Ukraine is a distinct and strategically important format of interparliamentary engagement. Unlike visits by Ukrainian MPs, it allows partners to experience the Ukrainian context directly and see the consequences of the war, the work of institutions and the practical significance of international support. This format makes parliamentary diplomacy more persuasive by creating not only political understanding but also direct experience. At the same time, receiving delegations requires separate resources for logistics, programme coordination, support, transport and basic representation expenses. In the absence of an allocated budget, responsibility for organising such visits is largely transferred to MPs, their teams and external partners. This limits the systematic use of one of friendship groups' most effective instruments and makes it dependent on resources available at a particular moment.



There should be some kind of schedule. Obviously, we are at war, and the budget is limited, but there should be at least one visit to Ukraine to receive the group and one visit to the partner country at least once a year.



Likewise, here [in Ukraine] we cannot accommodate colleagues or [organise] other things. Perhaps we all contribute and provide a dinner, or something along those lines.

Actual Sources of Funding: How Interparliamentary Relations Groups' Activities Are Supported in Practice

In the absence of systematic budgetary support, friendship-group activities do not cease but are financed through a combination of several channels. This is not a coherent model in the formal sense, but in practice, it is this combination that sustains the groups' international activities. Its principal characteristic is its hybrid nature: mechanisms that are not institutionally established or only partly formalised substitute for the absent parliamentary framework.

According to MPs, their own **funds remain** both the simplest and the most common source of financing. Under this model, institutional activity is partly shifted into the sphere of individual choice: participation in a visit, travel and accommodation costs, incidental expenses and even basic representational elements depend on whether an MP is prepared to invest personal resources. This personalisation has a dual effect. On the one hand, it makes it possible to sustain activity even when the institution does not provide adequate support. On the other, it means that individual MPs' financial capacity directly affects the intensity of their participation in interparliamentary cooperation.



You can allocate money for tickets or fuel. You can pay for a hotel. Sometimes they pay for our hotel, and we pay for theirs in Ukraine. That happened at the beginning, but it is less common now.

A second practical source is **funds allocated to support MPs' activities**. In the absence of separate financing, it begins to serve as a substitute. This is a semi-formal solution: it remains within the scope of permissible parliamentary resources but is used for purposes previously supported by other sources. The problem is that interparliamentary activities must then compete with other areas of an MP's work. Funds that could be used for communication with constituents, constituency work or other professional needs are partly re-directed to international activities.



Because MPs receive funds for parliamentary activities, we can cover these official trips using those funds.



The situation is slightly better now because we have funds for parliamentary activities, while official travel in every country in the world is treated as representation expenditure.

Partner parliaments are an important source of support, **acting as hosts and covering part of the costs** associated with visits. This principally concerns accommodation, domestic logistics and programme organisation. Such support, however, means that friendship-group activity depends to a considerable extent on the other side's willingness. The configuration of the contact itself is influenced by the partner's level of interest, available capacity and the type of visit it is prepared to finance. This makes international activity more feasible but also less autonomous.



Everyone pays for themselves in this situation. For example, when we travel to Lithuania, we pay for travel, accommodation, meals and so on. Depending on the circumstances, the Lithuanian side may cover meals and transport within Lithuania, such as a minibus, but we cover everything else ourselves.

NGOs, donors, foundations and various intermediary organisations constitute a separate channel by funding or organising international contacts. In the current circumstances, they form a parallel infrastructure supporting parliamentary diplomacy. Their role is important because they support Parliament without being part of the system in the narrow sense. This type of funding is beneficial, in particular, because it may facilitate participation in interparliamentary cooperation by MPs who do not have sufficient personal savings. It also means that a broader informal or semi-formal support environment has formed around interparliamentary relations groups, in which Parliament's international activities are sustained not only by Parliament itself but also by a wider circle of external actors.



I found donors for these visits and other forms of support to make it all work.



Or there may be a Ukrainian NGO working on advocacy that has some resources and pays for your travel and hotel. It is unrealistic to pay for this from personal budgets. Of course, you still pay for meals and so on.



Some of our colleagues, myself included, always sought grant support so that we could travel as part of a delegation.

Internal Inequality of Participation: Who Can Actually Afford to Be Active in Interparliamentary Relations Groups

In the absence of systematic funding, participation in friendship-group activities becomes selective. In practice, international trips and visits are accessible only to MPs who can cover the relevant costs from personal funds or other resources available to them, or to those whose participation third parties are prepared to finance or organise. Access to this instrument is therefore determined not only by political rationale, competence or formal status, but also by resource capacity and the availability of the necessary contacts. This creates internal inequality in participation in parliamentary diplomacy. The most active participants are not necessarily the MPs with the greatest expertise or formal responsibility for an area, but those able to mobilise the required funding. International engagement, therefore, partly selects participants on material and network-based criteria.



Because it depends so heavily on financial capacity, I generally participate in events where I see potential for cooperation with our partners. To allocate money for a visit abroad now would mean taking it from my family, and I cannot do that. When there is a genuine invitation, visits are prepared much better.

Dependence on external coverage of expenses also has a representative dimension. When a visit is fully organised by another party, Ukrainian participants have less control over the format and pace of engagement, additional programme elements and the broader space for informal contact. This does not preclude effective participation, but it reduces autonomy and makes the activity more dependent on conditions determined by the external resource. Inequality, therefore, concerns not only who can travel, but also the terms on which participation takes place. The use of donor funds to finance visits creates an additional threshold for participation in interparliamentary cooperation that is independent of Parliament's position as an institution, since funding depends on the individual MP's relationship with the donor. It should be noted that external coverage of the cost of such visits does not constitute a gift or informal benefit to an MP where it takes the form of reimbursement or coverage of official travel expenses by international intergovernmental organisations, international technical assistance programmes or the organiser or co-organiser of the event.³⁶ This approach may have positive consequences, including the participation of more competent MPs in delegations. Its disadvantage is the risk of selectivity: MPs without established contacts with donors or organisers may have fewer opportunities to participate in delegations.

The shortage of funding for interparliamentary relations groups is therefore not only an organisational but also a structural problem. It creates unequal access to international activity, affects the composition of participants and the frequency of their involvement and influences the degree of autonomy in engagement. Parliamentary diplomacy consequently operates as a sphere in which the opportunity for systematic participation is distributed unevenly.

³⁶ On Prevention of Corruption: Law of Ukraine No. 1700-VII of 14 October 2014, Article 23.

2.4. Interaction of Interparliamentary Relations Groups with the MFA, Embassies and Other State Institutions

Interaction between interparliamentary relations groups and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, embassies and other public authorities occupies a prominent place in their practical work, but does not constitute a standardised or uniformly understood mechanism. MPs hold different views on the intensity, substance and effectiveness of such cooperation. For some, it is a regular element of day-to-day work involving the receipt of information, coordination of positions and organisation of contacts. Others emphasise the fragmented nature of these practices and their dependence on the country concerned, the activity of the group's leadership and the quality of personal relationships with the diplomatic corps or government structures. There is therefore no basis for speaking of a shared understanding of how coordination between interparliamentary relations groups and state institutions should operate.



If the group leader has a good relationship with embassies and the MFA, analytical information is provided. If there is no such relationship, then essentially no work takes place.

The MFA performs an important coordination and information-support function in interparliamentary cooperation. Friendship groups maintain ongoing or regular contact with ministry representatives, and group leaders are briefed on foreign policy priorities. The MFA provides talking points for meetings, helps formulate positions, supplies background materials and receives feedback following visits. From this perspective, friendship groups are one of the additional instruments of foreign policy communication capable of acting in coordination with official diplomacy and reinforcing it through a parliamentary dimension. In these accounts, the ministry appears not merely as the formal recipient of requests, but as an institution that helps align group activities with the broader foreign policy agenda.



Groups that made the effort received talking points; those that did not were unlikely to receive them.



The MFA is as cooperative as possible, and the Foreign Intelligence Service is as cooperative as possible, but reactively. If there is a request, they act; if there is no request, they do not.

Assessments of the MFA's role are nevertheless **not uniform**. Interaction with the ministry appears uneven and unstable. Some MPs note that talking points or coordination guidance are not always provided, certain support mechanisms depend on the period concerned, and established rules of engagement are weak. The MFA appears not as an institution whose resources are equally accessible to all groups, but as a partner whose level of involvement varies depending on the political leadership, the subject matter of the contacts and MPs' own willingness to initiate engagement. Almost all respondents who assess MFA coordination positively emphasise the importance of their own proactive approach. The general logic is as follows: the Verkhovna Rada has 114 friendship groups, approximately 40 of which are fairly active. The MFA cannot monitor all MPs' official travel, so requesting information support or talking points from the ministry is primarily the responsibility of MPs themselves. According to MPs, the MFA prioritises permanent delegations rather than interparliamentary relations groups.

Embassies are the principal institutions providing direct operational support to interparliamentary relations groups. This includes assistance in organising visits, agreeing programmes, establishing contacts with parliamentarians from other countries, communicating the Ukrainian side's positions and involving MPs in broader bilateral formats of engagement. In this context, embassies act as an intermediary between parliamentary diplomacy and official diplomacy. The ambassador or diplomatic team is the key link providing friendship groups with information and other forms of support.



Embassies generally facilitate bilateral contacts as much as possible, provided they understand this mechanism.

At the same time, assessments of embassies' role clearly reveal a personalised dimension. The quality of MPs' cooperation with embassies depends not only on the existence of a diplomatic mission, but above all on the ambassador. This means that even where embassies are the most effective support mechanism, cooperation remains determined by the human factor and is not fully institutionalised.



Direct communication with the ambassador is genuinely a useful instrument, provided the ambassador is competent, because ambassadors differ too.

Cooperation between interparliamentary relations groups and other ministries and public authorities arises where an additional channel is needed to articulate problems, advance initiatives or provide political backing for issues requiring a government response. Such interaction is nevertheless primarily situational rather than a stable and formalised system in which friendship groups are integrated into a permanent mechanism of government coordination.



If you are travelling to address a particular subject, it is quite effective to visit different ministries. For example, if the subject is energy, it would be useful to go to the Ministry of Energy [to obtain information].



Every ministry has a foreign policy department that interacts with the governments of different countries. They can also provide information on the status of projects and what needs to be strengthened in communication.

Finland provides a particularly illustrative example. Although friendship groups in the Finnish Parliament are formally classified as unofficial parliamentary activity, their work is supported by the parliamentary administration through secretarial, organisational and information support. The group secretary coordinates meetings with the group's leadership, prepares agendas, background materials and talking points, takes meeting notes and follows up on agreements. This example demonstrates that **even parliamentary diplomacy with an informal status can be considerably more effective when supported by a sustainable administrative framework and regular coordination with the relevant foreign policy institutions.**

3. Topics and Formats of Cooperation within Interparliamentary Relations Groups

3.1. *Organising Official Travel*

International travel is one of the formats of engagement within interparliamentary relations groups. Visits may vary in scale, composition and purpose, but are generally organised around a specific political need, invitation, event or agenda. The value of such international activity has also changed since the beginning of the full-scale war. Visits abroad by Ukrainian MPs and visits to Ukraine by foreign parliamentarians increasingly perform an advocacy function. They make it possible to explain Ukraine's needs, help secure decisions on support, maintain attention to the war and influence the positions of partner countries.

The format of a visit influences how its composition is determined and who is involved in its organisation. The group's chair or co-chairs generally determine the composition of a group delegation, taking account of the visit's purpose, MPs' profiles and the host side's expectations. By contrast, during an individual official trip or the participation of several MPs in a specific event, the group leadership does not necessarily select the participants but approves the trip.

Organising official travel combines logistical preparation and coordination among the parliamentary group, the host side, embassies, the MFA and other partners. At this stage, preliminary arrangements must be converted into an agreed programme, a defined list of participants and a clear procedure for engagement with partners.

Approval of Foreign Official Travel

Following the start of the full-scale war in Ukraine, MPs' foreign travel moved from a relatively autonomous form of international activity to official travel requiring formal confirmation and approval. Before 2022, an MP could travel abroad much more freely, meet partners and not necessarily involve the Verkhovna Rada Secretariat or the leadership of the relevant interparliamentary relations group in that communication. Following the introduction of martial law, the ability to leave the country became conditional on confirmation of the official nature of the trip. This is established in the rules on crossing the state border during martial law, under which MPs may travel on the basis of decisions authorising official travel³⁷, and in provisions governing the approval of MPs' foreign official travel and the submission of a report upon their return.³⁸ The authorisation procedure has consequently become not merely a technical stage in arranging travel but also a control mechanism distinguishing official international activity from private travel and affecting the speed of parliamentary diplomacy.

³⁷ [On Amendments to the Rules for Crossing the State Border by Citizens of Ukraine: Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 69 of 27 January 2023; On Approval of the Rules for Crossing the State Border by Citizens of Ukraine: Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 57 of 27 January 1995, para. 2-14.](#)

³⁸ [On the Status of an MP of Ukraine: Law of Ukraine No. 2790-XII of 17 November 1992, Part 8 Article 33.](#)

In practice, permission to travel depends on more than the final decision of the leadership of the Verkhovna Rada. The procedure consists of several elements:

- an invitation from the host side, where required by the format of the visit;
- verification that reports on previous official travel have been submitted;
- receipt of talking points from the MFA;
- internal parliamentary approval.

Depending on the format of the trip, an **invitation from the host side** may be an important document. It is not required in every case, but under the Ukrainian procedure, it can provide documentary grounds for treating an arrangement with partners as official travel. Foreign partners do not always understand this role, as parliamentary travel abroad in their countries does not generally require special authorisation to leave the state.

Invitations were particularly important during the period when MPs encountered refusals to approve official travel or delays in obtaining signatures. These problems were previously raised primarily by opposition representatives and were also recorded in an earlier study by the Agency for Legislative Initiatives and the Parliamentary Centre on the experience of women and men MPs working under martial law.³⁹ As of May 2026, however, the blocking of official travel was no longer a problem. The issue is now the continued complexity and bureaucratisation of the procedure, within which an invitation remains one of the documents confirming the official nature of the trip and facilitating internal approvals.

The procedure first requires **reporting on previous official travel**. Submission of a report is a condition for an MP's subsequent international trip, as it demonstrates that the previous visit was completed not merely when the MP returned but also through a formal explanation of its substance and benefit to Ukraine. The report should confirm that the trip was genuinely official and not merely a formal basis for leaving the country.

Reporting also performs a coordination function within interparliamentary relations groups. Following changes to the approval procedure, group chairs or co-chairs gained a greater ability to see who was travelling within the relevant area and monitor the submission of reports after their return.



One of the co-chairs must sign off on it. This enabled us to know who was travelling and when, and simply to ask and remind assistants [...] to send the report that is submitted to the Verkhovna Rada after the official trip.

³⁹ Experience of Women and Men MPs Working under Martial Law in Ukraine / Parliamentary Centre; Agency for Legislative Initiatives. 2025, pp. 38–39.

Reporting, therefore, serves not only the formal control of foreign travel but also the accumulation of information on group members' actual activities, which may subsequently be used in preparing the annual report. This is discussed in greater detail in [the section on reporting](#).

Talking points from the MFA may form a separate element of preparation for official travel. Within the authorisation procedure, their importance lies less in serving as a formal condition for travel and more in linking an MP's visit to the current foreign policy context in the country concerned, identifying sensitive issues and highlighting matters the Ukrainian side considers important. In recent years, this practice has been used less systematically. Its role in ensuring consistency of foreign policy messages is examined in greater detail in [the subsection on the operation of the 'One Voice' approach](#).

The key stage is **the internal parliamentary approval of official travel**. At this point, the prepared visit must pass through a sequence of approvals within the Verkhovna Rada from:

- the chair or co-chair of the relevant interparliamentary relations group;
- the chair of the parliamentary faction or group;
- the Secretary General of the Verkhovna Rada or their deputies;
- the Committee on Foreign Policy and Interparliamentary Cooperation.

This multi-level process makes the procedure subject to oversight but also increases its duration and dependence on obtaining signatures sequentially.



You constantly have to chase [...] the committee chair, then the friendship-group chair, then the First Deputy Chairman, then the Chairman, and then it goes somewhere else as well.

The official travel approval procedure remains excessively bureaucratic but is now perceived as a routine part of organising international travel. MPs describe it more as an administrative complexity to which they must adapt than as a systemic obstacle to official travel. The main challenge at this stage is therefore not merely the existence of approvals, but their predictability, speed and capacity to avoid obstructing international engagement where a visit is already supported by an invitation and partner-country backing.

Inviting Foreign Parliamentarians to Ukraine

The work of interparliamentary relations groups involves not only Ukrainian MPs' travel abroad but also receiving foreign parliamentarians in Ukraine. Foreign MPs can observe the situation directly and speak with Ukrainian officials, military personnel, communities and civil society representatives.

Organising such visits combines the work of MPs and representatives of the Verkhovna Rada Secretariat. MPs and group leaders generally set the political framework of the visit and maintain communication with their foreign counterparts, while meetings in the Verkhovna Rada may require the involvement of the Secretariat or the secretariats of the relevant committees. The programme may extend beyond formal parliamentary meetings and allow partners to see directly the conditions in which the country lives and works during the war, understand Ukraine's current needs and observe how international support already provided is used in practice. Government officials, embassies, the MFA, civil society organisations and other partners may also be involved in this coordination.

Despite the high effectiveness of this format, its regularity depends on foreign parliamentarians' willingness to travel to a country at war and on the availability of resources to receive a delegation. Because of security risks or perceptions of the war itself, such visits often require an additional political occasion around which a programme can be constructed. A further constraint is the absence of a stable budget for receiving foreign delegations, meaning that this format often depends on group members or partners being willing to cover organisational costs. These conditions limit the systematic use of one of the most persuasive and effective instruments of parliamentary diplomacy.

3.2. *Behind the Scenes of Interparliamentary Cooperation*

MPs broadly divide their work in friendship groups into two levels: maintaining contacts and resolving specific issues. To maintain contacts, friendship groups use informal communication channels through which MPs exchange information and experience with colleagues, discuss news and respond to particular developments. Close communication keeps colleagues in foreign parliaments connected to the Ukrainian information space and allows information to be promptly refuted or confirmed. At the same time, friendship groups are actively used to address strategic or urgent issues, as contacts with parliamentarians, government officials, civil society, and the media create leverage over decision-making. These contacts are highly intensive and responsive. They operate outside bureaucratic procedures and therefore become an effective instrument for resolving bilateral problems.



When issues arise, as they do [...], the easiest way is to call Hungarian politicians with whom you have a close relationship and ask them to help resolve the matter.

In the Ukrainian Parliament, each interparliamentary relations group independently plans its activities, proposes initiatives and develops cooperation at its own discretion. International experience shows that foreign groups often use more established formats of interaction, both internally and with external actors such as fellow parliamentarians and civil society stakeholders. For example, the German Bundestag holds parliamentary breakfasts attended by friendship-group members, civil society representatives and visiting parliamentary colleagues. In Ukraine, such practices are constrained primarily by the lack of resources available to friendship groups.

One important format that could not be identified in the work of the Verkhovna Rada's friendship groups is internal coordination and meetings of group members to discuss the results of visits, exchange accumulated knowledge and plan activities. Some foreign parliaments provide examples of closer interaction among group members, who share news and the results of their visits and ensure internal awareness.



They introduced a tradition whereby, whenever an MP, a group of MPs or ministers visit Ukraine or participate in an international meeting devoted to Ukraine, the group invites that person or those people to brief the other members on the results of the visit. For example, what did you see and hear? What does Ukraine need? What can [country name] do? They therefore also hold internal meetings, which they organise themselves.

Visits and Receptions

Visits and receptions are the most important formats of engagement within friendship groups. They require the greatest resources, including funding and organisational and logistical planning, but are the most effective means of building trust and friendships and launching joint projects and initiatives. Parliamentary tourism casts a negative shadow over such visits: some MPs travel not to pursue strategic or advocacy objectives but for leisure. Although most MPs reassessed the importance of parliamentary diplomacy after the full-scale invasion began, misuse of official travel has not been entirely eliminated. Despite stricter restrictions on MPs' foreign travel and requirements for arranging official trips, some parliamentarians still treat official travel as a holiday. The effectiveness of 'diplomatic' and 'tourist' visits, therefore, differs considerably. Although the latter generally attracts more public attention, it is the former that produces important international achievements.

There is consensus among MPs on the importance of inviting foreigners to Ukraine. Visits to Ukraine, including places affected by Russian aggression, help foreign parliamentarians better understand Ukrainian realities and the wider context and see how they can contribute to supporting Ukraine. Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, some MPs have therefore prioritised bringing foreign politicians to Ukraine, organising visits in accordance with all security requirements, influencing their agendas and showing life beyond Kyiv's government district.



We travelled to the East with all the relevant security measures and protocols. They saw how the soldiers were training, how unit cohesion was being developed and spoke with them personally. Their level of understanding was entirely different afterwards, and they conveyed this to colleagues in their parliament.

The effect of such visits does not end when the trip itself concludes. After returning home, foreign parliamentarians may **draw on what they saw in conversations with colleagues, party discussions, parliamentary debates, media commentary or when preparing decisions on Ukraine.** In this sense, a visit to Ukraine creates not only contact between individual MPs but also an additional channel of influence within the partner country's political system.



There were three people representing the three parties forming the government... It made an enormous impression and was a very emotional experience for them [...] We took them to a base that had been hit, which was also highly emotional. Journalists accompanied them, and there were striking images and everything else. When these MPs returned, the entire German media spent a week discussing only them, their impressions, their views and their photographs from Ukraine. Many people in Germany believe that this was the turning point, and it had effectively been initiated by the friendship group as a form of interparliamentary engagement.

A similar mechanism can be seen in the experience of parliamentarians from partner countries. Following his first visit to Ukraine in the summer of 2022, one chair of a friendship group in a partner-country parliament became one of the first politicians in his country to call for the supply of heavy weapons to Ukraine.

The impact of such visits is not limited to MPs themselves. **Assistants, advisers and staff of parliamentary offices in other countries are also an important audience.** In many parliamentary systems, they are involved in preparing positions, analytical materials and decisions. Engaging them, therefore, broadens the range of actors the Ukrainian side may influence.



Our MPs often think: “They are only assistants; what is the point of meeting them?” But it is important to understand that, in other parliaments, an MP’s office and team of assistants and advisers are highly influential. They very often shape the policy, decisions and ideas presented to an MP. It is therefore extremely important to work with them.

This broadens the understanding of parliamentary diplomacy, which operates not only through direct contact with MPs but also through those who shape their information and analytical environment. During visits to Ukraine, assistants and advisers may become intermediaries in transferring experience. After returning to their parliaments, they prepare materials for MPs and may influence the subsequent development of positions on Ukraine.

Visits undertaken through friendship groups have several distinctive features in addition to the bureaucratic approvals discussed above. One is the significant role of the chair or co-chair. The group chair draws up the delegation list, generally seeking to involve as broad a range of MPs as possible and to create delegations that are diverse not only politically but also in terms of sectoral interests. Representatives of foreign parliaments regard balanced factional representation in a delegation as an important element in building trust and pluralistic dialogue. Group leaders themselves also undertake more individual visits to meet their counterparts and participate more frequently in government visits and receptions, reflecting their greater involvement in bilateral relations.



As chair of the friendship group forming a delegation, I have to take current trends into account and select people who will strengthen both the group and Ukraine’s case.

Events

Large forums, conferences and parliamentary assemblies such as PACE often provide MPs with an entry point to the international arena and opportunities to meet people, build relationships and plan cooperation. Key issues are discussed and solutions developed in the corridors of global forums, before being consolidated over coffee or a glass of wine during the informal programme. This principle, familiar from traditional diplomacy, applies even more strongly to parliamentary diplomacy because of the flexibility and informality characteristic of parliamentarians’ communication. MPs also regard such platforms as an opportunity to share their expertise and present Ukraine’s experience to the international community. They therefore participate not only in in-person events but also in online events organised by civil society and academic institutions. Contacts established in this way develop into sustained and effective cooperation only through individual parliamentary initiative, regular communication and the implementation of joint projects.



Some groups are genuinely very effective, but this is often a consequence of people having attended conferences and simply met directly, at Davos, for example.

Personal Communication

The defining difference between friendship groups and other formats of governmental or parliamentary diplomacy is the close communication between representatives of different countries. Such relationships are developed in an informal atmosphere after official meetings and become key to mutual understanding and support. MPs share personal stories, identify like-minded colleagues and establish relationships that extend beyond parliamentary business to a more personal level. The context of Russian aggression, in which most MPs developed their relationships, gives these contacts a high degree of intensity, respon-

siveness and regularity. MPs who have formed friendships with colleagues may exchange messages or calls daily, resolve problems by telephone or send an email.



At the most basic level, if they know someone in Ukraine and personally worry about that person when they hear about another attack, news from Ukraine ceases to be abstract and becomes personal.



There is a group of MPs whom you can message at any time of day or night. It is already like communicating with colleagues in the Ukrainian Parliament, where some colleagues are closer and others more distant. You can communicate with them completely freely and call them directly on specific issues.

Such close communication makes it possible to correct false information, discuss more sensitive issues and gain a deeper understanding of both the situation in parliaments and public attitudes. MPs note that this level of communication is personal: everyone is first and foremost a person, not merely an elected representative, and can therefore ask direct questions and provide clear answers.

Friendship-group activities are not limited to the formats described above. Groups also hold online conferences and exchanges of experience, which were the only available format during the COVID-19 pandemic, and seek additional opportunities for meetings and dialogue. MPs engage in less formal formats with non-governmental organisations and business representatives, expanding and diversifying their networks of contacts. Active dialogue and the personal factor form the basis of effective friendship-group operation.

3.3. Thematic Priorities of Interparliamentary Cooperation and the Limits of Coordination

Interparliamentary cooperation has a relatively clear thematic framework but a considerably less developed internal coordination framework. In substantive terms, there is a relatively stable range of issues that regularly arise in MPs' work within interparliamentary relations groups. In organisational terms, however, cooperation depends to a considerable extent on individual initiative.

The Thematic Agenda of Interparliamentary Cooperation

Interparliamentary cooperation has a recognisable thematic core formed around military assistance, security, sanctions, international support for Ukraine, humanitarian cooperation, the situation of refugees, the return of children, cultural diplomacy, investment, energy, countering disinformation and particular sectoral areas. At the same time, its substance varies depending on the country, political context, group composition and current priorities of the bilateral agenda. The thematic profile is shaped by the partner country, the current political context and the specialisation of individual MPs. Security issues are central for some groups, while humanitarian, economic or European integration tracks are more prominent for others. In some cases, the subject matter also reflects the expertise of group members, with interparliamentary activities extending their committee specialisation in the Verkhovna Rada. The agenda of interparliamentary cooperation is therefore differentiated rather than standardised, combining priorities common to many groups with country-specific areas of work.

European Integration as an Overarching Theme of Interparliamentary Engagement

Among all the thematic areas identified, European integration occupies a special place as one of the most enduring themes through which much cooperation with European partners is understood. It is not a separate track alongside security or humanitarian assistance, but a broader framework combining support for Ukraine's EU membership, communication of reforms, explanation of legislative changes and external presentation of parliamentary activities.



European integration is generally one of the key themes of all our contacts with European partners.



Virtually all communication with EU parliaments is connected in one way or another with European integration.

It is important that European integration has a practical rather than symbolic dimension in interparliamentary engagement. It involves discussion of specific reforms, partners' expectations, existing challenges and assessments of the pace of change and Parliament's capacity to advance the relevant agenda. In this sense, interparliamentary relations groups are not merely platforms for political support, but also channels for explaining how Ukraine is progressing towards membership. The importance of European integration is not identical in every relationship: for some partners, it is the central axis of cooperation, while for others, it forms the general background. European integration should therefore be viewed as an overarching theme that provides a common language for engagement with European partners while acquiring different content depending on the particular relationship. At this stage, cooperation with some EU Member States involves communicating progress rather than advocating the principle of integration itself, as broad support for Ukraine's European integration has already been secured from most partner countries over previous years.



This is no longer so much advocacy for the idea of accession itself as an explanation of progress and what has already been achieved.



Most partners already support Ukraine's accession to the EU. The question now is how we communicate the pace of reforms.

Fragmentation of Practical Work: The Logic of 'Everyone for Themselves'

Despite relatively clear thematic priorities, the practical organisation of interparliamentary cooperation is considerably less coherent. Group activities often take the form not of consistent collective work but of a collection of individual initiatives. Individual active MPs or group leaders play a significant role and effectively sustain particular areas of work. In these circumstances, the existence of a group does not always imply close interaction among its members.



Energy was an important issue for us, particularly after the attacks on energy infrastructure... Frankly, this was largely separate from the friendship group as a whole. It was my personal activity.

Fragmentation is most evident in the uneven level of participation. Some MPs are actively engaged in interparliamentary work, while others participate occasionally or only where a subject directly corresponds to their profile or political interests. Particular areas may depend on the personal network, communication skills and motivation of an individual MP. In this context, the phrase 'everyone for themselves' does not mean that interaction is entirely absent, but rather that structures are too weak to transform individual initiatives into genuinely collective practice.



There are members of the [name] Committee. They are interested in [country name] and the friendship group's work only when they can observe a mechanism for supporting and protecting the sector for which the Committee is responsible. After that, they may never travel there again.

How 'One Voice' Operates: From Wartime Consensus to Selective Consistency

In 2022, Parliament genuinely spoke with one voice in interparliamentary engagement. During the initial stage of the full-scale war, key foreign policy messages were largely aligned, and the need to present Ukraine externally as a politically consolidated community was supported by most MPs regardless of factional affiliation. That consistency emerged naturally rather than through a formal framework, as a collective response to the full-scale invasion. 'One Voice' was therefore not a declarative formula in 2022 but an actual practice of external communication. It was based on a broad political consensus concerning fundamental national interests, above all, international support for Ukraine, military assistance, sanctions pressure on Russia and the need to preserve partners' solidarity.



As regards "One Voice", it was obviously completely natural and entirely sincere at the beginning.



This "One Voice" policy is a principle not only for representatives of the governing majority in Parliament but for the opposition as well: we all work in the same direction on international affairs.

Over time, this consistency weakened. The common position did not disappear completely, but the range of issues on which it functions as a single voice narrowed. Core messages on support for Ukraine, the need for military, financial and political assistance and the importance of maintaining international solidarity continue to be supported by all MPs. A shared framework remains in matters concerning external support for the state and continues to be an important component of interparliamentary communication. It would therefore be inaccurate to speak of the complete disappearance of 'One Voice': it continues to exist at the level of fundamental messages concerning the war and support for Ukraine.

The single voice weakens most visibly when Ukraine's domestic political processes become the subject of external communication. This is where growing differences among MPs and divergent interpretations of the domestic situation are observed. While a shared state-centred framework operates in relation to international support, MPs discussing internal developments abroad more often communicate from their own political position, factional affiliation or personal perspective. The boundary of 'One Voice' therefore lies less between different groups of MPs than between two types of subject: external support for Ukraine, where consensus remains, and communication of domestic politics, where there is increasing scope for divergent positions.



Regarding delegations and “One Voice”, the most recent example is that a representative of [faction name] travelled with me and [...] said from morning to night that he would explain that the single-party majority was illusory, existed only on paper, did not have the votes and so on.



There are colleagues who will spend the coffee break telling everyone that they are not allowed to travel [on official trips].



I think “One Voice” remains on issues concerning countering Russia, providing assistance and financial support, weapons, sanctions, pressure on Russia and so on. In 99 cases out of 100, I do not know, perhaps something differs somewhere.

‘One Voice’ should therefore be understood not as a permanent and uniformly strong characteristic of interparliamentary cooperation, but as a variable mode of consistency. In 2022, it took the form of a broad political consensus and operated in practice as MPs’ common voice in external communication. Since then, this mode has become more selective. Its core has been preserved around key messages of support for Ukraine, while individualised communication has become stronger on matters concerning domestic processes. **The current state of ‘One Voice’ in the interparliamentary sphere should therefore be described not through a binary ‘present/absent’ distinction but through varying levels of consistency depending on the subject of communication.**

4. Reporting on the Activities of Interparliamentary Relations Groups

4.1. *International Practice in Reporting by Interparliamentary Relations Groups*

The impact and effectiveness of parliamentary diplomacy are difficult to quantify or assess. Reporting on international activities nevertheless helps monitor and record parliamentarians' achievements and the work undertaken. The Indicators for Democratic Parliaments developed by the Inter-Parliamentary Union include reporting as one of the criteria for assessing parliamentary diplomacy.⁴⁰ Parliaments require MPs to report on international visits and permanent delegations to report on their work during sessions of interparliamentary institutions.

Interparliamentary relations groups are among the least regulated forms of parliamentary diplomacy. The rules governing their operation, and consequently their reporting practices, vary considerably between parliaments.

For example, the **Croatian Sabor** provides⁴¹ that friendship groups submit reports on visits to the Committee on Interparliamentary Cooperation. On the parliamentary website, however, these are published only as news items. The information becomes part of a summary publication containing statistics on Parliament's international activities for the half-year and annual reporting periods.

The **activities of friendship groups in the Romanian Parliament**⁴² can be traced through the Information Bulletin, which twice a year presents a summary of interparliamentary relations groups' activities during the current session. The summary does not provide a detailed description of events but merely lists bilateral meetings, dates and names.

By contrast with this news-based coverage, both chambers of the **French Parliament** have clearly defined formats and templates for public reports on visits and receptions. In the Senate, friendship groups submit four-page reports⁴³ describing the course of meetings and subjects discussed and highlighting important aspects of bilateral relations. The reports also include photographs from the event, while the final page lists the composition of the French delegation and contains participants' photographs. Reports published by the National Assembly⁴⁴ describe friendship-group visits in greater detail: (1) they list delegation members and explain the purpose of the visit, (2) they sometimes thank embassies for assistance in organising the trip or provide general impressions and (3) they present a chronological account of each day of the visit, mentioning all meetings, lunches, dinners and other activities and illustrating them with photographs. Both chambers publish infor-

⁴⁰ Dimension: 1.11.4 Parliamentary diplomacy. Indicators for Democratic Parliaments.

⁴¹ Pravilnik o osnivanju i djelokrugu rada skupina prijateljstva. Hrvatski sabor.

⁴² PREZENTARE GENERALĂ A GRUPURILOR PARLAMENTARE DE PRIETENIE. Senatul României.

⁴³ Comptes rendus des accueils et des déplacements des groupes interparlementaires d'amitié — Quatre pages. Sénat.

⁴⁴ Les Groupes d'amitié parlementaires: rapports de missions et de réceptions. Assemblée nationale.

mation on other forms of friendship-group activity, such as meetings with foreign ministers, ambassadors and representatives of non-governmental organisations, although reports are not always attached.

Reporting in the **German Bundestag** takes a different form. Friendship groups send reports on visits and receptions to the President of the Bundestag, while information for the public is presented in press releases containing details of the delegation's composition, the topics discussed and the state of cooperation between the countries. On the basis of these reports, the President of the Bundestag prepares a biennial Report on International Activities and Commitments⁴⁵, covering the activities of members of the Presidium, committees, permanent delegations, friendship groups and individual MPs, as well as consolidated statistics and expenditure.

Reports by interparliamentary relations groups in the **Canadian Parliament**⁴⁶ use a diplomatic style and have a clear structure: an introduction describing the delegation, preparations for the visit and the chronology of the trip, followed by thematic sections covering the principal events and most important discussions.

In most cases, information on friendship-group activities is not publicly available. Parliamentary websites publish press releases or news items, while MPs use personal pages or social media to communicate international activities. Foreign parliamentarians also regard this communication gap as a problem. Addressing it requires additional administrative resources but is important for maintaining the transparency of parliamentary diplomacy and informing the public about the groups' work.



We do not publish any information about events, meetings and so on. Unfortunately, this information is therefore difficult to find. I believe we could improve the situation somewhat in this respect.

Overall, international experience shows that there is no single standardised reporting practice. Reporting by friendship groups is not a mandatory requirement, and parliaments tend to publish consolidated information on international activities rather than individual reports. Nevertheless, where friendship groups are assigned strategic importance, more information about their activities is generally available publicly.

4.2. Reporting Practice in Ukraine

Reporting by interparliamentary relations groups in Ukraine takes place at two levels. The first concerns MPs' official travel, after which each MP submits an individual report on the work performed and the official nature of the trip. The second consists of annual group reports submitted by the group's chair or co-chairs, which are intended to summarise activities in the relevant area during the year. Individual reporting records a specific trip, while annual reporting should consolidate such activities into an overall picture of the group's work. In practice, however, these two levels are not always linked, which is one of the key challenges affecting interparliamentary relations groups.

⁴⁵ Unterrichtung durch die Präsidentin des Deutschen Bundestages: Bericht über die internationalen Aktivitäten und Verpflichtungen des Deutschen Bundestages. Drucksache 20/15113. Deutscher Bundestag, 2025.

⁴⁶ Report of the Canada–Japan Inter-Parliamentary Group. 22nd Bilateral Meeting. Tokyo and Tohoku, Japan. From May 13 to 17, 2024. Parliament of Canada.

Individual Reporting after Official Travel

Individual reporting following foreign official travel is a mandatory component of an MP's official trip. Unlike annual group reports, these documents are not public, making their subsequent use less visible. In practice, an individual report serves not as an instrument for analysing the results of parliamentary diplomacy but as part of the authorisation and control procedure. It must confirm that the trip was work-related and is also a precondition for subsequent official travel.



Of course, whenever you travel officially, you always submit a report.



Naturally, I write as detailed a report as possible for the Verkhovna Rada because it is an official trip. This is mandatory.

As noted in the [subsection on authorisations](#), since the beginning of the full-scale war, an MP's travel abroad requires several internal parliamentary approvals. One is approval by the chair or co-chair of the relevant interparliamentary relations group. Through this approval, the group leadership can at least see which MPs are travelling within the relevant area and monitor whether reports are submitted upon their return.

This is important because not every trip is automatically discussed within the group after it ends. Where an MP sends the report to the group leadership, information on meetings held, new contacts and agreements may be used in the group's subsequent work, including during future visits or when preparing the annual report.

In group practice, reporting functions not only as an administrative requirement but also **as a means of internal discipline**. If an MP does not provide a report to the group leadership, approval of their next official trip may take longer. For MPs, this creates an additional procedural dependency, but for group leaders it provides an opportunity to monitor activity in the relevant area. Without such a mechanism, some individual trips could remain outside the group's internal coordination and be omitted from its annual report.



If they do not submit it, the next time they wait a little longer for approval of their next official trip and remember that they can copy us on the previous report they failed to send.

This also applies to visits to countries covered by other interparliamentary relations groups. If an MP travels to a country whose cooperation group they do not lead, the trip must be approved by the chair or co-chair of the relevant group. This requirement allows group leaders to see not only the activity of their own members but also visits by other MPs to the country for which they coordinate cooperation.



If I travel to Canada, for example, I also need the approval of the chair of the Canada friendship group. Likewise, I approve travel by people going to [country name]. This is also a mandatory requirement.

Despite its potential coordination value, **MPs generally perceive individual reporting as a formal procedural step.** It must be completed to close the official trip and avoid problems with subsequent travel. Once individual reports have been submitted, it is not always clear how they are processed, whether they are analysed or whether they are used in further work. The report, therefore, remains a mandatory element of the control system, but functions only weakly as a tool for analysing the results of a visit and coordinating follow-up.



Just as every MP who travels officially is required to write a report afterwards. That too is purely a formality.



Individual reports are sent somewhere in the Secretariat and simply disappear there.

A further problem is the absence of an established template or clear guidance for individual post-travel reports. The content, therefore, depends on how the MP, or their team, understands the purpose of reporting. Some MPs attempt to describe a trip in a structured manner, but this is an individual practice rather than the product of a common approach.



Frankly, there was no guidance. When I asked for it, I received no answer.



I have read some reports, and they are broadly similar. We therefore try, at our own discretion, to describe the trip in a sufficiently structured way. If someone is genuinely interested in more detail, they call or write.

Assessing such activities through reports nevertheless has limitations, as interparliamentary work is often informal and cannot be reduced to the number of trips, meetings or public outcomes. A minimum reporting structure is therefore needed not to measure an MP's effectiveness, but to strengthen coordination and accountability in parliamentary diplomacy.

The greatest challenge arises at the interface between individual and annual reporting. After an official trip, an MP submits a report to the Committee on Foreign Policy and Interparliamentary Cooperation, including through the relevant secretariat. MPs do not, however, always send an additional copy to the group leadership responsible for preparing the consolidated annual report on activities in the relevant area. As a result, group chairs or co-chairs must separately collect information from MPs on trips, meetings and agreements, even though some of this data have already been submitted through individual post-travel reporting.



There is some duplication in these reports because every MP who travels officially must subsequently write a report and send it to the secretariat. Then, at the end of the year, the friendship-group chairs must submit this report as well.

The problem, therefore, lies not in the annual reporting requirement itself, but in the fact that information from individual post-travel reports does not always become working material for the group leadership. In these circumstances, annual reporting becomes a separate exercise in repeatedly collecting, verifying and organising information on group activity.

Annual Group Reporting

An annual report should transform disparate trips, meetings and contacts involving group members into a coherent picture of work with the country concerned. In this sense, it is not merely an administrative document but a potential instrument of institutional memory, showing how engagement developed, which contacts have already been established and what requires follow-up. In practice, however, preparing such a report depends largely on the chair, co-chairs and their assistants, who must collect information on activities during the year, even where some took place without their direct involvement.



In our case, my assistants do this. A large proportion of the friendship group's activity consists of what I do directly, so we already have the information. At the end of the year, when reports had to be submitted, I asked everyone in the friendship-group chat to send information on what they had done in relation to [country name]. It was very difficult to collect.

Group leaders prepare annual reports as part of the same activity that generally relies on their own initiative, their assistants and group members' willingness to provide information. Reporting, therefore, becomes not only a form of accountability but also an additional administrative burden in an area without dedicated organisational support.



Friendship-group chairs do this and, frankly, it is an additional workload because MPs have relatively limited resources.



As friendship-group chairs, we receive no additional resources: no additional assistants and no additional staff from any secretariats or administrative bodies.

The quality of an annual report, therefore, depends not only on whether activities took place, but also on whether the group leadership has access to information from other MPs, whether it can be collected at the end of the year and how fully it can be organised in the report. Formally, failure to submit an annual report may provide grounds for the Committee on Foreign Policy and Interparliamentary Cooperation to consider changing the group's leadership.⁴⁷ In practice, however, this mechanism does not appear to function as an effective means of influence, and the absence of some reports is not accompanied by visible changes in leadership. Annual reporting, therefore, relies less on sanctions than on the initiative of the group leadership, the availability of a team and members' willingness to provide information.



We cannot compel anyone or introduce sanctions. Some provide information, and some do not. There are simply different countries and different circumstances. Some people genuinely work with these countries and regularly hold joint events, exchange delegations, and visits. Each country has to be considered separately.

A further difficulty is that **not all results of group activities can be recorded in a report**. Some interparliamentary work takes place through informal conversations and preliminary arrangements that are important for future engagement but cannot always be described in detail in a public document. Annual reporting, therefore, raises questions not only of

⁴⁷ Regulation on Parliamentary Groups of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on Interparliamentary Relations with Foreign States: Order No. 223 of the Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine of 22 June 2020.

completeness but also of the depth of disclosure, including the boundary between information that should be recorded in a public report and information requiring internal official discussion. Without such a distinction, a report either remains excessively general or risks disclosing information that could undermine subsequent communication.



When you return to Ukraine, there are things you simply cannot include in this reporting.



Believe me, their embassy also monitors what we report. We are open, after all. They may ask: so you travelled there specifically about this issue? Why is this issue important to you? They then begin investigating and looking for opposing policies or counterarguments.

Despite the public nature of annual reports, MPs have no consistent understanding of what happens to these documents after submission. They may be published and formally noted, but it is unclear whether the reports are used for further analysis of cooperation with a particular country by the Verkhovna Rada Committee on Foreign Policy and Interparliamentary Cooperation or the Verkhovna Rada Secretariat. Under this model, a report records past activity but does not necessarily help assess the dynamics of engagement, identify weaknesses or formulate next steps.



Most of the time, it is done simply to tick a box and complete the formality.



It is all consolidated, and the bureaucratic machinery processes it. I cannot say there is some kind of super-brain analysing everything, producing proposals, a vision and so on. If we are speaking about the Verkhovna Rada as an institution or the Committee, this is still more about form.

Annual reporting therefore exists as a formal accountability mechanism, but in MPs' practice it remains dependent on personal initiative, available resources and the group's internal coordination. It cannot, therefore, be assessed solely on the basis of whether a report was submitted. It is also important to understand what the documents actually record, whether they make it possible to reconstruct the group's real activities and whether they reveal more than formal compliance with a reporting requirement.

How Group Activities Are Reflected in Annual Reports

Annual reporting by interparliamentary relations groups is provided for in the Regulation on Parliamentary Groups, but its significance extends beyond compliance with a reporting requirement. Such reports should provide an open institutional record of contacts with foreign parliaments, formats of engagement and key areas of cooperation. Analysis of the published reports nevertheless shows that the problem concerns not only regular submission, but also whether these documents make it possible to establish what activities the group undertook in its engagement with the country concerned.

The study analysed 43 annual reports by interparliamentary relations groups with EU countries for 2022–2025. As of May 2026, the European Union has 27 Member States, and the Verkhovna Rada’s list of parliamentary groups included a group with each of them. If every group had reported annually, the maximum expected number of reports over four years would have been 108. By contrast, the page containing parliamentary-group reports on the Verkhovna Rada website included 43 annual reports from 18 groups, approximately 40% of the maximum expected number⁴⁸.

Table 1. Regularity of Publication of Annual Reports by Groups in EU Countries, 2022–2025

Number of reports published for 2022–2025	Number of groups	Share of the 27 groups
4 out of 4 years	3	11%
3 out of 4 years	6	22%
2 out of 4 years	4	15%
1 out of 4 years	5	19%
0 out of 4 years	9	33%

The consolidated data demonstrate uneven public reporting: a complete reporting history for 2022–2025 can be reconstructed for only three of the 27 groups. Reports for only some years are available for 15 groups, while no annual report was identified for nine groups during this period. This does not mean that the groups concerned undertook no activities, but it shows that a significant number of heads of interparliamentary relations groups have not submitted their annual reports to the Committee on Foreign Policy⁴⁹.

Several typical approaches to structuring the available reports can be identified:

- **division into sections**, separately presenting general information on the group, an assessment of cooperation, visits, meetings, activities of the group leadership, conclusions or priorities for the following year;
- **continuous prose**, with different types of activity described without clear separation;
- **a table format**, although such reports are not standardised either, as different groups use different indicators;
- **a general overview of bilateral relations**, focusing primarily not on specific group actions but on the partner country’s position, the political context or the overall state of cooperation.

⁴⁸ Based on a count of reports published on the website of the Committee on Foreign Policy and Interparliamentary Cooperation as on 20 April 2026.

⁴⁹ Video recording of the meeting of the Committee on Foreign Policy and Interparliamentary Cooperation held on 11 August 2026.

This structural diversity complicates comparative analysis and the reconstruction of group activities using common criteria.

Transparency of parliamentary work requires not only the publication of reports, but also that a reader who was not directly involved can understand the substance of the parliamentary groups' activities. The analysis, therefore, used the corpus of publicly available annual reports to assess the extent to which these documents make it possible to identify the participants, format and substance of group interactions with the countries concerned.

For this purpose, a distinction was drawn between declared activities and minimally reconstructable interactions. In this study, a declared activity means an action or format of work presented by the report's authors as a group activity. Minimally reconstructable interactions were defined as activities for which the report made it possible to establish that a group representative had contact with representatives of the relevant country or its institutions and to identify, at least at a basic level, the format and substance of the interaction. [Annex 5](#) sets out the detailed methodology for selecting and counting activities and defining declared activities and minimally reconstructable interactions.

Table 2. Declared Activities and Minimally Reconstructable Interactions in Annual Reports by Groups with EU Countries, 2022–2025

Year	Number of reports identified	Declared activities	Minimally reconstructable interactions
2022	13	74	63
2023	13	65	50
2024	5	34	26
2025	12	62	50
Total	43	235	189

The consolidated data show that the 43 reports analysed declared 235 activities, of which 189 could be classified as minimally reconstructable interactions under common criteria. Approximately one fifth of declared activities could therefore not be counted as specific group interactions with the relevant country.

The difference between these indicators arises primarily in several typical situations:

- **inconsistent recording of letters**, appeals, media activities and publications: some groups describe such formats in detail, while others omit them or present them in aggregate form;
- **general formulations** such as 'a number of meetings', 'ongoing communication' or 'a series of publications' without specifying the quantity;
- **events taking place during broader visits or delegations** where the participation or role of the particular group is not specified;

- **activities for which no participation by representatives of the relevant country was recorded**, including interaction with Ukrainian public authorities or civil society organisations.

These data do not constitute a ranking of group activity or effectiveness. A more detailed report may create the impression of greater activity by separately describing elements of a single visit or the broader context of cooperation. Conversely, a shorter report may omit some meetings, participants or results. The quantitative analysis in this study is therefore used not to compare the effectiveness of groups, but to assess the extent to which their activities are visible and reconstructable in public annual reports.

The principal problem, therefore, concerns not only missing reports but also the fact that the available documents do not always make it possible to understand the full scope and substance of a group's work during the year. For readers not directly involved in the group's activities, a report does not always make clear which activities are genuinely related to the group's work, what role it played and what the broader context of bilateral relations was. In view of the principles of transparency in parliamentary work,⁵⁰ what matters is not only the publication of information itself, but also whether it is accessible, timely and understandable to different groups within society. Introducing minimum requirements for the structure of annual reports could therefore transform reporting into an instrument of parliamentary transparency that makes group activities understandable, reconstructable and accountable.

Recommended Content of Reports

Based on the analysis of reporting practice, the study developed two templates: an individual post-travel report and an annual group report. The individual template proposes recording basic information on the trip, the participating MP and the source of funding, meetings held, topics discussed, other activities undertaken during the trip and, where applicable, results achieved. The annual template proposes summarising the group's work during the year through information on its membership, a brief overview of activities, visits, receptions, online interactions, other forms of cooperation and plans for the following year. Both templates are included in [the annexes to this study](#).

The proposed templates are not intended to provide an automatic assessment of the effectiveness of a group or an individual MP. In parliamentary diplomacy, results are not always rapid or formally measurable. Some of the work consists of maintaining contacts, securing access to relevant parliamentarians, explaining Ukraine's position and creating conditions for future engagement. The absence of a specific result following an individual meeting, visit or year of work does not therefore necessarily mean that no substantive activity took place.

It is therefore difficult to derive universal assessment criteria that would operate equally appropriately across different groups, countries and formats of engagement.



You cannot derive criteria. The number of visits? Fine, you can come, shake hands, take a photograph and leave. What does that achieve?



Criteria based on resolutions or decisions concerning Ukraine adopted by a particular parliament would also be unfair, because this is certainly not exclusively the work of the friendship group. Every country has an embassy working daily and also interacting with MPs.

⁵⁰ Indicators for Democratic Parliaments. Indicator 3.1: Transparency of parliamentary processes. Dimension 3.1.1: Transparency of parliamentary work. Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2023.

In this context, a report should record not only achievements, where they exist, but also basic information on the engagement itself: who was involved, which issues were discussed, the format of communication and what may require follow-up. Such a structure makes it possible to distinguish the group's own activity from a general political overview or formal description of an event. It also reduces the risk that a report will consist of general formulations from which the group's contribution cannot be understood.



This is ongoing, long-term work and engagement; it is access to those parliamentarians and the opportunity, through your presence, to strengthen the message and convey Ukraine's story.

At the same time, because parliamentary diplomacy is informal, a report cannot fully reflect the entire substance of a group's work. Some activities take place through informal contacts, preliminary arrangements or communication that cannot always be described in detail in a public document. This does not, however, remove the need for a minimum reporting structure. Its purpose is not to assess the group's effectiveness, but to understand whether work is taking place, with whom it is being conducted and which issues require follow-up.



It is very difficult to assess, particularly the work of parliamentarians, because it is often informal.



I cannot measure it because sometimes this is not the official work of the friendship group, but contacts developed through its work or on the occasion of a friendship-group meeting or something similar.

If a group undertook no activities during the year or did not submit a report, this should be visible to the Committee on Foreign Policy and Interparliamentary Cooperation and the Verkhovna Rada Secretariat. Without such a record, it is difficult to distinguish between a situation in which cooperation did not in fact take place and one in which it took place but was not reflected in a public report.

Problems Identified

1. *Funding*

Funding is one of the key institutional obstacles to the sustainable operation of interparliamentary relations groups identified by MPs themselves. According to the study, friendship-group activities largely lack guaranteed budgetary support. Resources for travel, hosting foreign delegations, organising meetings, logistics, accommodation, supporting materials and even basic representation expenses often have to be sought separately. In practice, this means that interparliamentary relations groups do not operate as a fully resourced instrument of parliamentary diplomacy but depend on ad hoc opportunities such as invitations from the host side, support from donors, civil society organisations and international foundations or MPs' own funds. This model makes group activities uneven and unstable, as the very possibility of engaging in international activities depends not only on political rationale or need but also on whether resources can be found for a particular visit.

This problem directly affects MPs' capacity to perform the function of parliamentary diplomacy. The absence of basic funding restricts the regularity of contacts, complicates the planning of visits and limits the ability to work systematically with priority countries. Even where there is a political need or a request from partners, MPs may be constrained by the cost of tickets, accommodation, meals, domestic transport or organisational support. Importantly, funding affects not only formal attendance at meetings but also the informal dimension of diplomatic work: behind-the-scenes conversations, joint events and engagement with assistants, advisers, experts and representatives of partner countries' political environments. These formats often build trust, ensure continuity of contact and enable Ukraine's interests to be advanced beyond the formal agenda.

The shortage of funding also creates inequality of participation between MPs and groups. Greater opportunities are available to those with personal resources, access to donor networks or the capacity to arrange support independently. In such circumstances, the composition of delegations and the level of group activity may be determined less by competence than by the ability to secure or identify funding. This creates a risk of distorted representation: the most active participants in parliamentary diplomacy may not be those with the greatest expertise or those most needed in a particular area, but those with better organisational and resource capacity.

A separate dimension of the problem concerns accountability. Where a trip is financed not from the parliamentary budget but from an MP's own funds, by the host side or by external organisations, the logic of institutional responsibility for results is weakened. In such circumstances, an MP may regard the trip as an activity for which full reporting to Parliament or the public is unnecessary because the state did not directly cover the cost. This does not remove the obligation to act in the public interest, but in practice, the model weakens the link between resources, mandate and results. The absence of transparent information on funding sources also makes it more difficult to assess whether external actors influenced the visit's priorities, the delegation's composition or the meeting agenda.

External funding creates an additional risk that parliamentary diplomacy will depend on the agendas of donors, host parties or organisations able to support a particular visit. Even where such funding is provided in good faith and is intended to support Ukraine, the structure of dependence means that not all important areas receive equal attention. Priority is given to visits for which resources have been found rather than those that are most strategic from a foreign policy perspective. This is particularly problematic in relations with countries where contacts must be developed over a long period, Ukraine's position must be

explained, or engagement is needed with less obvious but potentially important partners. In such circumstances, parliamentary diplomacy may respond to available opportunities instead of operating in accordance with a long-term plan.

Financial instability also affects internal perceptions of interparliamentary relations groups. Where an activity is not supported with resources, it begins to be seen as an additional, largely voluntary burden. This reduces motivation for systematic participation, particularly where results are long-term and not always visible publicly. Parliamentary diplomacy nevertheless remains an important instrument for representing Ukraine abroad and requires sustained participation by MPs. A gap, therefore, arises between the political importance of this work and the limited institutional conditions under which it is carried out.

2. Reporting

The reporting problem concerns not only the formal presence or absence of reports, but also the weakness of the system for recording, analysing and using the results of parliamentary diplomacy. According to the study, post-travel or annual group reports are often submitted in an unstructured format that does not always reveal the actual substance of the work: (1) who was engaged, (2) which issues were raised, (3) what agreements were reached, and (4) which issues require further follow-up. Reporting, therefore, exists as a procedure, but does not always function as an instrument for assessing how effectively information is transferred and for planning further action.

The formal nature of reporting is reinforced by the fact that MPs do not always understand what happens to the documents after submission. The study repeatedly records the perception of reporting as a 'tick-box' exercise: a document is prepared and sent to the Verkhovna Rada Secretariat or the relevant committee secretariat, after which the MP receives no feedback, sees no subsequent analysis and is not involved in discussing the results. In such circumstances, the report ceases to form part of a political or institutional cycle. It is not returned to the MP with requests for clarification, does not become a basis for coordination with the MFA or other groups and is not used to build systematic knowledge of the partner country. This reduces the motivation to devote time to preparing a high-quality document.

The result is a loss of institutional memory. If data on who was engaged, which issues were discussed, what agreements were reached and what requires further action are not recorded in a standardised form suitable for subsequent use, they remain largely in the memories of individual MPs, assistants or group leaders. When the composition of a delegation, group leadership or parliamentary convocation changes, a significant proportion of this accumulated knowledge may be lost. Each new activity then risks beginning almost from scratch, without a full understanding of previous arrangements.

A separate problem is that individual reports are not public. Closed or limited access reduces external scrutiny of the substance of parliamentary diplomacy and weakens MPs' political incentive to demonstrate results. If a report is not public and is not subject to public or expert scrutiny, an MP has less incentive to explain thoroughly why a visit took place, which issues were advanced and how it benefited Ukraine's interests. This also makes it more difficult to distinguish substantive working visits from parliamentary tourism. Public assessment of MPs' international activities, therefore, more often focuses on the fact of travel abroad rather than the substance of their work.

The non-public nature of reporting has another consequence: weak accountability for the use of time, mandate and resources. Even where a trip was not financed from the state budget, an MP acts as a public official and a representative of Parliament. The absence of a clear reporting system makes it impossible to assess whether specific results were

achieved or whether a contact requires follow-up. This creates scope for ambiguous interpretations of official travel: some trips may be important advocacy instruments, while others may produce minimal substantive results or constitute parliamentary tourism. Without transparent reporting, the distinction between them remains insufficiently visible.

At the same time, the reporting format cannot always reflect the actual nature of parliamentary diplomacy. Some important work takes place not in official meetings but through informal conversations, preliminary arrangements, the discreet communication of signals or communication with political actors that cannot always be fully described publicly. This creates tension between the need for transparency and the need to preserve the diplomatic sensitivity of certain contacts. The problem is that the current system does not provide a sufficiently clear balance between these requirements: reports either remain formal or fail to provide a complete picture of the actual result.

Reporting is also linked to the problem of internal coordination. The materials refer to different types of reports: individual reports following official travel and consolidated group reports. However, there is not always a substantive link between them. Group leaders may collect information separately from participants, while MPs separately submit reports to the Verkhovna Rada Secretariat, and the final result does not always develop into a coherent picture of the group's activities. The most significant consequence is that weak reporting reduces the overall manageability of parliamentary diplomacy. Without high-quality reports, it is difficult to determine which groups are genuinely active, which areas require strengthening, where active engagement exists and where a group is largely nominal.

3. Coordination

Coordination of interparliamentary relations groups is fragmented and depends to a considerable extent on the personal activity of group leaders or individual MPs. This problem is also directly linked to reporting. Contact with the MFA, embassies and relevant ministries is often developed as an individual practice rather than an established procedure. Where an MP or group leader independently requests talking points, analytical materials or briefings, engagement may be productive. In the absence of such a request, coordination often does not arise automatically.

This results in different levels of consistency between positions. Some groups receive support from embassies or the MFA, while others operate almost autonomously. This complicates the development of a common foreign policy line. The materials also indicate a lack of systematic interaction within the 'MFA-groups-partners' triangle, suggesting that parliamentary diplomacy is not fully integrated into the broader foreign policy strategy.

Internal coordination within groups is also unstable. Communication within the group, the sharing of accumulated knowledge and the use of group chats are all ad hoc practices that vary from one group to another.

4. Competence

The competence problem has several dimensions: knowledge of foreign languages, understanding of the international context, negotiating capacity and the ability to represent state interests. Some MPs involved in international activities do not have sufficient language proficiency or subject-matter expertise to communicate effectively with foreign partners. Insufficient proficiency in English and partner-country languages is particularly evident.

Insufficient competence reduces the quality of Ukraine's international representation, where delegation members cannot communicate independently with partners. It also restricts the ability to build personal relationships, an important component of parliamentary diplomacy. The evidence includes criticism of situations in which delegations were composed on the basis of political or organisational arrangements rather than expertise or relevance to the subject matter.

A separate problem is the perception of international travel as a status-enhancing or tourist opportunity, known as parliamentary tourism. The materials refer to working visits being combined with private interests and to cases where MPs used official travel without producing an adequate substantive result.

5. Communication and Competition

The communication problem is reflected in a lack of consistent alignment among MPs during international contacts. The materials indicate that the principle of speaking with one voice operates primarily on specific issues concerning countering Russia, support for Ukraine, sanctions and military assistance. Across the broader field of international communication, consistency depends on the political context, the individuals involved and the level of internal trust within delegations. While all Ukrainian MPs' positions were informally aligned in 2022, this weakened over time, including in informal communication with partners.

This creates a risk that domestic political competition will spill over into the foreign policy sphere. Where MPs emphasise internal conflicts or the positions of their own political force during international meetings, partners receive a less coherent signal concerning Ukraine's priorities. This does not necessarily undermine support for Ukraine, but it complicates the perception of parliamentary diplomacy as a coordinated instrument of state policy.

Competition is also evident in contests for leadership positions, participation in delegations and control over contacts. The study identified situations in which the transfer of contacts between MPs was limited because contacts were perceived as a political resource. This weakens the institutional sustainability of parliamentary diplomacy: when Parliament's membership changes, elections take place in partner countries or group leaders change, some established relationships may be lost.

Recommendations

To Ukrainian MPs and Interparliamentary Relations Groups

1. Ensure the systematic public disclosure of individual reports on official travel undertaken within interparliamentary cooperation, including information on the sources of funding for foreign official travel.
2. Communicate the results of interparliamentary activities more actively and publish reports in open access through their personal communication channels, including social media.
3. Introduce a standardised reporting template for interparliamentary relations groups. Provide training for friendship-group leaders on how to complete it.
4. Hold regular coordination meetings of members within each interparliamentary relations group, both for prompt discussion of current issues and for annual activity planning.
5. Use the opportunities provided by the Research Service and other institutional mechanisms to learn foreign languages.
6. Continue to apply the 'One Voice' principle in interparliamentary communication.
7. Develop activity plans for interparliamentary relations groups, defining key priorities and areas of work.
8. Coordinate international visits and interparliamentary contacts with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine and the relevant embassies.
9. Share information among interparliamentary relations groups on opportunities and practices for securing third-party funding.
10. Introduce the practice of submitting copies of reports on foreign official travel to the leadership of the relevant interparliamentary relations group, rather than sending them only to the secretariat of the Committee on Foreign Policy and Interparliamentary Cooperation.
11. Form parliamentary delegations with due regard to political balance and representation of both the governing majority and the opposition.

To the Verkhovna Rada Secretariat

1. Consider providing training for MPs of future convocations with the involvement of MPs from previous convocations who have experience of interparliamentary activities.
2. Consider providing training on mechanisms and sources for securing funding for interparliamentary activities.

3. Establish systematic collection and consolidation of statistical data on parliamentary diplomacy in a single annual consolidated report of Parliament.
4. Consider establishing mechanisms for financial support of interparliamentary relations groups, primarily those working with EU Member States.
5. Add annual activity reports to the relevant group pages on the website of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine.

To the Committees of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine

1. Strengthen coordination between the Committee on Foreign Policy and Interparliamentary Cooperation and the Committee on Ukraine's Integration into the European Union in coordinating the activities of interparliamentary relations groups with EU Member States.
2. Initiate more systematic planning of interparliamentary relations groups' activities at the level of the relevant committees.

Annexes to the Study

Annex 1. Annual Reporting Template

REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE INTERPARLIAMENTARY RELATIONS GROUP WITH
COUNTRY ____N IN 2025

1. General Information on the Parliamentary Group

Date of establishment	
Chair/co-chairs of the group	
Number of group members at year-end	
Changes in leadership during the year (or membership)	
Person responsible for preparing the report	

2. Brief Summary of Activities during the Year

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3. Group Activities

3.1 Visits	
Date (relevant event) and location	
Composition of the delegation	
Funding	
Principal meetings	
Topics discussed	
Results achieved	
[space for a photograph from the visit]	
Date (relevant event) and location	
Composition of the delegation	
Funding	
Principal meetings	
Topics discussed	
Results achieved	
[space for a photograph from the visit]	
3.2 Receptions	
Date (relevant event) and location	
Composition of the foreign delegation	
Participants from the Ukrainian side	
Principal meetings	
Topics discussed	
Results achieved	

[space for a photograph from the reception]	
Date (relevant event) and location	
Composition of the foreign delegation	
Participants from the Ukrainian side	
Principal meetings	
Topics discussed	
Results achieved	
[space for a photograph from the reception]	
3.3 Online Engagement	
Date	
Participant	
Organiser	
Event	
Topics discussed	
Results achieved (optional)	
[space for a photograph from the reception]	

4. Other Forms of Cooperation

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5. Plans for 2026

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Annex 2. Guidance on Using the Annual Reporting Template

The annual report template has been prepared to make parliamentary group reports clearer and more comparable. It is not intended to replace a political overview of Ukraine's relations with the relevant state or to provide an automatic assessment of the group's effectiveness. The report's principal purpose is to help record which forms of engagement took place during the year, who was involved, which issues were discussed and, where applicable, which results or areas for further engagement can be identified.

Tangible results may be absent or may emerge only later, which is a normal feature of diplomatic work. Information on results achieved should therefore be provided where applicable and at the authors' discretion.

1. General Information on the Parliamentary Group

This section covers basic information on the group during the reporting year: the date of establishment, the chair or co-chairs, the number of members at year-end, any changes in leadership or membership and the person responsible for preparing the report.

This section is factual and may be concise. Where changes in the group's membership or leadership occurred during the reporting year, they should be stated separately so that the composition in which the group operated during the year is clear.

2. Brief Summary of Activities during the Year

The summary may contain five to seven sentences outlining the group's principal activities during the reporting year. It should briefly identify the key formats of engagement, principal achievements, the most significant contacts or events and the issues on which the group focused, together with any outcomes or matters requiring follow-up.

The summary should not duplicate every activity described in the subsequent sections. General information on assistance provided to Ukraine by the partner country, the position of its government or the history of bilateral relations should be included only where it directly relates to the group's activities or helps explain the context of its work.

3. Group Activities

3.1. Visits

This section describes foreign travel by group members and other in-person events where participation was connected with the group's activities. These may include parliamentary visits, participation in forums, conferences, parliamentary assemblies, working meetings or other events.

For each visit, it is advisable to specify the dates stated in the travel authorisation, the country and cities visited, the composition of the delegation, the event or purpose of the trip, sources of funding, principal meetings, topics discussed and, where applicable, results achieved. Where several meetings took place during a single visit, they should be described within that visit rather than repeated as separate activities. This helps avoid duplication and provides a more accurate picture of the actual scale of activity.

Where some information is sensitive and cannot be disclosed in a public report, the general area of work should be recorded without details that could undermine further communication with partners.

Where available, photographs should also be added to confirm that the visit took place.

3.2. Receptions

This section describes the reception of foreign delegations in Ukraine and other in-person meetings with representatives of the partner country involving the group. For each reception, the date and location, composition of the foreign delegation, event or purpose of the visit, participants from the Ukrainian side, topics discussed and, where possible, results achieved should be specified.

It is important to show separately who travelled from the partner country and who participated in the meeting on behalf of the Ukrainian parliamentary group. Where a reception formed part of a broader visit by a foreign delegation to Ukraine, the report needs to include only the elements of the programme in which the parliamentary group or its members participated.

Where available, photographs should also be added to confirm that the reception took place.

3.3. Online Engagement

This section describes online meetings, consultations, participation in forums or discussions and other remote forms of engagement with representatives of the partner country. For each online interaction, the date, participants from the Ukrainian side, key participants from the partner country, the party or institution that initiated or organised the meeting, the event format, topics discussed and, where applicable, results achieved should be specified.

For this section, it is important not merely to state that an online meeting took place, but to show who represented the parliamentary group and with whom they interacted on the other side. Where online communication was regular, it may be presented in aggregate form, provided the key participants, topics and results are specified.

Where available, photographs should also be added to confirm participation in the online event.

4. Other Forms of Cooperation

This section may cover forms of engagement that do not constitute visits, receptions or online meetings but were connected with the group's activities. Examples include interaction with Ukrainian communities abroad, civil society organisations, businesses, international partners or other stakeholders where this formed part of the group's work. It may also include correspondence, working calls, preparation of joint initiatives, coordination of events and other actions supporting the group's activities.

Public communication related to the group's activities should be indicated separately, including media publications, interviews, comments, authored materials, posts or other forms of coverage. Where applicable, the format, media outlet or platform, date and subject should be stated briefly. Where possible, an active link to the materials should also be included. General media references to the partner country or its support for Ukraine should be included only where they are directly related to the activities of the group or its members.

5. Plans for the Year

This section may briefly outline the planned areas of work for the following year. These may include anticipated visits, receptions of delegations, online meetings, joint initiatives, work with the Ukrainian community abroad, and engagement with embassies or other areas of cooperation.

Plans should relate to the group's activities rather than merely to general expectations concerning the development of relations between Ukraine and the partner country. Where specific activities have not yet been agreed, priority areas of work may be indicated without excessive detail.

Annex 3. Individual Reporting Template

REPORT ON OFFICIAL TRAVEL ABROAD BY AN MP OF UKRAINE

Participant	
Faction	
Date (relevant event) and location	
Format	
Funding	
Summary	

List of meetings during the official trip

Date	Persons met	Subject matter	Achievements

Other activities during the official trip

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An example of a completed template is available [via the link.](#)

Annex 4. Guidance on Using the Individual Reporting Template

An individual report is submitted following a specific official trip and makes it possible to record not only the general programme but also the MP's personal participation in relevant meetings, events and other activities. Where several members of one delegation participated in the trip, their reports may differ. Such a report makes it possible to show the role of a particular individual: which meetings they attended, which issues they raised, with whom they communicated and, where applicable, which results were achieved through their participation.

Tangible results of an official trip may be absent or may emerge later, which is a normal feature of diplomatic work. Information on results achieved should therefore be provided where applicable and at the author's discretion.

1. General Information on the Official Trip

This section describes basic information on the official trip: the participating MP, their faction, dates, location and country, the relevant event or format of the trip and the source of funding.

The date field should state the dates for which permission to travel was granted. Where the trip concerned a specific event, such as a conference, forum, parliamentary assembly, official event or commemorative date, this may be indicated separately. Where the trip was not linked to one specific event but took place as part of regular working contacts, reciprocal visits or bilateral engagement with partners, this may be stated as the format. The country or countries and cities visited should also be included in this field.

The format of the MP's participation should be specified separately: (1) individual participation, (2) participation as part of a parliamentary delegation, (3) participation as part of an interparliamentary relations group, (4) participation as an invited speaker or another format. Where other group members participated, this may be stated briefly in this section. The composition of the Ukrainian side at each specific meeting should, however, be indicated in the list of meetings, as the travel dates, itinerary and participation in individual meetings may differ between members of the same delegation.

2. Brief Summary of the Official Trip

This section should describe the purpose, substance and overall logic of the official trip in approximately one to three sentences. The summary may explain why the trip took place, with whom the key engagement occurred, which issues were discussed and, where applicable, what was achieved through the MP's participation.

The summary should not duplicate the list of meetings, but should briefly explain the logic of the trip and the role of the person reporting. Nor should it describe the activities of the entire delegation, where the author did not participate in particular parts of them.

3. List of Meetings during the Official Trip

This section describes meetings held during the official trip. For each meeting, the date, the individuals or institutions met, the subject matter discussed, and any achievement or practical result should be stated.

Meeting dates should be stated separately from the overall travel dates. This helps show when particular activities took place during the trip. Where a meeting was held in a group format, separately identifying participants from the Ukrainian side may help demonstrate the MP's role in that meeting.

Where some information is sensitive and cannot be disclosed in a public report, the meeting may be described in general terms, indicating its area, substance and significance for further cooperation. The report does not require a detailed account of events in which the MP did not participate or that were unrelated to the purpose of the trip.

4. Other Activities during the Official Trip

This section may include activities undertaken during the official trip that did not constitute separate meetings. Examples include interviews with foreign media, meetings with Ukrainians abroad, participation in public discussions, communication with the embassy, transfer of assistance received, signing of agreements or other practical results. Where an activity has already been included in the table as an achievement of a specific meeting, it should not be duplicated.

It should also be stated separately whether the official trip received public coverage. Where there were media publications, interviews, comments, social media posts or notices on official resources, the format, date, subject and platform should be indicated briefly. General media references to the international event, host country or partner country should be included only where they relate to the MP's participation in the official trip.

The report should not describe activities in which the person did not participate. The principal purpose of individual reporting is to show clearly the MP's personal role, the substance of their participation and their specific contribution during the official trip.

Annex 5. Methodology for the Quantitative Analysis of Annual Reports by Interparliamentary Relations Groups

This annex describes the methodology used for the quantitative analysis of annual reports by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine's parliamentary groups on interparliamentary relations with EU countries for 2022–2025. The analysis was intended not to assess the groups' effectiveness, but to determine the extent to which their activities are reflected in public reporting and can be reconstructed from publicly available documents.

A quantitative content analysis of annual reports was used for this purpose. The unit of analysis was an individual annual report by a parliamentary group for the relevant country and year.

For all 27 parliamentary groups in EU countries, it was verified whether their annual reports had been published for each of the four years. The absence of a report for a particular year was not interpreted as the absence of group activity, but only as the absence of a publicly available annual report for the relevant period.

For the **43 annual reports identified from 18 parliamentary groups in EU countries, declared activities and minimally reconstructable interactions** were counted separately. On the basis of this analysis, two consolidated tables were prepared in the main text of the study: the first shows the regularity of publication of annual reports, while the second shows the relationship between declared activities and minimally reconstructable interactions.

A declared activity means a separate action, format of work or block of activity expressly presented by the report's authors as an activity of the group. This indicator included:

- visits;
- meetings;
- participation in events;
- letters, appeals and greetings;
- media activities, interviews and publications;
- humanitarian, charitable, cultural, educational and social initiatives;
- other formats of work were presented in the report as activities of the relevant group.

General formulations such as 'a number of meetings', 'ongoing communication' or 'a series of publications', without a specified quantity, were counted as one declared activity.

A minimally reconstructable interaction means an activity that can be identified from the report as a specific interaction between a representative of the Ukrainian parliamentary group and representatives of the country with which the group was established to promote cooperation. To be included in this indicator, the report had to make clear that one or more group representatives participated in the interaction and had to make it possible to identify its format and substance at least at a minimum level.

Minimally reconstructable interactions included:

- visits by Ukrainian representatives to the relevant country where a group member or representative of its leadership participated;
- visits by delegations from the relevant country to Ukraine, where a member of the Ukrainian group participated in engagement with them;
- individual in-person and online meetings with parliamentarians, government officials, diplomats, representatives of delegations and institutions, regional or local authorities and representatives of the expert community, civil society, business, culture or education in the relevant country;
- participation by group representatives in public events, including interparliamentary assemblies, forums, conferences, round tables, official receptions, cultural, commemorative, symbolic and other events, where these involved contact with representatives of the relevant country or its institutions;
- meetings with ambassadors and representatives of the relevant country's embassy in Ukraine, as well as with ambassadors and representatives of Ukrainian embassies in the relevant country, where such meetings were presented in the report as part of the group's activities or bilateral cooperation with that country.

Where several meetings, events or public activities took place during one visit or official trip, the activity was counted as one minimally reconstructable interaction. Separate meetings during the same visit were not counted again unless the report presented them as independent activities outside the visit.

Only activities from the relevant reporting year were included. Where a report contained information on activities from previous years, these were not included in the quantitative count for the current year. Events mentioned in several annual reports with the same date or substance were counted once, under the year to which they actually belonged.

Where a report mentioned a visit by the president, prime minister, parliamentary speaker or another senior official but did not state that a group representative participated, the event was not counted as a minimally reconstructable interaction. Likewise, activities formally included in a particular group's report were not counted where the report's substance indicated that they actually concerned another country or another area of cooperation.

The following were not counted as minimally reconstructable interactions:

- letters, appeals and greetings;
- media appearances, interviews and publications;
- working correspondence, telephone conversations, working chats or other communication without a specific description of the participants and substance of the interaction;
- internal meetings, working chats or other group communication without recorded participation by representatives of the country for cooperation with which the group was established;

- interaction with Ukrainian public authorities, Ukrainian civil society organisations, the Ukrainian diaspora, Ukrainian migrants, volunteer organisations or other Ukrainian structures abroad, where the report did not record the participation of representatives of the relevant state or its institutions;
- plans, intentions and announced but unrealised visits or meetings;
- general overview sections on the relevant state's support for Ukraine, where they did not contain specific actions involving the group;
- humanitarian, charitable, cultural, educational and social initiatives where the report did not record contact between a representative of the Ukrainian parliamentary group and representatives of the relevant country or its institutions;
- the organisation of camps, children's recreation and the transfer or receipt of humanitarian assistance without clearly recorded participation by representatives of the relevant state.

These activities were excluded from minimally reconstructable interactions not because they lacked substantive importance, but because of the limitations of comparative analysis. Different groups' reports describe such formats unevenly: in some cases as separate quantitative units and in others through general formulations or extensive descriptions from which the number of activities, the participants involved or the connection with the particular group cannot be established.

Some borderline cases were assessed on the basis of the substance of the report rather than the formal title of the event alone. The key criterion was whether the report made it possible to establish a specific interaction between the group and the relevant country, rather than merely a reference to a particular topic, country or the general context of bilateral relations.

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