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Introduction

'Who do I call if I want to call Europe' is a quotation attributed to Henry Kissinger and is often quoted when people want to suggest that the European Institutions are too diverse to provide a clear target audience for political messages addressed at 'Europe'. It is, of course, a simplification. First, do we mean [Europe](#), the [European Union](#), or the [Council of Europe](#)? And if you are not clear about the reason for this question, click on the hyperlinks for more information. Secondly, any one of these is complex and therefore having just one phone number for them would be simplistic and unrealistic. Granted, there is one President of the United States of America, but he is also not the only target for political messages from all those who wish to influence US politics.

But that said it is important for citizens to understand how they can communicate with the appropriate decision-makers about the issues they care about effectively and at the right time.

This paper therefore tries to answer the question which has been raised with QCEA by people who support our advocacy through our Action Alerts: how do I know which Member of the European Parliament to write to? The paper does not go into the question as to whether the European Parliament or a Member of that Parliament is the right audience; for the purpose of this paper, that is taken as read.

How do Members of the European Parliament relate to citizens - constituencies

Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) represent citizens. They are directly elected every 5 years through a variety of electoral systems in the 27 Member States. What all these systems have in common is that they are in some ways methods of proportional representation. As a result, MEPs are elected through list systems; that means that they represent a rather large geographical area and that they are not the only MEP who represents that area.

A constituency is an electoral district, i.e. a geographically defined area for which representatives are elected. Single-member constituencies require a 'first past the post' electoral system because by definition, only one person can be elected. Systems of proportional representation can accommodate multi-member constituencies and indeed, the larger the district, the larger the electorate and the larger the number of representatives, the more proportional the results are likely to be. There are no single-member constituencies in the European Parliament.

The European Parliament is made up of [753 Members](#) who represent 27 Member States. The number of MEPs per country depends on the population of the country. The smallest number representing any one country is 6; the largest is 99.

Most countries have decided to make the whole country one constituency. The list of these follows, along with the number of MEPs representing them:

Country	Number of MEPs
Germany	99
Italy	73
Spain	54
Poland	51
Romania	33
Netherlands	26
Greece	22
Hungary	22
Portugal	22
Czech Republic	21
Sweden	20
Austria	19
Bulgaria	18
Denmark	13
Slovakia	13
Finland	13
Lithuania	12
Latvia	9
Slovenia	8
Estonia	6
Cyprus	6
Luxembourg	6
Malta	6

Four Member States have more than one constituency within the country but they, too, have more than one MEP representing them. The different constituencies are:

Belgium - 3 constituencies - 22 MEPs

Flemish constituency	13 MEPs
Francophone constituency	8 MEPs
German speaking constituency	1 MEP

Republic of Ireland - 4 constituencies - 12 MEPs

Dublin	3 MEPs
East	3 MEPs
South	3 MEPs
North West	3 MEPs

France - 8 constituencies - 74 MEPs

North West	10 MEPs
West	9 MEPs
Massif Central and Centre	5 MEPs
Ile-de France	13 MEPs
East	9 MEPs
South East	13 MEPs
South West	10 MEPs
Overseas (Outre-Mer)	3 MEPs

United Kingdom - 12 constituencies - 73 MEPs

Eastern	7 MEPs
East Midlands	5 MEPs
London	8 MEPs
North East	3 MEPs
Northern Ireland	3 MEPs
North West	8 MEPs
Scotland	6 MEPs
South East	10 MEPs
South West	6 MEPs (includes Gibraltar)
Wales	4 MEPs
West Midlands	7 MEPs
Yorkshire and Humber	6 MEPs

As a result, the question of who to address if you want to raise a concern with an MEP remains a complicated question.

In those countries that have constituencies (i.e. Belgium, the Republic of Ireland, France, and the United Kingdom) the first port of call should be an MEP who represents the constituency in which you vote. But even in these countries that is not the complete answer. So, what other ways of identifying the right person are there.

How to find out what they are working on

So the next issue to consider is: will the MEP actually be working on the issue I want to raise? To decide whether this is the case - or at least likely to be the case - it is necessary to consider how you can find out what MEPs are working on. This will be determined by:

- Which committees they are on
- Which committees they chair (if any)
- Which pieces of work they are the designated spokesperson for
- Which delegations they are on
- Which delegations they chair (if any)

The European Parliament has an enormous workload. This is divided up between different committees and delegations; within these, specific individuals are asked to lead and act as spokesperson for different pieces of work. Within the different political groups, a further allocation of this workload is done. So who is doing what needs to be considered at the level of the committee/delegation and at the level of the political groups.

MEP Web pages

The first point of information for any particular MEP would be their web page on the [European Parliament website](#). This is the 'home page' for MEPs and to find a particular one you can either search for them by name or by clicking on the country they represent. Once you have found the MEP and click on their name, their EP web page will come up. The following image is an example which shows what information you will find on such a page.

The key items of information are:

- Along with the picture, the name, the political group, the Member State, and the political party in the Member State of the MEP
- The date of birth and the place of birth (this may give a clue as to the part of the country in which they are interested)
- A list of committees and delegations the MEP is on - if they are chair or vice chair of a committee this would be listed too
- A list of committees and delegations on which the MEP is a substitute
- A short CV - the level of detail and information varies between MEPs and isn't always all that helpful
- A link to the declaration of financial interests
- Links to specific pieces of work (Questions, Motions for Resolutions, Written Declarations, Reports, Speeches in plenary and Opinions) which the MEP has worked on or participated in both in the current parliament and in previous parliaments if they have been MEPs for longer
- Links to other ways of getting information about the MEP including their own website, their e-mail address, their facebook page and so on
- The names of their assistants in the European Parliament (accredited) and in their constituency office (local)
- The addresses and other contact details of their offices in Brussels and Strasbourg.

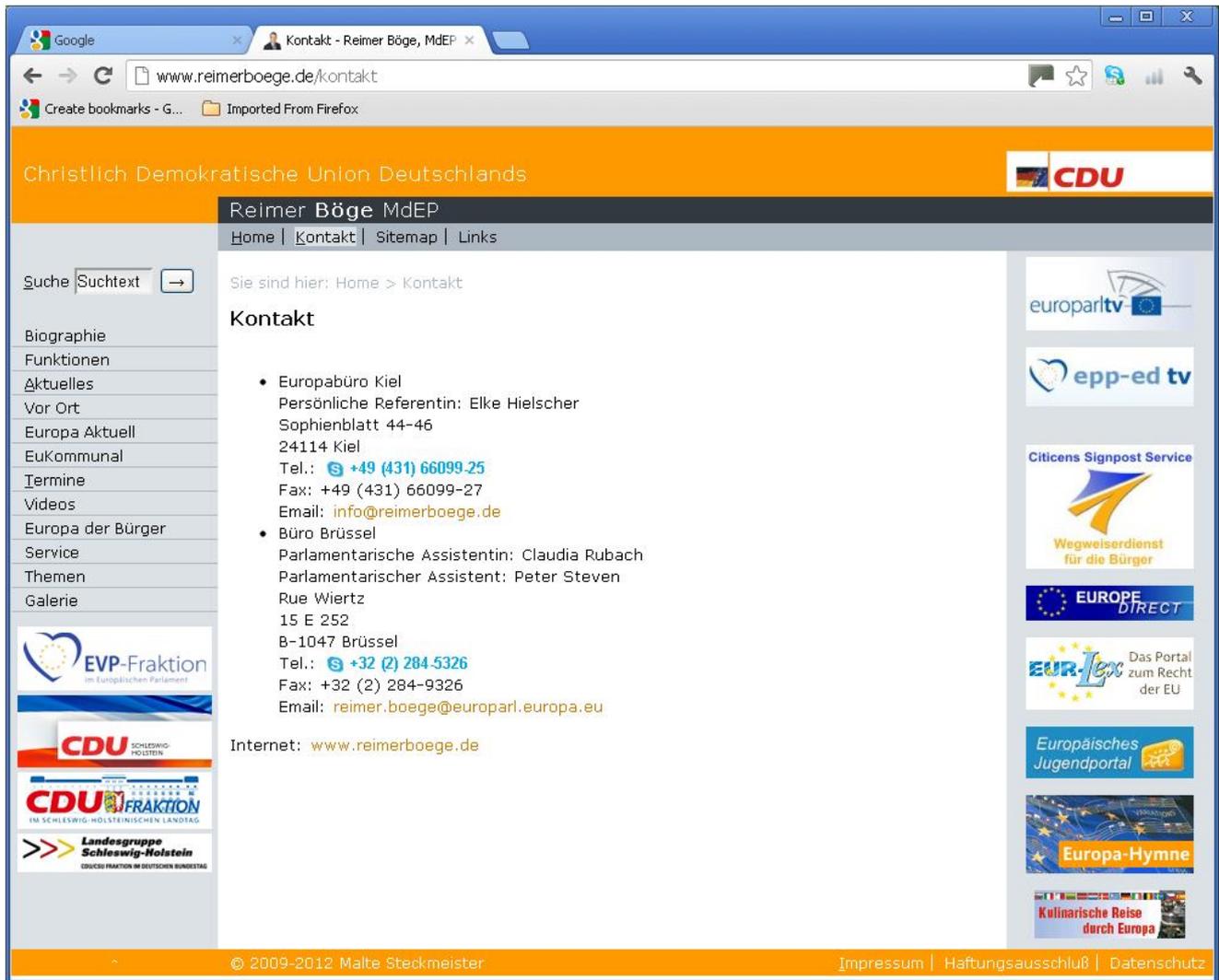
The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the profile of Chris Davies, a Member of the European Parliament. The browser's address bar shows the URL: www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/4554/Chris_DAVIES.html. The profile includes a portrait of Chris Davies, his name, and his affiliation with the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) and the Liberal Democrats Party in the United Kingdom. It lists his birth date as 7 July 1964 in Lydham, Staffordshire. The profile is divided into several sections: 'Member' (listing committees on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety; Fisheries; and relations with the Palestinian Legislative Council), 'Substitute' (listing committees on Budgetary Control and relations with Israel, and a delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean), 'Curriculum vitae' (detailing his career from a manager in the UK to a Member of the European Parliament), 'Declaration of financial interests', and 'Parliamentary activities' (listing questions, motions, reports, speeches, and opinions for three consecutive terms). On the right side, there are sections for 'Accredited assistants' (DEBLOK Sarah, HICKS Cary), 'Local assistants' (ABRAMS John, HOWS Loti, LANGLEY Danny, MARRBROW Richard, ROBERTS-JONES David, WILSON Jackie), 'Contacts' (Bruxelles and Strasbourg), and 'Postal address'.

By exploring all the links - and especially the links to parliamentary activities - this will show the issues they work on and the issues they are interested in. For the purpose of identifying what they are responsible for in terms of reports, the links to Motions for resolutions, reports, speeches in plenary (only available in original language) and opinions are the most significant.

More information can be gained from the MEP's own website (not the page hosted on the European Parliament Website) where they will make a great deal of effort to present their work to the people who they consider are their 'constituents'. One important piece of information would be the office address in their constituency as

this will indicate where they are based and will also lead to the staff who work there who may be more accessible than the MEPs themselves.

For example, and using the personal webpage of a German MEP, where the question of their geographic affiliation is important because the country is only one 99-member constituency, the following picture shows the contact information for one MEP:



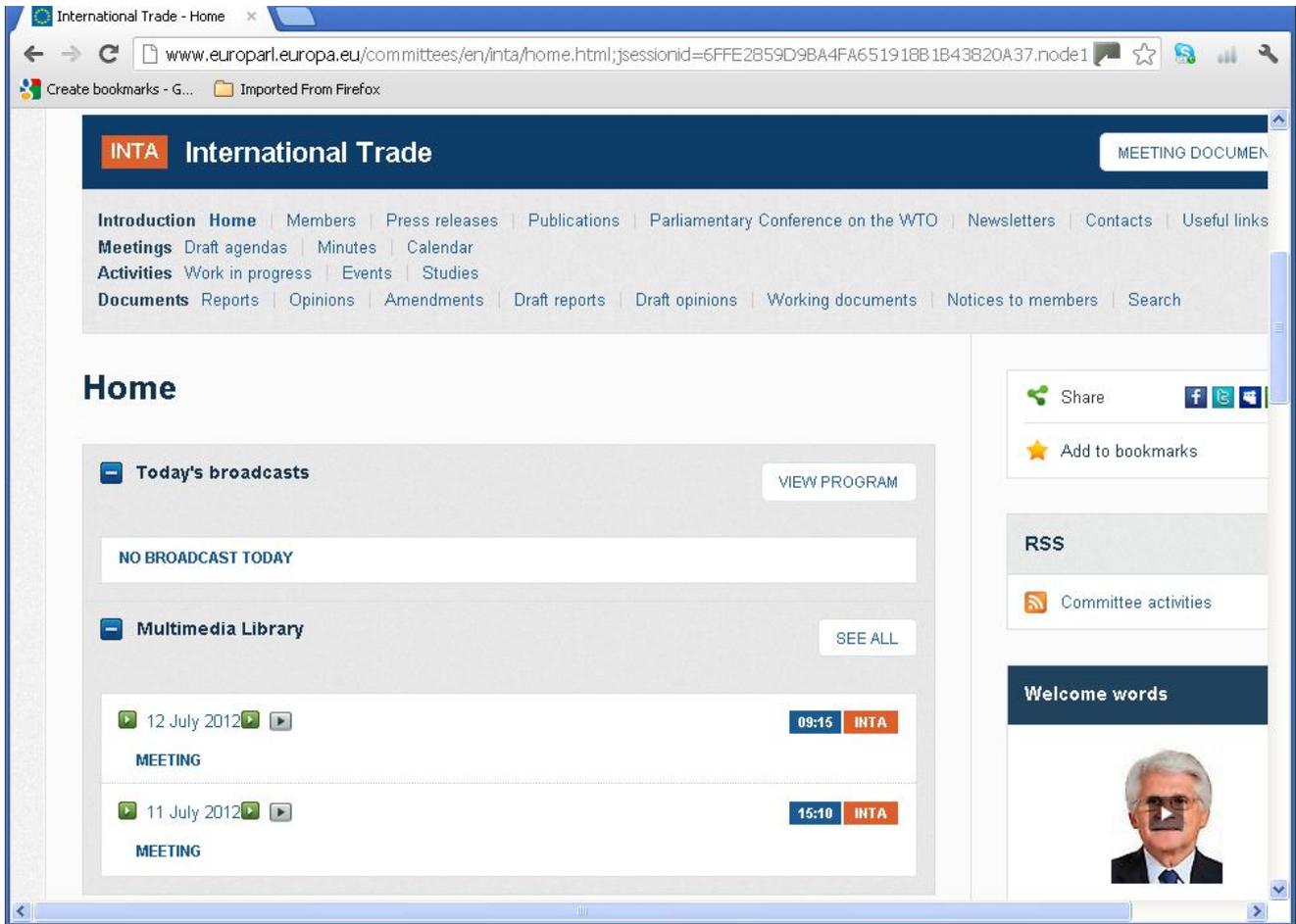
This shows that the MEP in question has his local office in Kiel and is thus most likely to be responsive to citizens who live in that geographic area. How big an area he would be responsive to, is a matter of finding out through experience.

But personal web pages such as this also have links to a biography which may be much more detailed than the one on the European Parliament site; that may indicate areas of particular interest.

Committee Information

The second strand of information would be the pages of the European Parliament Committees. The [full list](#) of all the committees is a first indication of the way in which European Parliament business is divided up. For more information about a particular committee there is a link to each of the committees on this list.

Taking the Committee for International Trade as an example, the following image shows the opening page of the Committee's section on the European Parliament website.



At the top, there are links to the home page of the Committee, the list of members, and various news items. There are also links to draft agendas, minutes and the meeting calendar. The third line shows work in progress, events and studies undertaken by the Committee and the final line shows links to various documents.

This is not the easiest way to find out who is doing what but with a bit of surfing and trial and error, much can be gained. For example, by clicking on the 'Work in Progress' link under Activities, a list of all the legislative and non-legislative agenda items that have started their progress through the Committee but not finished it can be accessed.

By scrolling through this, it is possible to find specific items of business which are of interest. Again, by way of example, if you scroll to an item and then click on the hyperlink which is shown in the form of a number (such as: 2009/0155(NLE)) this will open a new page which contains the procedure file for that item. Taking the example quoted, this page looks as follows:

International Trade - Work in Progress Procedure File: 2009/0155(NL) www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?lang=en&procnum=NLE/2009/0155

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Procedure file

ECI (ex) Agreement: Commitment Agreement and Acceptance of Industrial Products (ACAA) Additional Protocol to the Euro-Mediterranean Agreement 2009/0155(NLE)

Basic information | Key players | Key events | Forecasts | Technical information | Documentation gateway | Links to other sites

Basic information

NLE - Non-legislative instruments
 2009/0155(NLE) Amending Parliament 1st reading - single reading - budget 1st stage

ECI (ex) Agreement: Commitment Agreement and Acceptance of Industrial Products (ACAA) Additional Protocol to the Euro-Mediterranean Agreement
 See also 2012/2000(EPSP)
 Subject: 2.10.20 Standards, EC of standards and trade-marks, certification, compliance 2.20.20 Social and economic and trade agreements and relations
 Complete text view

Key players

European Parliament	Committee responsible	Reporter	Appointed
	ITRE International Trade	ANDRÉ VALE	24/09/2011
	Committee for opinion	Reporter for opinion	Appointed
	ITRE Foreign Affairs	DE KROMER-VANROOY	03/09/2010
	ITRE Industry, Research and Energy	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
Council of the European Union	Council composition	Finalising	LMU
	General Affairs	5000	23/09/2010
European Commission	Commission DG Trade	Commissioner	DE GUCHY-KAHL

Key events

Date	Event	Summary
23/09/2010	Initial legislative proposal published	Summary
03/09/2010	Additional information	Summary
03/09/2010	Legislative proposal published	Summary
19/09/2010	Committee of assent announced in Parliament, 1st reading/single reading	

Forecasts

Date	Event
19/09/2012	Vote scheduled in committee, 1st reading/single reading

Technical information

Procedure number: 2009/0155(NLE)
 Procedure type: NLE - Non-legislative instruments
 Procedure subtype: Consent by Parliament
 Legislative instrument: Decision
 See also 2012/2000(EPSP)
 Legal base: Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU) 207, Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU) 218-219-220
 Steps reached in procedure: Amending Parliament 1st reading / single reading / budget 1st stage
 Committee dossier: INTA 022427

Documentation gateway

European Parliament	Council of the EU	European Commission	All documents
Committee draft report		PE430203	01/09/2012

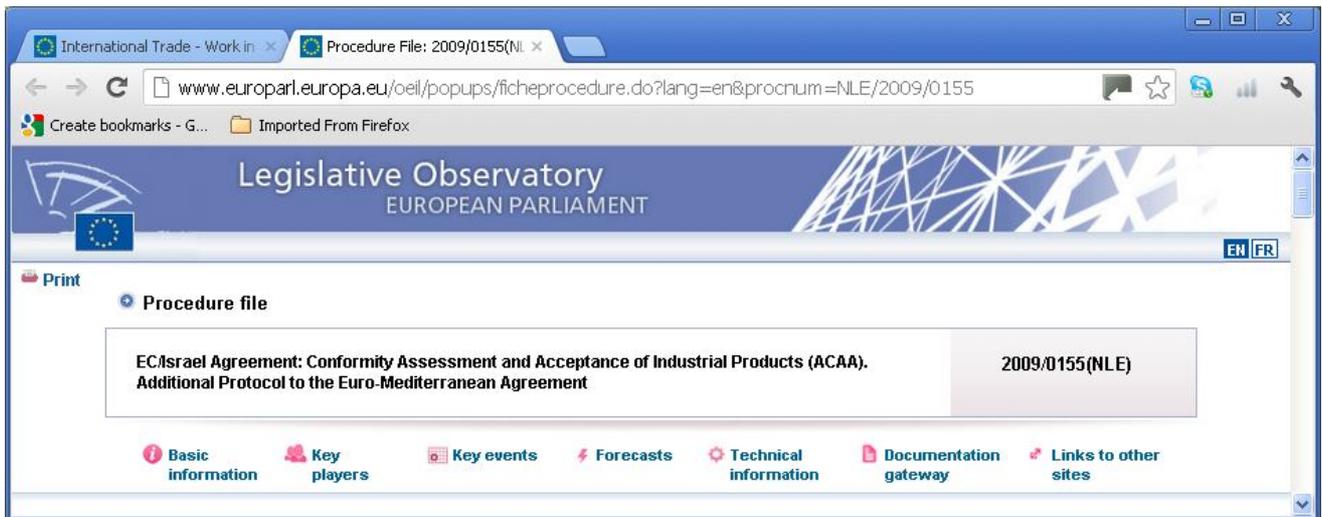
Links to other sites

European Commission	Pages

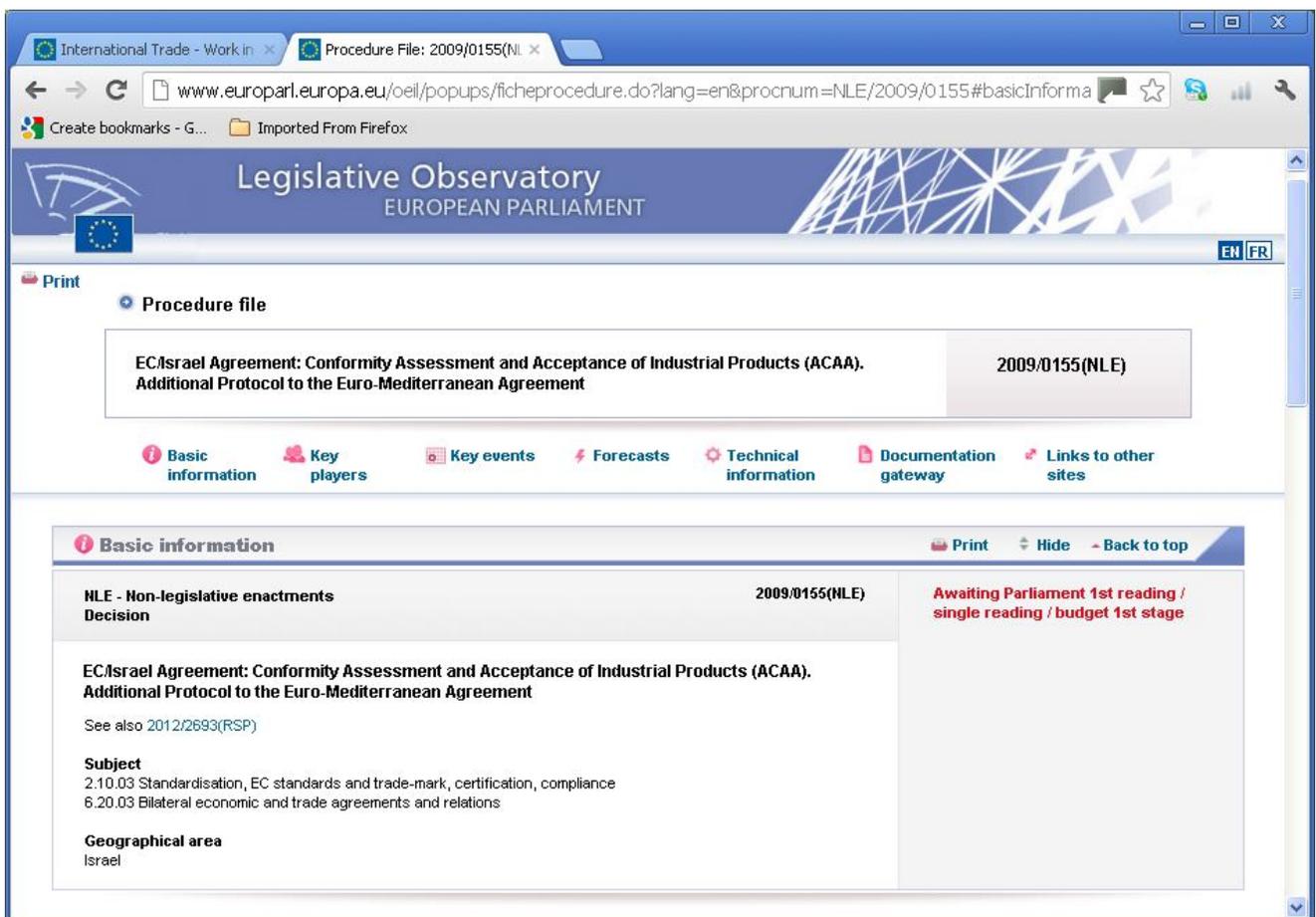
Share: Facebook Twitter

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This is quite a big screen so it is difficult to read the image. However, by splitting it up, it becomes clearer.



Right at the top, there is the title and the reference number together with links to different parts of the information available. Below are shown each of these parts separately:



The basic information repeats some of the information from the top of the page and provides information on what the issue is about.

International Trade - Work in... Procedure File: 2009/0155(NL)

www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?lang=en&procnum=NLE/2009/0155#basicInforma

Create bookmarks - G... Imported From Firefox

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EN FR

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Procedure file

EC/Israel Agreement: Conformity Assessment and Acceptance of Industrial Products (ACAA).
Additional Protocol to the Euro-Mediterranean Agreement

2009/0155(NLE)

Basic information Key players Key events Forecasts Technical information Documentation gateway Links to other sites

Key players

Print Hide Back to top

European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	INTA International Trade	S&D MOREIRA Vital	24/05/2011
		Shadow rapporteur	
		ANDRIKIENÉ Laima Liucija	
		SCHAAKE Marietje	
		JADOT Yannick	
		ZHRADIL Jan	
		SCHOLZ Helmut	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	AFET Foreign Affairs	S&D DE KEYSER Véronique	08/09/2010
	ITRE Industry, Research and Energy	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
Council of the European Union	Council configuration	Meeting	Date
	General Affairs	3005	22/03/2010
European Commission	Commission DG	Commissioner	
	Trade	DE GUCHT Karel	

The 'key players' section shows who the Rapporteur is. This is the MEP who has to draft the report which will form the basis of the debate and decision. The link called 'Shadow Rapporteur' when opened as shown, shows the MEPs in the other political groups who are the spokespersons for those groups on the issue. If there are other committees who have been asked to provide an opinion, the Rapporteur for these opinions is also shown as here for the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Closer to the bottom of this section is also information about who in the Council of the European Union (i.e. the institution where the Member States work together) and the European Commission is responsible. For our purposes, this is less relevant.

International Trade - Work in x Procedure File: 2009/0155(NL x

www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?lang=en&procnum=NLE/2009/0155#basicInforma

Create bookmarks - G... Imported From Firefox

Legislative Observatory
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

EN FR

Print

Procedure file

EC/Israel Agreement: Conformity Assessment and Acceptance of Industrial Products (ACAA).
Additional Protocol to the Euro-Mediterranean Agreement

2009/0155(NLE)

Basic information Key players Key events Forecasts Technical information Documentation gateway Links to other sites

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
22/10/2009	Initial legislative proposal published	COM(2009)0559	Summary
02/12/2009	Additional information		Summary
10/02/2010	Legislative proposal published	05190/2010	Summary
15/06/2010	Committee referral announced in Parliament, 1st reading/single reading		

Forecasts

18/09/2012	Vote scheduled in committee, 1st reading/single reading
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Technical information

Procedure reference	2009/0155(NLE)
Procedure type	NLE - Non-legislative enactments
Procedure subtype	Consent by Parliament
Legislative instrument	Decision
	See also 2012/2693(RSP)
Legal basis	Treaty on the Functioning of the EU TFEU 207; Treaty on the Functioning of the EU TFEU 218-p6a
Stage reached in procedure	Awaiting Parliament 1st reading / single reading / budget 1st stage
Committee dossier	INTA/7/02427

Documentation gateway

European Parliament	Council of the EU	European Commission	All documents
Committee draft report		PE483.808	07/03/2012

Finally, the page shows key events (i.e. the dates when significant events in relation to this item happened or are forecast to happen (here: the publication date of the original proposal by the Commission, the publication date of additional information, the publication date of the proposal in its version for decision - and in some of the cases with links to the documents).

The technical information shows that this is a decision where the European Parliament can only either consent or not (i.e. it can say yes or no but it can't propose any amendments) and the legal basis.

And right at the bottom are then links to relevant documents.

With this information to hand, it is possible to identify the MEPs who are most likely to be interested in what an interested citizen may want to say about this issue.

So what do you do if 'your' MEP is not one of them?

Going back to the list of MEPs who are actually serving on the relevant committee, any advocacy should be addressed to MEPs in this order of priority (unless one of them is listed as a Rapporteur/shadow Rapporteur in which case they are the first port of call):

- Any MEP on the committee who represents your 'constituency' - see above - and if that constituency is very large and there is more than one, the one who is most likely to be geographically close to where you live;
- Any MEP on the committee who represents a political party you are in support of - if you can communicate that their response to your advocacy is likely to influence your voting behaviour in the next election, it will count more.

If you are writing to an MEP who is outside of your constituency (this is more likely in Belgium, France, the Republic of Ireland or the UK), then you need to explain why you are writing to them - i.e. because they are on a particular committee and because none of 'your MEPs' are.

How to find out what they are interested in

Another approach would be to ask yourself: who is interested in this issue? Especially if you want to raise a concern which isn't actually on the agenda but which you think should be.

To find out what a particular MEP is interested in, there are, again, a number of sources of information. Going back to the personal page we saw above, there is a section which shows the MEP's parliamentary activities:

The screenshot shows the profile page for Tokia Saïfi, a Member of the European Parliament. The page is titled 'Tokia SAÏFI' and identifies her as a member of the 'Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)'. She is from France, representing the 'Union pour un Mouvement Populaire - Parti Radical'. Her birth date is 11 July 1959, Hautmont.

Member

- AFET** Committee on Foreign Affairs
- SWAS** Delegation for relations with the Mashreq countries
- SMED** Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean

Substitute

- INTA** Committee on International Trade
- DSRP** Delegation for relations with the Arab Peninsula

Curriculum vitae (The MEP is solely responsible for the information published)

- Founder and leader of the association Espace Intégration in Lille (1997). Manager of projects for young people of immigrant descent (1988-1999). Coordinator of a project to help create economic micro-projects in urban districts (1998-1999).
- Member of the European Parliament (1999-2002).
- Minister for sustainable development in the government of Jean-Pierre Raffarin (2002-2004).
- Instigator of the national sustainable development strategy (2003). Introduced national sustainable development week (2003).
- Member of the EP Committee on International Trade (since 2004). Member of the High-Level Group on Textiles and Clothing (2004). Rapporteur on the future of the textile and clothing sector after the elimination of quotas (2005). Chair of the Committee on Political Affairs, Security and Human Rights of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly (EMPA) (since 2004).
- Vice-chair of Jean-Louis Borloo's Radical Party (since 2006).

Declaration of financial interests

Parliamentary activities - 7th parliamentary term

- Questions
- Motions for resolutions
- Reports
- Speeches in plenary
- Opinions

Accredited assistants

- D'AMICO Ornella
- JAISSON Francis
- SALMON Amélie

Local assistants

- FERHATI Amokrane
- LAHOUEL Khadija

Contacts

Bruxelles

Parlement européen
Bât. Altiero Spinelli
13E205
80, rue Wiertz / Wiertzstraat 60
B-1047 Bruxelles/Brussel

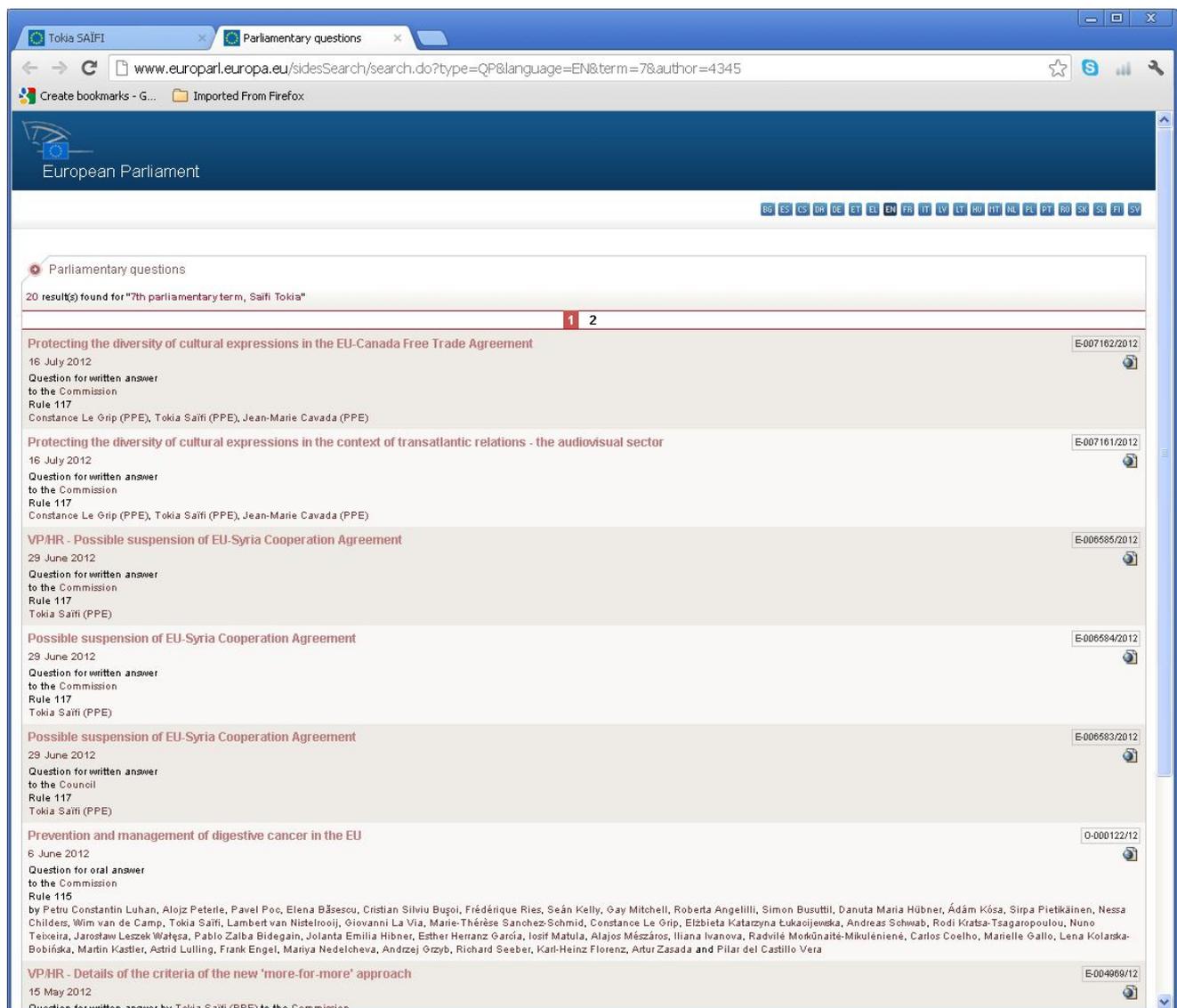
+32(0)2 28 45562
+32(0)2 28 49562

Strasbourg

Parlement européen
Bât. Louise Weiss
T08033
1, avenue du Président Robert Schuman
CS 91024
F-67070 Strasbourg Cedex

This is right at the bottom of this picture and refers to Questions, Motions for Resolutions, Written Declarations, Reports, Speeches in Plenary and Opinions. Here, the interesting headings are Questions, Motions for Resolutions, Written Declarations, and Speeches in Plenary.

For example, looking just at the questions by this particular MEP (by way of example) we get the following opening page:



This tells us that she has asked 20 questions since the start of the current parliament - i.e. since 2009. That's quite a lot. By looking through them, the areas of interest of the MEP can become clearer.

Similarly, the link to Motions for resolutions finds that she has co-signed 53 such motions and lists the subjects.

She has not co-sponsored any written declarations. So, if for example, one wanted to get a written declaration sponsored and wanted to approach her about this, it would be worth asking her first whether there is an 'in principle' reason why she has not done so before. And she has spoken in the Plenary on 109 occasions. That is

quite a lot and the topics she has chosen to speak on are quite varied. A closer analysis of these would be very useful to identify the issues she might be willing to pursue.

By examining all these details a picture emerges about her areas of interest.

By looking at her own website, more information about her areas of interest becomes apparent:

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the website of Tokia Saïfi. The browser tabs include 'Tokia Saïfi', 'Debates', 'Motions for resolutions', and 'Parliamentary questions'. The address bar shows the URL: www.tokia-saifi.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=frontpage&Itemid=75&lang=en. The website header features a portrait of Tokia Saïfi and the text 'Tokia Saïfi Ancienne Ministre, Députée au Parlement Européen'. Below the header is a navigation menu with links for 'Groupe PPE', 'Home', 'European Parliament', 'International trade', 'Affaires étrangères', 'Region', 'Press', 'About', and a search box labeled 'recherche ok'. The main content area is divided into several sections:

- Accord anti-contrefaçon (ACTA) : débats et vote en session plénière**: A news article with a photo of a market stall. The text states: 'Les débats sur l'accord anti-contrefaçon (ACTA) se sont tenus en session plénière le mardi 3 juillet. En attendant l'issue du vote, le mercredi 4 juillet, retrouvez ici l'intervention de Tokia SAÏFI.' A 'Read more' link is provided.
- La plénière en bref**: A news article with a photo of the European Parliament plenary chamber. The text states: 'Les débats, textes et faits qui ont marqué la session plénière des 2 au 5 juillet 2012 résumés en quelques lignes.' A 'Read more' link is provided.
- Schéma de préférences tarifaires généralisées : vers un système plus efficace et plus juste**: A news article with a photo of a meeting. The text states: 'En validant aujourd'hui les amendements au projet de schéma de préférences tarifaires généralisées (SPG) "nouvelle mouture", nous avons montré notre volonté de soutenir les efforts de la Commission européenne en faveur d'une aide commerciale au développement ciblée sur les pays qui en ont le plus besoin", a déclaré Tokia SAÏFI à l'issue du vote, mercredi en séance plénière du Parlement européen.' A 'Read more' link is provided.
- Multimedia**: A section containing a photo of a group of people standing together.
- Focus**: A section containing several links: 'Sakharov Prize', 'Financial transaction tax', 'Cyprus EU Presidency', and 'European year for Active Ageing and'.

The contact page shows that her in-country office is in Lille and it is therefore likely that this is the geographic area of France to which she will be most responsive.

It is therefore possible, but sometimes a little time-consuming to target MEPs. The examples in this paper are just that: examples, randomly chosen.

Who do you call?

So how do you decide who to call? And are there others - besides the MEPs - who might benefit from an approach and who might be able to exercise influence?

Building Relationships

Which MEP to approach (as can be seen from the above description) will depend on the issue, the geographic area where you are, your political affiliation and your own information about the areas of interest of the MEP.

It pays, sometimes, to contact MEPs who we think are not yet convinced by our arguments - it's not always useful spending the time trying to convince those who already agree with us. It is important, however, to let them know we agree with them; it gives them the support and encouragement to do the things we want them to do.

Given the serious research work necessary to target the right MEP(s) it makes sense to build up a relationship. So, once it is clear which MEPs are likely audiences for your messages, try to get to know them. Most of them have offices where you can make an appointment to meet them. Talk to them about the issues you are interested in. If they know you, if they know you will come to them with good information and only when it is useful, they will be more prepared to listen.

One very good time for starting such a relationship is during election campaigns. If you are part of a local group interested in specific issues, you could host a debate for a number of candidates on that subject. They may be very interested to participate because they are looking for votes.

Other channels to get your message through

MEPs' Assistants

There are a key group of people who need to be considered in all this: the MEPs' Assistants. MEPs have staff working for them in Brussels (and Strasbourg) and they have staff working for them in their offices at home. All these people are very influential because they screen the incoming post and e-mails and therefore have a degree of control over what the MEP sees and what level of priority is given to the things they see.

They are also often extremely well-informed and keen to hear from a range of people about the issues they work on. Sometimes they need input from well-informed citizens.

Staff of political groups in the European Parliament

But there is another group of people we should not forget: they are the staff of the political groups in the European Parliament.

Each group has its own team and the number of people and the specific areas of responsibilities are decided by the groups. There is information available about them through the links below:



[EPP \(Group of the European People's Party/ Christian Democrats\):](#)



[Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament](#)



[Alliance of Liberal Democrats for Europe](#)



The Greens | European Free Alliance
in the European Parliament

[The Greens/European Free Alliance](#)



[European Conservatives and Reformists Group](#)



[GUE/NGL European United Left/Nordic Green Left](#)



[Europe of Freedom and Democracy](#)

Is it worth it?

All this may seem like a lot of effort. But politics involves effort. I would like to quote here from the [Advices and Queries](#)¹ of Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends:

34. Remember your responsibilities as a citizen for the conduct of local, national, and international affairs. Do not shrink from the time and effort your involvement may demand.

So we take it as read that effort is required. But are the MEPs likely to respond? There are maybe seven points to remember:

- They are our elected representatives; they can only represent us if they know what we think; so we have a responsibility to let them know.
- They have a high workload; if we have useful and important information they might be able to use, they may welcome this.
- Some MEPs are more responsive than others - but one can only know this by trial and error.
- Some of the Assistants and Group Staff are more responsive than the MEPs themselves so it's worth talking to them.
- Building a relationship with one or a handful of MEPs is likely to pay off more because it is harder to ignore people you know than people you have never heard of.
- Knowing and understanding how they work (where they can make a difference, where they have power and influence - and where they do not) is a good starting point. If they have the sense that you've done your homework, they will recognise you as a serious partner and they will find it harder to ignore what you say.
- There is relatively little engagement with MEPs from the general public. So for many of them your approaching them may be a very welcome change to the routine; so they may be quite open to you. One MEP told us some years ago that she starts taking notice of an issue if she gets 12 letters or e-mails from people she regards as constituents. That's not a big hurdle.

And Next Time...

We will explain how to contact the European Commission and the Council of the European Union.

¹ The advices and queries are intended for use in Quaker meetings, for private devotion and reflection, as a challenge and inspiration to us as Friends in our personal lives and in our life as a religious community, and as a concise expression of our faith and practice for enquirers and the wider world.