

ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP FOR

Balkan Trade and Security

JUNE 2026

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All-Party Parliamentary Group for Balkan Trade and Security · June 2026

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01

Introduction

The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Balkan Trade and Security has been established to strengthen parliamentary engagement between the United Kingdom and the Balkan region, with a particular focus on trade, investment, security, infrastructure, diplomacy and regional cooperation.

All-Party Parliamentary Groups are informal, cross-party groups of MPs and Peers who share a common interest in a particular country, region or policy area. They hold no formal role in legislation, but they provide one of the most important channels through which Parliament engages with governments, diplomatic missions, businesses and communities, both in the United Kingdom and abroad.

The Group's principal purpose is twofold: to promote trade and investment between the United Kingdom and the Balkans, and to help Balkan embassies engage Parliament more effectively and more regularly.

> *The Balkans are strategically important, but often underrepresented in Westminster compared with larger European regions.*

This publication introduces the Group, the challenge it has been formed to address, its members and advisers, and the people responsible for its administration.

02

Challenge with Parliamentary Engagement

Many Balkan embassies in London operate with small diplomatic teams and limited capacity. Some may have only one or two officials covering the full range of political, commercial, security and cultural issues. In practice, this means the same official who manages ministerial visits and consular matters may also be responsible for trade promotion, press enquiries, community engagement and relations with Parliament.

Sustained parliamentary engagement is demanding under any circumstances. Relationships must be maintained, parliamentarians briefed, events organised, correspondence followed up and the rules governing All-Party Parliamentary Groups properly understood, all alongside an embassy's wider diplomatic duties. Even where interest and goodwill exist on both sides, the practical work of keeping a parliamentary relationship alive often falls to officials who simply do not have the hours in the day.

The structure of APPGs compounds the difficulty. MPs and Peers serve as APPG officers on an unpaid basis, on top of their constituency, committee and chamber commitments. They rarely have the time to carry out secretarial duties, organise meetings, maintain websites, prepare briefing material or manage compliance processes. Country-specific groups therefore often struggle to maintain regular activity unless they enjoy strong administrative support and sustained parliamentary interest.

02

Challenge with Parliamentary Engagement

continued

Research into existing country groups across the region bears this out. Some groups have become inactive or have quietly been forgotten as the parliamentarians who once led them moved on. Others have lapsed and needed to be re-registered or recreated, sometimes more than once. All APPGs are dissolved at a general election and must be formally re-established in the new Parliament, a hurdle at which many groups fall. And for some countries there is no effective formal parliamentary group at all, leaving engagement dependent on occasional individual contact.

The result is that parliamentary engagement across the region is uneven: strong in some years and for some countries, dormant in others, with no consistent platform on which embassies, parliamentarians and businesses can rely.

> In April 2024, new APPG guidance meant that foreign governments and diplomatic missions could no longer act as secretariat or provide direct secretariat support, creating further practical and administrative challenges for smaller embassies.

The consequence is simple: compliance is now more demanding, and the need for professional, independent coordination is correspondingly greater.

03

Building a Serious UK-Balkan Parliamentary Platform

The APPG for Balkan Trade and Security provides a shared parliamentary platform for Balkan embassies, parliamentarians, advisers and business representatives. It is designed to bring people together, reduce duplication and create a more efficient way of engaging Westminster.

i The Group is not intended to replace existing country relationships.

ii It provides a wider regional forum where shared issues can be discussed collectively.

iii It gives embassies a stronger and more regular route into Parliament.

iv It allows parliamentarians to engage with the region as a whole, rather than through scattered and sometimes inactive groups.

v It creates a neutral space for diplomacy, trade, investment, infrastructure and security discussions.

vi It allows advisory board members to support the Group on specialist areas such as AI, software, transport, logistics, law, trade and security.



Feryal Clark

LABOUR

Former Minister for AI and Digital Government



Jeff Smith

LABOUR



Fleur Anderson

LABOUR

Foreign Affairs Committee



Matt Western

LABOUR

Chair of the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy



Andrew Rosindell

REFORM

Former Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs



Alex Sobel

LABOUR

Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Ukraine



Yasmin Qureshi

LABOUR

Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Egypt



Simon Hoare

CONSERVATIVE

Chair of the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee



Martin Vickers

CONSERVATIVE

Chair, APPG for Albania and Kosovo

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Labour National Executive Committee



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CONSERVATIVE



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CONSERVATIVE

Shadow Transport Secretary



David Taylor

LABOUR



Nia Griffith

LABOUR

Former Shadow Defence Secretary



Laura Kyrke-Smith

LABOUR



Anneliese Dodds

LABOUR

Former Shadow Chancellor



Dave Doogan

SNP



Jessica Morden

LABOUR

Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to Central America



Tan Dhesi

LABOUR

Chair of the Defence Committee



Lord Balfe

CONSERVATIVE

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Lord Hannay

CROSSBENCH

Former UK Ambassador to the United Nations



Lord Bourne

CONSERVATIVE

President of Remembering Srebrenica



Baroness Stuart

CROSSBENCH

First Civil Service Commissioner



Baroness Goudie

LABOUR



Lord Vaizey

CONSERVATIVE

Former Minister for Culture, Communications and Creative Industries



Lord Howell

CONSERVATIVE

Former Secretary of State for Energy and Transport



Lord Evans

CONSERVATIVE



Lord Mackenzie of Framwellgate

NON-AFFILIATED



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GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

Adviser on International Trade

06

Sponsored by Ambar Cloud

Ambar Cloud is a British technology company that builds custom software for organisations with complex operational needs. Its team has experience at major firms including Meta, Amazon, Microsoft, Veeam, Intuit and Arup. Ambar Cloud's approach uses AI carefully: not as a replacement for human judgement, but as a way to make software design and delivery faster, clearer and less expensive.

They have seen a real opportunity for partnership between the Balkans and the United Kingdom, particularly in areas where governments, businesses and public institutions need better digital systems. Their work is especially relevant to trade, investment, infrastructure, public services and regulated sectors.

Ambar Cloud is a sponsor of the APPG for Balkan Trade and Security and advises the Group through its contribution to the AI Advisory Board.

CONTACT

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07

Group Co-Ordinator

The APPG for Balkan Trade and Security is supported by Christopher Grozdoski, who acts as Group Co-Ordinator.

Christopher is a parliamentary adviser with experience working across the House of Commons and House of Lords. He has helped establish and run multiple All-Party Parliamentary Groups, and is highly familiar with the Westminster environment, parliamentary procedure and the practical challenges involved in building serious engagement between Parliament, business, diplomatic missions and international partners.

Christopher brings a detailed understanding of how international actors can engage effectively with the British political system. His work focuses on translating complex regional, commercial and diplomatic priorities into clear, practical routes for UK policymakers.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE APPG, PLEASE CONTACT

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