The work of the European Union (EU) in the area of external relations includes the negotiation of trade agreements, and cooperation on energy, health, climate and environmental issues, often in the context of international organisations such as the United Nations. It also operates European Neighbourhood Policy programmes in relation to its closest international neighbours.

Under the Lisbon Treaty, which came into force in 2009, there was a reorganisation of the EU's external relations work with the creation of the European External Action Services (EEAS), the European Union's diplomatic arm, and the post of High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.