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Promoting human rights

Greens play a key role

The European Parliament issues an **annual report on human rights and democracy in the world**. In the past, this report dealt with country situations and specific issues and was rather considered as "a shopping list" of concerns. Through the action of the Green Chairwoman and the Green Members of the subcommittee, the structure and the content of this report will be reviewed so as to transform it into a genuine tool aiming at evaluating the implementation of EU instruments in the field of human rights and democracy. In this sense, the European Parliament can gain more credibility towards the Council and the Commission by focusing on the evaluation of the EU human rights policy and by making concrete recommendations on this matter.

At each Strasbourg plenary session, **cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law** are debated and related **resolutions** are adopted. Those resolutions aim to put pressure on governments that breach human rights but also to give recommendations to the European Commission and Council in their policy making.

Parliament's main player in promoting human rights and democracy and protecting minorities is the **Human Rights Subcommittee**, a subcommittee of the Committee on Foreign Affairs. It deals with the day-to-day management of human rights dossiers, sometimes in cooperation with other Parliamentary committees (such as the Foreign Affairs, Development, Civil Liberties, Women's Rights or Security and Defence Committees), or with European Parliament delegations with the parliaments of third countries.

The subcommittee on Human Rights is now chaired by a Green Member **Hélène Flautre** (France). The mandate of the subcommittee on human rights is to deal with the issue of human rights, protection of minorities and promotion of democratic values in third countries. It is also in charge of following up on the human rights situation in EU applicant countries. In short, the main task of the subcommittee is to assess the implementation of EU instruments in the field of promoting human rights and democracy: financial instruments, human rights guidelines, human rights dialogues and EP and Council reports. Thanks to the work of the Green presidency, the subcommittee is increasingly playing an expert role on human rights and democracy, providing input to reports from the Foreign Affairs committee, mainstreaming human rights issues throughout Parliament bodies (*inter alia* through the parliamentary delegations) and creating a platform for permanent dialogue with civil society representatives.

To show its commitment to the defence and promotion of human rights, the European Parliament set up the **Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought** in 1988. Each year, the prize is awarded to "individuals or international organisations who have distinguished themselves by their efforts on behalf of freedom of thought and human rights.

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