

Human rights: Work with civil society, not only with authorities, say MEPs

MEPs highlight the need for effective partnership between the EU and the governments and civil societies of partner countries instead of focusing on relations with authorities after lessons learned from Arab Spring and with Eastern neighbours in pre-transition period in report on EU's human rights strategy adopted on Tuesday afternoon in Foreign affairs committee.

The report drafted by Rui Tavares (Greens/EFA, PT) stresses that the events of the Arab Spring have revealed shortfalls of EU policies towards the region, such as young people facing mass unemployment and a lack of prospects in their countries. It insists that ongoing projects and exchange programmes that are inclusive of Arab Spring youth need to be stepped up.

The resolution was adopted by 59 in favour, 0 against, 4 abstentions.

No progress - reduce support

The text points out that current economic crisis, and its effects on the strength of the European project "demonstrated the insufficiency of lofty proclamations on human rights issues if they are not matched by a principled through agile and concrete measures".

MEPs believe that countries not making progress on 'deep democracy' including the rule of law, should see the Union's support reduced, without prejudice to support to the civil society of these countries. This would be the case particularly when the countries infringe the core principles, such as freedom of expression, freedom of religion or belief and gender equality.

Inter-institutional cooperation

MEPs restate the need to intensify inter-institutional cooperation on human rights related matters. They emphasize that EP needs to be closely associated with reshaped policy framework in order to play its key role in improving the democratic legitimacy of EU policy-making. In this regards, the report also seeks to ensure ongoing communication and collaboration between the EP and the EU Special Representative for Human Rights.

Follow-up

MEPs say they will follow-up more systematically parliament's resolutions relating to human rights and of individual human rights cases. They also recommend that Parliaments delegations should have Members specifically tasked with raising the human rights issues when going to a country where the situation of human rights is worrying.

Vote in plenary is scheduled for December.

In the chair: Elmar Brok (EPP, DE)