

EU's opposition to the death penalty



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Citizens write to the European Parliament to express their concerns about the death penalty still being applied in countries around the world. Some enquire about the position of the Parliament on the death penalty; others call on the EU to intervene in individual cases.

The death penalty is prohibited by law in all Member States of the European Union (EU). The ban is laid down in the [Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union](#) (Charter) and [European Convention on Human Rights](#) (Convention) and its Protocols, particularly Protocol 6 and 13. All Member States have ratified the Convention and all of them have ratified its Protocols 6 and 13.

Protocol 13 provides for the total abolition of the death penalty.

In addition, the [Treaty on European Union \(TEU\)](#) states in article 6 that the EU recognises the rights, freedoms and principles set out in the Charter and that the EU (as a whole) shall accede to the Convention.

As one of the conditions for accession to the EU, every candidate country must ensure respect for fundamental rights and EU citizens' rights, as guaranteed by the *acquis* (all current EU rules) and by the Charter - this entails also the abolition of the death penalty.

The European Parliament against the death penalty

The European Parliament (EP) is a [fierce defender of human rights](#). The EP uses the Thursday afternoon of each Strasbourg plenary session to highlight violations of human rights across the world. The debates and documents adopted by MEPs help to raise awareness about human rights abuses.

The EP has expressed its opposition to the death penalty in several resolutions, e.g. in its [resolution of 7 October 2010 on the World day against the death penalty](#).

In a more recent [European Parliament recommendation to the Council of 2 April 2014](#), the Parliament recommended to the Council, "to continue fighting against the use of the death penalty and to strongly support the moratorium as a step towards abolition; to continue to push for abolition worldwide".

EU guidelines on death penalty

According to Article 21 of the TEU, the EU's external action shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development, and enlargement, and which it seeks to advance in the wider world: democracy, the rule of law, the universality and indivisibility of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for human dignity, the principles of equality and solidarity, and respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law.

As stated in the [EU guidelines on death penalty](#), the EU "has a strong and unequivocal opposition to the death penalty in all times and in all circumstances. Therefore, and encouraged by the growing momentum towards abolition of the death penalty worldwide, the EU will continue its long-standing campaign against the death penalty".

The EU intervenes both on individual cases and at a general policy level; it issues statements on individual cases and carries out other actions in favour of individuals at risk of execution.

In a [joint declaration of 9 October 2014 on the European and World Day against the Death Penalty](#) the EU and the Council of Europe reaffirmed "their strong and absolute opposition to capital punishment in all cases and under all circumstances and their commitment to its worldwide abolition".

The European External Action Service website provides detailed information on the [EU policy on death penalty](#).

Promotion and protection of human rights

Furthermore, the EU funds non-governmental organisations which campaign for the abolition of the death penalty and carry out related projects. [Regulation No 235/2014](#) of 11 March 2014 established the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) for the period 2014-2020 which will focus, inter alia, on promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, relating to, among other things, abolition of the death penalty.

Do you have any questions on this issue or another EP-related concern? Please use our [web form](#). You write, we answer.

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