

Human Rights Protection

What do I need to know before I start?

The first step towards the protection of human rights in Western Europe following the Second World War came with the entry into force in 1953 of the Council of Europe's Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, commonly known as the European Convention on Human Rights, which rendered some provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights legally binding between the signatory countries. The European Court of Human Rights was established to oversee the implementation of the Convention in the Council of Europe's member states. Beyond the context of the Council of Europe, initiatives for the promotion of human rights protection developed in the 1950s within the context of the European Communities. A special Ad Hoc Assembly, established by the ECSC Special Council of Ministers and composed of 87 politicians from the six Member States, was tasked with drafting the Treaty on a European Political Community (EPC), which included special provisions for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the Community. The draft treaty prepared by the Constitutional Committee was approved by the Assembly and subsequently reviewed by the foreign ministers of the ECSC six member states, leading to long negotiations and multiple redraftings of the EPC Treaty. Human rights protection became increasingly important for the Communities, especially with regard to the Community's relations with the Court and the Community's future role in protecting human rights. The 1973 Declaration on European Identity by the European Council mentioned specifically respect for human rights as a fundamental element of EU identity, while such respect became part of the conditions for EU membership with the 1978 Copenhagen Declaration. The Maastricht Treaty (1992) gave formal recognition to human rights as part of EU law, while the Amsterdam Treaty conferred new competences to the Community in adopting legislation aimed at fighting discrimination. An EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms was drafted and proclaimed in 2000 and was rendered legally binding by the Lisbon Treaty (2009; Art. 6). The Lisbon Treaty introduced indeed provisions aimed at strengthening the protection of human rights in the EU and confirmed the EU's objective to access to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Today, the promotion of human rights is an integral part of the Community's development co-operation policy, which is based on the principle of sustainable, equitable and participatory human and social development. It is therefore advisable to consult also the research guide on the Community's development co-operation policy.

Languages: Please be aware that although most documents available in our Archives are in French, English or German, some may be in other EU languages. In order to check the languages used in a fonds, please refer to our holdings page. Additionally, some fonds may contain a few files in a language other than those listed in the description.

What can I find at the HAEU?

Pertaining specifically to human rights issues, the fonds available at the HAEU are:

1) *EU institutions*

[Council of Ministers](#)

The Council's fonds, organized by year, does not include a specific section concerned with human rights issues but these matters were part of the issues discussed in some meetings of the Council for Foreign Affairs (example [1](#), [2](#)), of the ACP-CEE Council (example [1](#)), and of COREPER (example, [1](#), [2](#)). To access the relevant files, it is advisable to search the database directly ("droits de l'homme" OR "human rights") and filter the results to limit the search to the Council's fonds. Moreover, considering that the promotion of human rights is an integral part of the Community's development co-operation policy, it can also be useful to consult the Council's sub-fonds [Etats africains et malgache associés](#) and [Pays africains, des Caraïbes et du Pacifique \(ACP\) du Commonwealth](#), related to the Community's relations with developing countries and Member States' overseas territories.

[Commission](#)

In the Commission's fonds, files relating to human rights protection can be found both in the section for the [DGV Social Affairs](#), when it concerns the Community, the UN and its Commission on Human Rights (example [1](#), [2](#), [3](#)), and for the [DGI External Relations](#), when it concerns human rights violations in third countries (example [1](#), [2](#)). Since these files are not assembled but scattered among the two sections, it is advisable to search the [database](#) directly ("droits de l'homme" OR "human rights") and filter the results to limit the search to the Commission's fonds to reach more easily the abovementioned files. Furthermore, the Commission's fonds also include the draft [1976 Common Declaration](#) by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission concerning the respect of Human Rights as well as a 1979 [memorandum](#) on the accession of the European Communities to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. In addition, you might want to look into the sections related to the [Secretariat-General](#) and the [Cabinets](#).

[European Parliament](#)

The inventory of the European Parliament includes a section on the work of the parliamentary commission for political affairs (for the [1st](#), [2nd](#), and [3rd](#) legislature), which includes files concerned with human rights protection in Europe and globally and to the Community's policy in this regard (example for the [1st](#), [2nd](#), and [3rd](#)). With regard to the third legislature, the fonds includes the reports and proceedings of the [parliamentary commission for citizens' rights](#), as well as a sub-section on the work of the [sub-commission "Droits de l'Homme"](#) (1989-1991) as part of its political affairs. Furthermore, the numerous parliamentary questions (for the [1st](#), [2nd](#) and [3rd](#) legislature) present in the Parliament's inventory concern human rights protection in the

Community. It is therefore advisable to search the database directly and filter the results to limit the search to the Parliament's inventory to reach the relevant parliamentary questions (example [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#)). In addition, the fonds annexed to the Parliament's fonds includes numerous [press-cuttings](#) pertaining to human rights protection and to the fight against social exclusion and racism. Concerning the early years of the Parliament, the fonds of the [Ad Hoc Assembly](#) (relating to the draft treaty setting up a European Political Community) also includes [documents pertaining to human rights protection](#) as part of the reports of its sub-commission for jurisdictional institutions

[European Court of Auditors](#)

You might find it interesting to consult the ECA's [annual reports](#) (1977-1997), [special reports](#) (1978-1991) ([example](#)) and [opinions](#) (1977-1997) as well as [internal documents](#), including [information documents](#) (1977-1994) and [working documents](#) (1977-1994). The ECA internal documents includes files related to human rights protection in the Community and you may search directly the database ("droits de l'homme" OR "human rights") and filter the results to limit the search to the ECA's fonds (example [1](#), [2](#), [3](#)).

[European Investment Bank](#)

You might find it interesting to consult the sub-fonds '[Aides, dons et subsides exceptionnels](#)' as well as the [EIB information document](#) pertaining to human rights as well as the EIB [annual reports](#).

[Economic and Social Committee](#)

The inventory does not include a special section for human rights issues but the section 'Avis' comprises some files (reports, articles, and position papers) pertaining to the development of a common policy in the Community with regard to human rights and to the European Convention on Human Rights (example [1](#), [2](#)). Similarly to the Council of Ministers fonds, the inventory of the Committee is organized by year, each including a special section 'Avis' (example for [1975](#)) and it is advisable to search the database directly ("droits de l'homme" OR "human rights") to find relevant documents and filter the results to limit the search to the Committee's fonds. In addition, concerning the year [1981](#), the fonds of the ESC also includes a section pertaining to the meetings and work of [a sub-committee](#) that comprises a special section for human rights protection.

2) *Corporate bodies*

[European Movement \(ME\)](#)

It can be very useful to consult the ME's fonds to understand the origins of the Community's policy with regard to human rights, as it includes various [documents](#) pertaining to human rights protection in the Community and in Europe and to the drafting of the [European Convention on Human Rights](#).

[Youth Forum of the European Communities \(YFEC\)](#)

The YFEC was active in promoting human rights and fighting social exclusion and its fonds includes files pertaining to its [project 'Equality and Human Rights'](#) and to a [Human Rights conference held in Bucharest in 1988](#), including minutes of meetings, working documents and reports.

3) *Individuals*

[Angel Viñas](#)

You may look into Viñas's private fonds which includes various files concerned with [human rights in an international context and in the Community context](#). The fonds includes files concerning the [Commission's role](#) in promoting human rights and democratization, and policy statements and commitments on human rights, including EU common strategies and positions, statements from UN, international bodies, Commissioner's speeches and the EP position as well as human rights/democratisation clauses included in EC co-operation agreements and treaties. The documentation annexed to Viñas' fonds also includes a special section on [human rights and democracy](#).

[Graham J. L. Avery](#)

Concerned with [EU enlargement and accession negotiations](#), Avery's private fonds comprises [files](#) pertaining to the conditions of EU membership regarding human rights, including details of meetings and various papers.

[Giulio Fossi](#)

You may also look into Fossi's fonds, which includes reports and working documents pertaining to a [UNESCO seminar on human rights](#) organized by the French government in December 1989.

[Antonio Cassese](#)

It might be useful to look into the fonds, which includes [files](#) pertaining to his (failed) candidacy to the European Commission of Human Rights in 1992 and to the European Court of Human Rights in 2001. The relevance of these files in studying human rights issues in Europe is to be found in the various correspondence between Cassese and other actors active in the field, as it can provide insightful information on the different actors involved and their relations.

[Paolo Falcone](#)

Falcone's private fonds includes numerous [files](#) pertaining to human rights protection and to democratization in third countries during his time as director of the Human Rights Unit of the European Parliament from 1990 to 1994. The [documentation annexed](#) to Falcone's fonds also includes numerous files regarding human rights protection.

[Pier Virgilio Dastoli](#)

You may look into Dastoli's private fonds which includes files concerning the development of a common policy in the Community with regard to [human rights protection](#). In addition, the documentation annexed to Dastoli's fonds includes a [collection of documents](#) produced in the context of the work of the German Parliament's committee for European affairs with regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the European Convention.

[Emile Noel](#)

Noel's private fonds includes numerous files pertaining to human rights protection, to the Commission's position in this context and to the European Convention on Human Rights (example [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#)). The various files are however scattered among the different sections of the fonds' inventory. It is therefore advisable to search directly the database ("droits de l'homme" OR "human rights") and filter the results to limit the search to Noël's private fonds. In addition, you may look into his notes on the European Council and Commission's meetings, as well as documents related to the [work of the different DGs](#) of the Commission, during his time as Secretary-General.

[Fernand Dehousse](#)

The private fonds of Fernand Dehousse includes various files concerned with [human rights protection in the context of the United Nations \(UN\)](#), to the meetings of the [UN Commission for Human Rights \(1945-1954\)](#), as well as to its involvement in the drafting of the [European Convention on Human Rights](#) in the framework of the European Movement.

[Graham Watson](#)

Watson was [President](#) of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) and you may consult the Graham Watson papers, which includes files related to his involvement with several [liberal movements](#) including documents concerning [human rights protection in the UK and in Europe](#), as well as [reports](#) of meetings and [publications](#) pertaining to human rights protection.

4) *Oral History*

In addition, take a look at the [oral history holdings](#), which comprise numerous interviews of European politicians and officials, including important figures and officials active in the protection of human rights at the European level. Below, you can find a list of persons interviewed who addressed the topic of human rights protection at the European level.

[Abel Matutes Juan](#)

[Carlo Russo](#)

[Manuel Marín González](#)

[Claude Cheysson](#)

[Ernst Albrecht](#)

[Daniela Napoli](#)

[Paolo Ponzano](#)