



FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Freedom of expression guarantees that everyone has the right to say what they think and to give their opinion. This fundamental principle of democracy means that we must respect other people's opinions, even if they are different from our own. It guarantees debate and diversity of opinion in society. However, a democratic society may consider it necessary to punish all forms of expression that spread or justify hatred based on intolerance.

A FAIR SYSTEM OF JUSTICE

A fair system of justice guarantees that all persons have the right to defend themselves before a court, which applies the laws in a fair and just manner. Justice is a principle based on compliance with the laws of the country. Everyone is equal before the law. The courts decide whether a person has or has not complied with the law. The judiciary must be independent of those who hold political power and act independently and impartially; otherwise it is corrupt.



GENDER EQUALITY

Although women and men have equal rights and are equal in dignity, they do not always have the same opportunities in society. Like all other rights, gender equality must always be protected (for example equal pay, more balanced representation in politics and at the head of business enterprises).



FREE ELECTIONS AND VOTING RIGHTS

Democracy is based on the right to vote and on free elections. In a democracy, power is in the hands of the people, who choose representatives to express their opinions. Unfortunately, in many countries, elections are not yet free. Sometimes the head of state alone takes decisions in an authoritarian manner. At other times, the elections are rigged to ensure that a specific political party wins.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF ELECTIONS:

- > Legislative elections: citizens vote for the members of the country's parliament.
 - > Local elections: citizens vote for the representative of a town or region.
 - > Presidential elections: citizens vote for the President of their country.
- Elections also take place in other situations: in school classes, in youth councils, associations, business enterprises...



EUROPE MATTERS

A QUESTION OF VALUES

DIVERSITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination is when a person or a group of people is rejected because of their origin, skin colour, gender, language, religion, or political opinions... and deprived of their rights. Discrimination, which is often based on ignorance, prejudice and stereotypes, occurs when we are afraid of something that is unfamiliar or unknown to us and when our fear makes us suspicious of or aggressive towards others.



ABOLITION OF THE DEATH PENALTY

The death penalty, or capital punishment as it is also known, is a decision taken by a court to sentence those found guilty of the most serious crimes to death. The 46 member states of the Council of Europe no longer apply the death penalty because it is a violation of the right to life and therefore a human rights violation. However it still exists in many countries (the United States, China, Japan...).



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