

Executive Summary

Over the last few years, there has been no change regarding the protection and enforcement of human rights in Cuba. The shift of power in mid-2006 to Raul Castro, Fidel Castro's brother, has also not led to considerable improvements in the country. The opposition remains weak due to constant suppression and frequent imprisonments, and there are no signs that this might change soon. Therefore, they depend on international solidarity and support as mentioned by Vaclav Havel when he attended a conference in April 2007 in Berlin that was co-organised by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba.

It appears difficult to find a unified position on Cuba, either in Germany or in the European Union. On a European level there has been no coherent political strategy regarding Cuba, although the "Common Position" which was signed in 1996 still forms the basis of European policy towards Cuba. However, since "diplomatic measures" had been put in place against Cuba in 2003 and were subsequently suspended in 2005, opinions among the EU member states in terms of the right approach towards Cuba vary considerably, thus weakening the voice of the EU enormously. What is clear, however, is that the policy of "change through rapprochement" has not proved to be a successful strategy towards Cuba. The basis for any kind of dialogue or cooperation must be a stated intention of the Cuban government to improve its human rights record – this would even be more essential as Cuba is currently a member of the Human Rights Council of the United Nations.

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