

## WEDNESDAY, 13 DECEMBER 2006

IN THE CHAIR: MR BORRELL FONTELLES

*President*

### 1. Opening of the sitting

*(The sitting was opened at 9.05 a.m.)*

### 2. Documents received: see Minutes

### 3. Action taken on Parliament's positions and resolutions: see Minutes

### 4. Enlargement strategy and main challenges 2006-2007 – The institutional aspects of the European Union's capacity to integrate the new Member States (debate)

**President.** We have a very important item on the agenda today: the joint debate on

- the report by Elmar Brok, on behalf of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, on the Commission's Communication on the Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2006-2007 [2006/2252(INI)] (A6-0436/2006), and

- the report by Alexander Stubb, on behalf of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, on the institutional aspects of the European Union's capacity to integrate new Member States [2006/2226(INI)] (A6-0393/2006).

Apart from their intrinsic importance, these issues are of particular significance on the eve of the European Council and they will be amongst the most important issues to be discussed at the meeting of Heads of State or Government. It will be my pleasure to communicate to the Council the resolutions relating to these issues that Parliament will adopt during this sitting.

**Elmar Brok (PPE-DE), rapporteur.** – *(DE)* Mr President, Madam President-in-Office of the Council, Commissioner, it was in the spring of this year that this House asked the Commission to produce a report on the capacity to integrate the new Member States; that report appeared on 8 November, but it is not one that we regard as adequate.

Up to now, enlargement has been one of the most successful aspects of the European Union's policy, with the area of peace, stability and positive economic development being substantially extended and contributing to the reunification of Europe. We also know that, in candidate countries and also in others in Europe, the prospect of EU membership is a vital element in the process of reforming the state, and both these positive considerations must always be borne in mind.

Even so, we have to be aware, now that enlargement is bringing us to a total of twenty-seven Member States – with the possibility of Croatia soon making their number twenty-eight – of the need to give thought to the future of the European project. Do we want the European Union to be a political project in the true sense of the word, possessing the capacity to act, the ability to play a global role in dealing with issues of foreign and security policy, combating terrorism and organised crime, something for which it needs to be ready to act, or do we want it to drift along as an economic project? Clear answers must be found to these questions.

It must be clear to us that the present institutional constitution of the European Union will get us nowhere. It is because the Constitutional Treaty was intended for the last enlargement that that last enlargement must be completed and consolidated before we start thinking seriously about more big schemes, if we ourselves are not to wreck our own project. That is why the Constitutional Treaty does, to some degree, impose conditions, and Mr Stubb will have more to say about this.

There are still other questions that we have to address, questions to which unambiguous answers must be found, questions as to the direction in which we are journeying, perhaps in connection with the next review clause and the Financial Perspective scheduled for 2008/2009, in order that we may know which

enlargement shall have what consequences for the European project. There are, in any case, many areas – agricultural policy, structural policy, and so on – in which things cannot carry on the way they are now. What consequences result for certain Member States, how much less money will they get, and how much more will others have to pay? All these things have to be sorted out if the project is to be proceeded with in a serious way.

It is perfectly clear that the undertakings we have given – for example those given to the states of the Western Balkans at Thessaloniki – have to be acted upon. Nobody in this House is calling for negotiations currently underway to be broken off; we know that time is of the essence and that it is because Croatia is waiting on the threshold that the Heads of State or Government have to move the process forward, but we also have to spell out the fact that full membership is not at every stage and in every single case, whether immediately or in the long term, the only means whereby we can make countries' European prospect tangible in a credible way. It is for these reasons that questions arise concerning development and neighbourhood policy, or questions concerning multilateral coalitions of states for which European Union membership is a prospect, the idea being that their peoples should get something now and not just in fifteen years' time with the conclusion of negotiations that have not even begun yet. When I say, then, that we must develop a much more imaginative approach, I am thinking only of the example of Ukraine, where, regrettably, a great deal of time was lost, and that to our own disadvantage. That such countries should have a European perspective is in our interests and not only in theirs, and that is a reason why we must do something, but it has to be clear to us that, if we enlarge the EU despite making no headway in its internal development, we will end up with an inner circle, with members of the European Union being divided into first and second class. To sum it up in a slogan, we are faced with the choice between the constitution and Verhofstadt, for that, too, is a possible consequence. It is the countries that are particularly insistent on enlargement that are the very same ones who want to slow down or stop the process whereby the European Union becomes deeper, and I myself have doubts about their credibility.

As regards Turkey, we have joined with a number of colleagues in proposing a formula in response to the new development, and I hope that it will work. It is to be regretted that Turkey's legal obligations have not been met and that yet another delay has occurred, although it has to be said that, on the other hand, breaking off the negotiations would have been the wrong way to go about things. That must not mean, however, that Turkey need not discharge these obligations in the long term.

*(Applause)*

**Alexander Stubb (PPE-DE), rapporteur.** – Mr President, I would like to make five points about our report on integration capacity. I will start by thanking all those colleagues involved in the process and certainly those in the secretariat who did a wonderful job.

My first point is about the terminology we are using today. The original term which we dealt with was 'absorption capacity'. When we were discussing who was going to do this report, I talked to Mr Absorption himself – my good friend Mr Brok. We came to the conclusion that perhaps absorption is not the best term to use. I think Mr Karl Bild put it very well when he said: who wants to be absorbed by the European Union? Does France want to be absorbed by the European Union? Of course the answer is no. So we went for a more dynamic, more positive term and decided that 'integration capacity' is really what we are looking at.

My second point is that this is potentially a sensitive subject because there are many interests. My colleague and friend Mr Brok made reference to some of them. In other words you have those types of people who are against enlargement but for the Constitution. You have those who are against the Constitution but for enlargement. Then you have those like me who are for the Constitution and for enlargement, and then there are the likes of Mr Farage and the rest who are against both.

What we tried to do was swim through these four types of interest and I think we have done it fairly well in this report. The notion of integration capacity is nothing really new. We have always had it. There is always a debate before each and every enlargement about how much the European Union should deepen. Before 1973 the Union became a customs union. Before 1986 the Single European Act was put forward. Before the Finnish-Austrian-Swedish accession you had the Maastricht Treaty. Before the big bang in 2004 you had Amsterdam and Nice. What we want is to have a constitution before the next enlargement.

Thirdly, how do we define integration capacity? I think the conclusion of this report is that you can give a vague notion of what it actually means and you could say that it is not a condition for enlargement, but it is a criterion for us, the current Member States. We have to put our house in order before we are able to enlarge. The difficulty is that you cannot give integration capacity a strict definition because it is linked to two things. One: the time of accession. Two: the number of new states coming in. In other words, enlargement in 1973 was radically different to enlargement in 2004. Still on the definition, integration capacity is about three things: institutions, budget and policies.

My fourth point is about the public debate, and here I would like to point the finger at the European Council, which is saying that we need to link enlargement to public opinion. We say yes, of course you have to do that, but do not tell me that you do not have the opportunity to do it. Enlargement negotiations are opened through unanimity. Each chapter is opened with unanimity. Each chapter is closed with unanimity. The whole package is approved by unanimity, and on top of that each Member State is supposed to ratify accession. If within those two to ten years you are not able to explain the benefits of enlargement to the general public I think you are miserably failing in your job, so please do your job and then come and start talking about public opinion. We need more strategic thinking on enlargement.

My final point is about the Constitution. This report outlines a number of issues which we desperately need to clarify before the next enlargement: qualified majority voting, legal personality, the foreign minister, common security policy, etc. These are issues that we badly need to deal with before we can enlarge. The message from this report is: let us get that house in order before 2009 and then start enlarging.

I shall finish with this. Enlargement is probably the best policy the European Union has ever had. It has brought with it peace, prosperity, security and stability. When we talk about enlargement let us not give poor excuses because we know that we are never and yet always ready to enlarge.

*(Applause)*

**Paula Lehtomäki**, *President-in-Office of the Council*. (FI) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the June European Council decided that the debate on enlargement and on the Union's future enlargement strategy should continue and broaden during the Finnish presidential term. The European Council that will meet this week will discuss all aspects of future enlargements, including the Union's capacity to accept new members and ways to improve further the quality of the enlargement process on the basis of the experience gained thus far.

The European Council will have its general enlargement debate with reference to the enlargement strategy released by the Commission on 8 November. The strategy also incorporates a special report on the Union's capacity to integrate new members. The aim of the Presidency is for the European Council discussions to give weight to the common view of the future of the enlargement process. On Monday the General Affairs and External Relations Council considered the European Council's conclusions on enlargement. The Council engaged in a constructive and thorough debate on the matter.

Enlargement is part of Europe's integration process. When the Finnish Presidency presented its work programme to the Committee on Foreign Affairs last July, we pointed out that enlargement has undeniably promoted growth and affluence in Europe. It has benefited both the Union, together with its Member States, and Europe as a whole. The prospect of membership has prompted the candidate countries to carry out necessary reforms. Enlargement has contributed to the fact that the Union has become a more powerful player in international politics. Expansion of the internal market has made it possible for the EU economy to respond more effectively to the challenges of global competition.

The historic fifth round of enlargement will be completed when Bulgaria and Romania, whose intended commissioner candidates were approved here yesterday, join the European Union on 1 January. This round has already proven to be a success. Thanks to enlargement, an area of peace, stability, democracy, the rule of law and prosperity is extending to almost everywhere in Europe. We must now ensure that this success story continues.

The Union needs to continue its enlargement as an open and objective process, with no new restrictions or conditions imposed. To this end, closer attention needs to be paid to how enlargement can make headway in practice. It is only natural to try and improve the quality of the process of enlargement, and to make the Union better prepared for it.

As we know, and as is evident from the rapporteurs' speeches, capacity for integration, or the Union's ability to accept new members, is not a criterion of membership. Nor should it ever become one. Integration capacity is nevertheless an important factor to take into account in order to guarantee the success of enlargement. Preserving capacity for integration is in the interests of both the Union and candidate countries. If, however, we were to impose conditions on enlargement within the Union which a candidate country could do nothing about implementing, there would be a danger that we would be harming the willingness of countries interested in membership of the Union to undertake reforms.

To preserve the Union's capacity for integration it is necessary that acceding countries are prepared to accept and implement the obligations that come with membership of the European Union. It is also essential that the Union can function effectively and can develop. It is important for the Union to be able to accept new members when they are ready on the basis of the progress made in negotiations. Both of these considerations are also important in order to obtain the support of the general public for the enlargement process.

The Union's integration capacity should be examined during the enlargement process. We have to ensure that the Union is able to function politically, economically and institutionally as it enlarges. The impact of future enlargements on the Union's institutions, policies and budget needs to be carefully assessed.

It is important that the Union keeps to the commitments which we gave to Croatia, Turkey and the Western Balkan countries in negotiations on membership. With regard to Turkey, I would like to say here that the Presidency has done all it can to enable the negotiations process to continue. We are pleased with the solution arrived at by the Council on Monday. It will provide us with a basis on which to continue.

Candidate countries and potential candidate countries have a responsibility to carry out the reforms which are needed in those countries. Progress in the membership process depends on the progress made in this respect. Headway can only be made in the process if the conditions are met.

Recently there has been a strong sense of enlargement fatigue in the air. Providing timely and factual information can also do much to dispel prevailing doubts. The truth is, the Union derives benefit from new Member States and needs them.

Finally, Mr President, on behalf of the Presidency, I would like to thank the European Parliament for its robust participation in the debate on future enlargement. The two reports before us today are a valuable contribution to this debate. The Presidency will of course take due account of the reports on enlargement strategy and integration capacity being discussed today, as well as the views expressed by the European Parliament in general. We trust that Parliament will support our common mission.

*(Applause)*

**Olli Rehn, Commission.** *(FI)* Mr President, Minister Lehtomäki, ladies and gentlemen, I wish to take this opportunity to thank the Presidency for its excellent and close cooperation during its term, and I would especially like to congratulate it for the decision it took on Monday this week to allow the membership negotiations with Turkey to continue. This decision is a clear signal to Turkey that there are consequences for failing to fulfil its obligations, but at the same time the Council's decision on Monday managed to prevent a clash in relations between the European Union and Turkey.

This decision shows that the European Union can take decisions on thorny issues like Turkey resolutely and with solidarity, without making a major drama out of it. I trust that this will be appreciated in this House, and I know that it will at least be appreciated by the 26 members of the European Council who will meet on Thursday and Friday and who did not want another Turkey summit at the end of this year.

Mr President, I would like to congratulate the rapporteurs, Mr Brok and Mr Stubb (who is not stubborn but intellectually most flexible, however his name is pronounced!). I would also like to congratulate the Committee and all the Members for their intensive work on this important subject.

The Commission shares many of the points made in the reports. We welcome in particular your preference for the concept of 'integration capacity', as explained by Mr Brok and Mr Stubb. We welcome Parliament's support for the Commission's enlargement strategy and its principles, as well as the support for our efforts to enhance communication and transparency.

I agree with Parliament's view that integration capacity is primarily about the EU's institutions, budget and policies. But, before I dwell on those points, let me underline the paramount importance of keeping our own strategic interest in mind when considering our integration capacity.

In the current debate in Europe in general, we often talk past one another. Some underline only the strategic significance of enlargement for peace and democracy. Others focus only on internal problems which reduce our capacity to integrate new Member States. If these two discourses do not meet, we run the risk of increasing confusion among our own citizens and eroding our credibility in the candidate countries.

Therefore, we must build up a renewed consensus on enlargement by combining these two sides of the coin. We must keep up the strategic mission of enlargement by maintaining the EU's soft power of democratic and economic transformation and, at the same time, we must ensure our capacity to function, while gradually integrating new Member States.

For these reasons, the Commission will further improve the quality of the accession process. We shall make impact assessments and evaluate budgetary implications on key policies, especially on agricultural and cohesion policies.

Furthermore, we need to apply rigorous conditionality. Experience shows that the better prepared the new Member States are the smoother the EU functions after enlargement. Difficult issues, such as judicial reform and the fight against corruption, must be addressed at an early stage of the negotiations.

However, when improving the quality of the accession process, we should not create something overly complicated. That would only build artificial blockages into a process that is already complicated enough. I believe we are all in favour of simplification, not complication. Therefore, we must have clear rules, clear procedures, that are understood both by our own citizens and by the countries concerned – the candidate countries.

Some wonder whether enlargement is done at the expense of deepening. My answer is 'no': the EU has managed to deepen and to widen in parallel before, and that can be done again.

Therefore, a new institutional settlement should have been reached by the time the next new Member State is likely to be ready to join our Union. The European Council agreed a timetable for continuing the institutional reform, starting with a political declaration to be adopted in Berlin next March. The necessary steps to achieve a new institutional settlement should have been taken by the end of 2008.

We need a new institutional settlement to make our decision-making more effective. We need it to strengthen the legitimacy of the Union, and we need it to strengthen Europe's role in the world. Last, but not least, we need it for the current EU and its citizens today or, by the latest, tomorrow – not just because of potential future enlargement. We need to maintain the momentum of integration, and to deepen and further develop the European Union.

I trust you share these goals of a reformed and stronger Union and I look forward to working with you to achieve these objectives.

*(Applause)*

**Íñigo Méndez de Vigo**, *on behalf of the PPE-DE Group.* – (ES) Mr President, I would like firstly to congratulate the two rapporteurs. Fortunately, the two rapporteurs are both from my political group, Mr President, and they have acted jointly and in a complementary fashion. They are not aware of this, but I am going to reveal a secret this morning: in my political group, Mr Swoboda, we call Mr Brok and Mr Stubb 'the twins'. I hope that other twins that are better known across Europe will excuse our appropriating the name.

The truth is, however, that they have done what other twins should do. They have acted jointly for the good of Europe. They have not absorbed the amendments of other political groups, but rather they have integrated them. I therefore believe that the House will vote today in favour of these two reports on the strategy for enlargement and the capacity to integrate.

Mr President, these two reports make various positive commitments. The first commitment – as Mr Stubb has explained eloquently – is to enlargement. We believe that enlargement is enormously advantageous for the European Union and for the States that join it. There is no doubt about that. Anybody who doubts it should look at the Resolution's paragraph 19.

It is also clear, however, that in order for enlargement to be a success, the European Union must be prepared to accept those new States. The reality is that that is not currently the case. Nobody invites a guest home unless the house is prepared for them. Putting the house in order is the second commitment made in Mr Stubb's report: the commitment to the Constitutional Treaty.

Not so long ago, two out of every three Members of this House supported the Corbett-Méndez de Vigo report. Mr Stubb's report stresses that fact. We still believe that the content of the Constitutional Treaty is necessary in order to make it possible for our home to receive further guests.

I believe that it is very important to stress that now, because the German Presidency is going to make proposals with a date, that of 2009, and I believe that paragraphs 9 and 10 of the Stubb report emphasise what must be the content of any future reform, and also reject something that we in this Parliament have also emphasised on occasions: we do not want cherry picking – the partial entry into force of certain aspects. We want the balance represented by the text of the Constitutional Treaty.

Finally, Mr President, both reports have a clear political message. You will be at the European Council and I would ask that you repeat it there: there will be no further enlargements without a European Constitution. There will be none. This Parliament must issue a favourable opinion when it comes to approving any new enlargement. It will exercise that right, because that is what this report formally states.

Mr President, my group will support both reports, and with regard to Mr Stubb's report, it will vote in favour of Amendments 6, 7 and 8.

**Hannes Swoboda**, *on behalf of the PSE Group. – (DE)* Mr President, while I would like to start by thanking Mr Brok and Mr Stubb for their reports, I have to say, though, that the sight of the pair of them together with Mr Méndez de Vigo leads me to the conclusion that they may well – obviously – not be peas in a pod, but the result is very good, and that, with all due respect to you personally, Commissioner, I regard what emerges from these two reports as better than the report by the Commission, in that ours articulates the matter more clearly and with less ambiguity, and I do believe that the Commission should learn something from this.

Here, among the Members of this House, too, there are those who see a small Europe as a solution, arguing that the smaller the European Union is, the better and the more homogenous it will be, while, on the other hand, there are those who argue that 'the bigger the better' since we will then be able to speak for everyone, yet we cannot speak for everyone if we have not found a common voice – something for which, it follows, the conditions must be created. It is quality rather than quantity that is the making of Europe, and I am in full agreement with Mr Méndez de Vigo that this is dependent – among other things – on the European Constitution.

It does not have to be exactly the present constitution, and it probably will not be either, but that constitution's essential elements must be made reality if Europe is to become effective. There is no doubt about the fact that the second precondition is the proper financial basis; let us be honest about our inability, right now, to give our peoples the things they aspire towards and imagine themselves possessing, things that they are quite entitled to expect from Europe. How, then, is an enlarged European Union meant to work if we do not create the right financial conditions for it?

What we have to tell our governments is that they cannot go around making fine promises about enlargement at the same time as saying, whenever the financial basis is mentioned, that we do not have the money for it; that is not acceptable, and this House must make that perfectly clear.

Let me just say something else about the Constitution. The most important thing, of course, is reform of the institutions, by which is meant not a merely small-scale touching-up job, but a fundamental reform. Much the same can be said, in the financial field, about the financial models that bring about a fundamental change in the financial basis of the European Union.

So let us talk about integration capacity. On behalf of my group, I would like to say that integration capacity functions, not as a barrier against future enlargements, but as a precondition for them; a necessary precondition, moreover, and not merely a by-product of our thinking when we alter this or that detail in an accession treaty, something that will no longer be acceptable in future.

Alongside that, of course, the dialogues on South-Eastern Europe and the Balkans must be continued – not just about Croatia, on which subject I have the honour to be the rapporteur. Even after Croatia, it

will not be possible to draw a new border; instead progress will have to be made step by step. As for Turkey, about which Mr Wiersma will have more to say, while it must discharge its obligations, we too have an integration task yet to perform on Cyprus, and that is something we have to do.

Moving to my final point, we need to give the countries in our neighbourhood, particularly those around the Black Sea, a realistic vision, and that calls for the establishment of an intermediate form of a kind to which we in the Foreign Policy Committee have been giving consideration, for Mr Wiersma and I have put forward the idea of an EU/Black Sea Community, to tie the countries there closer to the European Union in what would be a kind of preparatory stage that might – albeit without imposing any obligation – lead to membership if the necessary conditions were met.

Whilst we have to give our neighbours what they desire, we can do that only if we do the same for our own fellow-citizens in Europe, and that we are at the moment not doing; we have yet to create the conditions for doing so, and only then will it once more be possible to take the vision of a great and enlarged Europe and make it reality.

*(Applause)*

**President.** Mr Stubb and Mr Brok are clearly not twins in the physical sense, Mr Swoboda. Mr Méndez de Vigo said it affectionately, making the point that they act jointly, like two other personalities who are also well-known, Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy, who were not twins either, but who acted together.

*(Laughter)*

That is how we should interpret the way they work together, and I say it with the greatest of affection for our rapporteurs today.

**Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck, on behalf of the ALDE Group.** – *(NL)* Mr President, Madam President-in-Office of the Council, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, although the jokes about twins have been wearing thin of late, I should just like to add that it is fortunate that you have not yet turned into evil twins, because that would of course be extremely regrettable.

Since May/June 2005, enlargement as a whole has come under fire. In fact, it is said to be the main reason for the ‘no’ votes in France and the Netherlands. It was in this negative atmosphere that the concept of absorption capacity all of a sudden reared its head. It is a hideous word which, to many, is an excuse to put the brakes on further enlargement and even to question, if not revoke, any pledges made in this respect.

My group never went along with this and is very much attached to first of all, the recognition that enlargement so far is a great success and secondly, that all pledges made in respect to Croatia and the western Balkan states, even though some of these are only now being formed, and pledges in respect of Turkey will actually be honoured.

In this connection, I should, in fact, like to congratulate Commissioner Rehn, his colleagues in the Commission, and the Council on the decisions taken with regard to Turkey, which, I think, strike the right balance. While no doors are being shut, it is made clear what the deal is, and we support you all the way in this decision.

Finally, my group feels very strongly – and Mr Duff will expand on this in a moment – that the Union and its institutions should put its own house in order, even before the next enlargement round gets underway. That, however, is up to the European Union, the Member States, the Commission, this House, the Council and not least the European Council, and not the candidate countries.

Both reports reflect this new, more positive attitude towards enlargement, underline very clearly the need for the institutions first to be reformed, and it is for that reason that my group will be supporting them.

**Joost Lagendijk, on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group.** – *(NL)* Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I will not repeat what a success enlargement has proven to be to date, as this has been done by many fellow-Members and also by the Commission and the Council, and although it does appear to be a bit of a platitude in this House, it is no unnecessary luxury to spell this out in a European Union where more and more people question the usefulness and necessity of enlargement.

Having said that, it is nevertheless necessary, and also possible to my mind, to learn from the way we have done things so far. As the Commissioner already mentioned, these lessons are in his report and also in Parliament's reports. I urge you to assess each country on its own merits and avoid making the same mistake by lumping Romania together with Bulgaria. I would urge you not to issue a date too soon, for this will turn against us and against the process. Do not put off awkward issues to the last minute and pay more attention to the implementation than to the pledge. In the debate on these lessons, the term 'absorption capacity', which is now called 'integration capacity', has suddenly cropped up in the last year. It is a reaction in some people in favour of further enlargement – among whose number I count myself – of fear to take part in this debate, because many opponents of further enlargement have used the term integration capacity as an argument against further enlargement.

I do not intend to mince my words when I say that integration capacity is not an argument in favour of enlargement, or, indeed against it, but we must all be clear what we are talking about.

Allow me to single out two elements. With regard to institutional reforms, I repeat that whilst I am very much in favour of further enlargement including the countries of the Western Balkans and Turkey, I am also persuaded that this enlargement is impossible on the basis of the current Treaties and that we therefore need a fundamental institutional reform. I just think that we in this House should not quibble about the question how exactly this should be done, as long as it is done!

As for the other elements from this discussion on integration capacity, public support is crucial. This is possible only if we, and also our national counterparts, manage to make a good job of putting across the message that the past is valued for what it is worth, so that people do not shy away from underlining the EU's long-term interests. This also requires political leadership and political courage, which does not take into consideration each and every opinion poll on enlargement which may be slightly less upbeat at this moment in time. All these elements – courage, political leadership, long-term interests – are combined in the debate on Turkey.

I am therefore very much in favour of this House not riding this wave of populism, which is what is happening in some debates in Europe about Turkey. In my country too, I have noticed that those in favour of accession two years ago are suddenly against Turkey joining, because that is the way the opinion polls are tending to go. We must not be dragged into this, not least in this report. That is why as far as Cyprus is concerned – and I will be discussing this item with Mr Brok – Turkey must deliver on its promise, but so must the European Union. That is why I am so pleased with the undertaking given by the Foreign Affairs Ministers that they will talk about the isolation of Northern Cyprus this coming spring. The future of the European Union cannot be built on instability and fear, and this is certainly true of enlargement.

**Erik Meijer**, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (NL) Mr President, in the early 90s, enlargement was declared as one of the EU's key objectives. Europe, which was previously shared between three economic blocs, had to make haste in being reunited within the European Union. Subsequently, the plan for a limited initial enlargement round – in which Estonia, the Czech Republic and Cyprus were included, but Latvia, Slovakia and Malta were not – was suddenly abandoned in favour of a major enlargement round. In this, Romania and Bulgaria, although they will be Members in three weeks' time, brought up the rear.

Following the pledge that all Balkan states that have not yet joined are also welcome, after the slow start of negotiations with Croatia and Turkey and following short-lived enthusiasm about a possible quick accession procedure involving Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus, it has become noticeably quiet. Negotiations with another candidate country, Macedonia, have not even actually got off the ground yet.

It now transpires that newcomers are no longer that welcome. Those in power fear that, without a constitution, it will become ever more difficult for the European Union to function properly, and ever more funds will need to be redistributed. The public at large are witnessing the phenomenon of labour migration, where people living far from home do the dirty and unsafe work and are badly paid and housed.

The adoption of the Services Directive has created the fear that sound social legislation and proper collective labour agreements in the old Member States will soon have to compete with inferior regulations that apply in new or future Member States. On account of both the neoliberal policy within the European Union and a lack of progress in the democratisation process and human rights in Turkey, further enlargement is becoming extremely unpopular among the public in the current Member States.



These two failings have forced us to shift down a gear and to adopt temporary transitional measures. The danger of this is that states that are currently being rejected are meanwhile becoming ever more dependent on the European Union, something which can hinder them in their own choices and in their own development.

My group is in favour, not least in transitional periods too, of the equivalence of the potential acceding countries being respected and financial support being given, thus allowing them to catch up, also with a view to making their future accession easier. We owe it to the many residents of our Member States who hail from the former Yugoslavia and Turkey to take seriously those regions' desire for accession.

**Konrad Szymański, on behalf of the UEN Group.** – (PL) Mr President, when I read both reports I came across only one pleasant surprise. The entirely black picture of the European Union's enlargement prospects has been replaced by a grey one. This brightening of the picture should be appreciated. The picture brightened even further today in the form of the rapporteur's speech, but the picture that is being painted is still far removed from the truth.

In spite of the impression we might get from both reports, it is not the institutional reforms that have made the Union an increasingly stronger player on the international arena. The European Union has gained political clout because it now represents a larger number of citizens, more companies, more territory and greater military and economic influence. Therefore, it is thanks to the enlargements that took place in the eighties, the nineties and most recently in 2004, that the European Union has gained the strength to be a global player. This change did not result from waving the magic wand of treaty reform.

I notice a greater willingness to talk about the resolution of March 2006 on the same issue, but making enlargement conditional on the Constitutional Treaty is simply anachronistic. We can expect institutional changes, but evoking the treaty as it stands can only be interpreted as an excuse for halting the enlargement process for no good reason. A philosophy based on the motto 'Constitutional Treaty or death' is neither good nor wise. A similar pretext can be found in academic debates on absorption capacity or integration ability.

European integration is not a chemical or physical phenomenon, and there are no objective laws of nature at play here. Integration is a question of pure political will, which lies in our hands and the hands of our colleagues in the Member States. If we truly agree that enlargements can be equated to success, then the question arises as to why we would want to add thirty clauses based on a philosophy not far removed from narrow-minded, gutless Euroscepticism. Can we really be sure that the quality of integration is suffering due to enlargement? Perhaps the quality of integration is also deteriorating due to the bad policies of the Union itself? Perhaps this quality is suffering as a result of an overloaded agenda, which we force onto the shoulders of the European Union, or of excessively diverse and excessively high expectations?

If we were to refute these criticisms of mine, we would be left with the rather banal truth that candidate countries have to fulfil membership criteria. I doubt whether we need to draw up two whole reports only to remind ourselves of this rather self-evident and long-established principle.

For these reasons I do not want to vote in favour of these drafts, as they appear to be nothing more than a list of pretexts for suspending the integration process without good cause.

**Bastiaan Belder, on behalf of the IND/DEM Group.** – (NL) Mr President, the Stubb report is disappointing for more than one reason. First of all, it does not in any way contribute towards resolving the current institutional *impasse* in which the Union finds itself. Only the confirmation of support for the European Constitution and a summary of this Constitution in paragraph 9, on adoption of this report, appeared to be this House's most recent position.

Just as shocking is the lack of vision where the enlargement process is concerned, which brings me to my second point of criticism. Whilst paragraph 11 underlines the need for efforts to be made so as to enhance the public's acceptance of enlargement, the underlying causes of the dwindling support for it remain, however, completely unaddressed. Also, this report perpetuates the taboo of the EU's finiteness. It is precisely the utter lack of political leadership to define the European Union's borders that causes discontent and uncertainty surrounding the enlargement process.

Moreover, concrete recommendations to enshrine the enlargement process in the Treaty are lacking from this report on the institutional aspects of the EU's capacity to integrate new Member States. I suggest enshrining the various stages of the accession process in a treaty, so that uniform criteria apply to aspiring Members every step of the way. In that way, the enlargement process will become more transparent and Parliament will be able to actually add substance to its responsibility of parliamentary control at all the crucial junctures of the accession process.

**Philip Claeys (NI).** – *(NL)* Mr President, while we are on the subject of enlargement strategy, now is a good time to consider the way in which negotiations with problematic candidate countries such as Turkey are conducted. Turkey has been given a deadline to meet its customs union obligations, but the Turkish Government is refusing to play ball, and the European Union's so-called sanction amounts to leaving the difficult chapters unaddressed for the time being and dropping the deadline with no new one in sight.

The Commission and Council have stated repeatedly that they do not want to have a train crash with Turkey, and that the Turks have now understood that they, and not we, can prescribe conditions. In fact, the Belgian Government has come up with a new doctrine for this, which reads that with Turkey, we, and I quote: 'are involved in geopolitical enlargement and that a different tactic is needed'. In other words, a non-European candidate country such as Turkey is free to play fast and loose with the Copenhagen criteria. The European Union has no answer to Turkey's bazaar-style haggling tactics.

Commissioner Rehn spoke a moment ago about the European Union's credibility in respect of the candidate Member States. He overlooks a small detail, namely the EU's credibility among the European public. People have always been led to believe that the negotiations would be suspended if it were evident that Turkey would not come up to the mark, which is the exact opposite of what is happening now, and that is the very problem of credibility that the European Union faces.

**Panayiotis Demetriou (PPE-DE).** – *(EL)* Mr President, Minister, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, the two rapporteurs have presented two exceptional reports today. I congratulate them, because they have put things in their place succinctly, comprehensively and with substance.

There is one question constantly floating round the European Union: Quo vadis Europa? This question can be broken down into other questions: what type of European Union do they want? What size European Union do they want? Is the European Union functioning efficiently today?

These are tormenting questions, which must be answered and the answers are in the vision that we want to serve. What is our vision? Our vision is common. We want a European Union which is democratic, which prospers, which is humane. We want a European Union which will play a regulatory role on the global stage. That is why enlargement is a self-serving objective. Enlargement is part of the vision; consequently we cannot put the cart before the horse; they need to move forward together. From this point of view, Mr Rehn is right to say that enlargement and deepening are two – I would add – sides of the same coin.

However, we cannot talk about enlargement at the expense of quality and for the benefit of expansion – the objective of Europe is not expansionist – without taking account of the conditions in which we live. It is not the European Union which has to adapt to enlargement. It is every country that wishes to accede to the European Union that must adapt. Talking of Croatia and Turkey, it is certainly a good thing that we want Turkey to accede to the European Union; however, we stopped Croatia when it infringed the terms we had set it. I do not want to say that we had to reach that point.

To close, I would say that we must proceed with the Constitution; otherwise enlargement will have no historical meaning.

**Jan Marinus Wiersma (PSE).** – *(NL)* Mr President, I too should like to add my congratulations to the two rapporteurs, Mr Brok and Mr Stubb, for the excellent work they have done. The European Union's fifth enlargement round is, without a doubt, one of the most ambitious projects the EU has ever brought to pass. It also serves as a point of reference, of course, for today's discussion. Moreover, this enlargement forces us to consider the EU's internal functioning before we launch into another round; this is why the subject of the EU's integration capacity is once again on today's agenda.

Nevertheless, I should like to comment on the criticism of enlargement that is often quoted in respect of the debate we are having, and from which I should like to distance myself from this to some extent,

because this criticism embraces a number of ideas that I find objectionable. First of all, that this enlargement was a mistake, secondly, that the European Union is full up and thirdly, that internal reforms are specifically needed in view of enlargement. This is incorrect. Enlargement represents an internal intrinsic value, tied in with the ambition to get the European Union to function more effectively. I repeat, and will continue to do so, that the enlargement of 2004 was a success and the enlargement at the beginning of next year to include Bulgaria and Romania will be no less of one.

The EU is, and always will be, an open club. It has made commitments to a number of countries, and these we will have to honour. Whichever way, the European Union has to reform in order to continue to function and also because the citizens expect more from the European Union. This, indeed, brings us back to the debate on integration capacity and the enlargement strategy in business terms. The Brok and Stubb reports demonstrate, I believe, that this House has succeeded in setting out our expectations in a businesslike manner, and that the Commission has opted for the same businesslike approach, even if, as Mr Swoboda has indicated, the Commission has left a number of important questions unanswered, with the excuse that it will 'return to them in due course'.

With regard to integration capacity, what matters to us most of all is that the European Union does its homework. The present institutions and the Treaty of Nice are inadequate as a basis for the accession of new Member States. It is up to us to carry out the institutional reforms that are needed to enable new countries to be integrated at a later date. The fact that candidate countries are, in turn, responsible for making thorough preparations for membership is nothing new. The conditions have been enshrined in the Copenhagen criteria since 1993.

There are some elements of the EU's integration capacity the importance of which is self-evident. We need the institutions in order for the European Union to function democratically and effectively, and we need a budget that is commensurate with the EU's ambitions; I should, however, also like to say something about what is termed 'capacity to act', which is, as I see it, of crucial importance. What also matters is that the European Union, the Commission, and the Member States, should take initiatives that meet the wishes and expectations of the European public; these must also be central in the communication about the European Union.

The European Union must demonstrate what it is capable of and must be able to put this across, for this is the only way in which we have a chance of successfully creating, and retaining, a support structure for European cooperation, and enlargement is part of this; we should not see enlargement as a separate area of policy that we must adopt in separation. Enlargement must also form part of what the Commission calls its 'citizens' agenda'. Only if public debate that is stirred into life on the basis of a Europe that performs better can we expect citizens to be positive about enlargement in future.

I should like to finish off with a comment about Turkey, a subject on which Mr Swoboda has already touched. Our group supports Commissioner Rehn's position. He has, as we see it, tabled a sensible proposal, namely that we must respond to Turkey's failure to implement the Ankara Protocol. At the same time, we agree with him that we should not slam the door shut completely. The channels of communication must remain open, and we support the partial suspension or delay in the negotiations to which you yourself referred. We continue to hammer home the need for Turkey to meet its legal obligations in respect of the European Union, but also, at the same time, for discussions not to be broken off completely.

On a final note, we hope that next year, the Commission and the Council will take initiatives in order to address the isolation, particularly of an economic nature, of Northern Cyprus.

**Andrew Duff (ALDE).** – Mr President, I certainly welcome the suppression of the terminology of 'absorption capacity', which sounds like a kitchen towel, and of 'privileged partnership', which is a faintly patronising concept, without, frankly, much privilege to it.

But we must seek now to develop the neighbourhood policy quickly and creatively so as to create upon the eastern frontier stable circumstances for states that cannot join the Union and for those that decide that they do not want to do so. As we approach the renegotiation of the Treaty, it would be sensible to include inside part III a chapter describing the enlargement policy, transcribing the Copenhagen criteria and describing far more clearly than at present the accession process and threshold. Consideration should be added, as we renegotiate part III, to the creation of a fresh class of associate membership. Such an improvement would serve to reassure public opinion about the quality of our accession process and

about the pace of expansion of Europe's post-national society. It would also be of great use to third countries as they reflect upon their future relationship with the Union.

### IN THE CHAIR: MR VIDAL-QUADRAS

*Vice-President.*

**Johannes Voggenhuber (Verts/ALE).** – (DE) Mr President, keen though I am to congratulate both rapporteurs, I have for some considerable time been trying to rid myself of the image of them as twins. Whether or not Mr Méndez de Vigo was thinking of the pair's mother I have no idea, but the business of giving birth to them must have lasted for several years. We congratulate both rapporteurs despite their membership of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats rather than because of it, for, in the crisis that the EU is undergoing, they have clarified something of great importance.

What does it mean when we regard deepening and enlargement as one indivisible task? It is one of which the rapporteurs have given a comprehensive and critical description, one not without criticism levelled at the Commission, the Council and Parliament itself, but they were also identical in the way they most scrupulously avoided the underlying, and very weighty, taboo issues. They have described the need for the whole of Europe to be united, but without asking what Europe as a whole actually is and where its borders lie. When we talk in terms of uniting and deepening, what, then, is the ultimate goal of this process of union? It is evident that there is more to it than using a market and a currency to hold Europe together, but what is the political objective? In January, Mr Duff and I put before this House a report in which these questions were asked, yet they have not so far been answered. That is one of the reasons why we cannot respond to many of the issues and fears that the public have; there are taboos at work here, and we should break them.

I am very much obliged for the forthright criticisms to be found in the Brok report, which are aimed at the superficiality of the way in which the financial consequences of the various enlargements are depicted and the superficiality with which institutional issues are addressed. It has to be seen as a black mark against the Commission that it has, from the very beginning of this constitutional crisis, failed to properly address the problems of the institutions, but the same criticism can be made of the superficial approach to issues such as internal security, justice, media freedom and fundamental rights. It is important that that should be said. Personally, I find it regrettable that the issue around Turkey should now see Cyprus put centre stage, for it is not really at the heart of the conflict, which is more about issues relating to fundamental rights and democracy – things that have actually been pushed somewhat into the background. The Commission should, in future, apply much greater thoroughness to dealing with these issues.

How is it possible that there should be in Poland, a country that signed the Treaty, a debate on the death penalty instigated by its government? How is it possible that the President of the Czech Republic should, only a few months after signing a similar treaty, cast doubt on social rights and on the social market economy? I think future accession negotiations will have to include much more discussion with the candidates of the goal of European political unification than has previously been the case.

**Jaromír Kohlíček (GUE/NGL).** – (CS) I should like to take Mr Voggenhuber's questions a step further. How is it possible that the very unfair practices we have recently seen have now been discovered in some parts of the accession treaty, as it confronts the reality of the situation? One example of this is the Commission's call for the Member States to assess what is referred to as their integration capacity, a very topical issue at the moment. The negotiations on the enlargement of the Schengen area and on sugar quotas are scandalous, and they are just two small tips of the iceberg, revealing weaknesses of the EU. I agree with him that here too we can see a chance to overcome these weaknesses. Once again, of course, it is a question of having the willingness to discuss solutions that will suit all parties, rather than the abrasive, belligerent, 'take it or leave it' approach with which we, in countries such as the Czech Republic, are familiar from our own accession negotiations.

For future rounds of enlargement, it is important not only to share common values, but also to acknowledge that the demands of countries that have traditionally been smaller players in Europe must be taken seriously. The principle of solidarity, which has been severely undermined by cutbacks in the EU budget from 1.24% to around 1.05% of GDP over the current budgetary period, for example, must in future be reinforced. Furthermore, it should be emphasised that the Constitutional Treaty cannot be the basis for the EU's future development. It is neither a Constitution nor a Treaty, and this needs to be

said out loud. I also wish to call for negotiations to establish a consensus on questions relating to the future of the EU with deadlines (the Member was interrupted).

Mr President, I should just like to make one remark. In the context of post-enlargement relations, which are referred to in the statement with Russia, I particularly look forward to seeing a solution to human rights and democratisation problems, for example in the Baltic States of the EU.

**Ryszard Czarnecki (UEN).** – (PL) Mr President, both the reports being discussed are supposed to act as signposts for the European Union. However, in the 21st century, we need more than just signposts. We also need traffic lights. In this case, metaphorically speaking, we need two, rather than three colours. We should have green and amber lights but no red light. This means that no country should automatically be excluded from European Union membership. Showing any country the red light along the road to the European Community is inappropriate, but European traffic would also sink into chaos if the only light on the road was green.

At this point, I would like to remind you of the debate we had two years ago regarding Turkey's accession. During the debate, the leaders of the Greens, the party to which Mr Voggenhuber belongs, spoke about 2014 as a potential date for Ankara's accession to the European Union. Today, we realise that this was a case of political surrealism. We have to accept that, Croatia and Macedonia's rapid accession aside, European countries such as Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina or Albania should be allowed to join the European Union ahead of Turkey.

We need to state clearly, and I say this on the day of a cyclical meeting of members from the parliament of Montenegro with representatives of the European Parliament, that the larger the Union is, the more powerful it will be. Finally, the European Union has significantly grown in importance by expanding, without needing a constitution. I would like to say a note of warning to Mr Brok and Mr Stubb. Let us not treat further enlargements as a pretext for introducing institutional changes.

**Georgios Karatzaferis (IND/DEM).** – (EL) Mr President, it would be good if Commissioner Rehn, the Commissioner of enlargement, could first define the borders of Europe for us. What is Europe? Where does Europe end? In Istanbul, in Diyarbakir or in Baghdad? We do not know where the borders of Europe are. Signatures are already being collected in the corridors for Israel to come in. Why not Palestine or Morocco tomorrow? But will that be Europe? Let us clarify what we want. A united Europe or a united Euro-Asia? This being so, everyone realises what is happening today. Today Turkey is not coming into Europe. Europe is going into Turkey, which is why it is not Europe but Turkey that is setting the terms.

We also need to clarify the exclusion of the northern part of Cyprus: this exclusion is not the work of Europe or of Cyprus. It is the work of the occupying army. If the occupying army left, there would be no problem. But here we turn a blind eye. We close our eyes. There is an occupying army in one of the 25 countries of Europe and we pretend that we know nothing about it. This is creating additional arrogance in Turkey. If we wanted to be fair, we would demand that the occupying army leave and that Turkey recognise all 25 countries, not just 24. If it had not recognised France or the United Kingdom, would Turkey be in? Of course not. Why? Because Cyprus is a tiny country? This is a huge historic mistake on the part of Europe.

**James Hugh Allister (NI).** – Mr President, it is clear to me that proponents of the rejected Constitution see enlargement as a bandwagon to secure implementation of parts of that Constitution. Hence, in the Stubb report, the ill-argued but vehemently demanded further assault on national vetoes, the requirement for a minister of foreign affairs, the demand for more powers for the unelected Commission and the expansionist Court of Justice and more competences for the EU.

Enlargement itself requires none of this, but Europhile fanatics like our two rapporteurs, devoid of sustainable arguments to overcome popular opposition to the Constitution, have come up with this spurious spin that enlargement demands a constitution. I say neither this EU, nor one bloated by foolishly encompassing Turkey, needs a constitution.

What a fine mess Laurel Brok and Hardy Stubb would get us into! And all this with no thought of who would pay. As in the past, the expectation seems to be that countries like the United Kingdom will happily continue to bankroll this runaway madness. With the EU already costing my country GBP 4 billion net per annum, I have to say to you that we simply cannot afford any more charity.

**Jacques Toubon (PPE-DE).** – *(FR)* Mr President, the European institutions are finally getting down to the main points. What is the European Union? What does it want? Who can be part of it? I hope that, thanks to the Stubb and Brok resolutions, our European Parliament will clearly help to abandon the pretence and stop forging ahead with the enlargement strategy.

Integration capacity is very well defined by the three elements that appear in paragraph 8 of the Brok report. As far as we are concerned, priority must be given to political projects and not just to the institutions. We are against enlargement leading to the dismantling of common policies. It is true that integration capacity, as rightly defined by Mr Stubb, does not constitute an accession criterion, but a condition for moving on to accession.

For the time being, we believe, like Mr Stubb, that a further enlargement cannot take place without new decision-making mechanisms, without new resources and without new representation of the Union. That is the conclusion that we currently draw from the unfortunate comparison between the accession to the Union of the 12 new Member States, which is a success, and the Treaty of Nice, which, for its part, is totally inadequate. Let us be as clear-sighted in our reasoning regarding Turkey.

The General Affairs Council has noted the consequences of Cyprus' situation, which is, of course, intolerable, but are we not just talking here about another diplomatic deception? The suspension is in danger of being ineffective and of doing nothing to change Turkey's attitude. Our position must be reaffirmed; the Union is in no position to integrate Turkey, but must implement a privileged partnership with this country, which is crucial to Europe.

Let us stop pretending; this is a question of interests and of Turkey and of the European Union. Enlargement is not an end in itself; it is a means of building Europe's political project.

**Carlos Carnero González (PSE).** – *(ES)* Mr President, I would like to begin by congratulating Mr Stubb on his work as shadow rapporteur for the Socialist Group in the European Parliament.

He has done some serious work, which meets two fundamental conditions for this kind of report. Firstly, it provides an appropriate response to an extremely important issue, and secondly, and this is key, it unites large majorities in this House. I believe that this report is likely to follow the pattern of other reports, such as the Corbett-Méndez de Vigo report, which achieved the practically unanimous support of the European Parliament in their time, and that gave them strength. I believe that, in particular, because we are discussing Mr Stubb's report and are going to approve it before the meeting of the European Council in a few days' time and following the success of the Second Interparliamentary Forum on the Future of Europe, which took place here last week.

It is true that we must talk about integration capacity and not absorption capacity. We must respond to the citizens' legitimate concerns by means of a two-fold approach combining deepening and enlargement. We say yes to enlargement, which has been a success and which must be the instrument for building what used to be referred to by the apt expression, the 'Common European Home'.

Mr Méndez de Vigo, it is not guests that we want in this home; it is people and countries to whom the home is going to belong, which means much more. They have the right not just to be here, but also to feel at home here and to help decide upon our *acquis* and collective management. Integration capacity cannot therefore be a further criterion to be added to the Copenhagen criteria, but rather a condition that we apply to ourselves as a Union, in order to ensure that enlargement is a success. Integration capacity clearly includes political capacity, institutional capacity and financial capacity, before any further enlargement can take place. The report says this and we are all repeating it. Nice is no use. That is stating the obvious. When it comes to policies, and unanimity, which means paralysis, as we can see, we are paying a heavy price for not having a Constitution.

That is why in this report we are committed to the European Constitution and its essential content, as Mr Swoboda said. The container itself hardly matters, but what does matter are the main advances contained in that Constitution, because that means deepening and enlargement in real time. That is why it is essential that paragraph 9 of Mr Stubb's report should remain in its entirety.

We believe that the European Constitution will come to fruition by means of an appropriate agreement, without nibbling away at it and without dismembering it as a whole, but naturally that agreement must be ready for 2008 at the very latest, so that the citizens know it when they vote in 2009. Otherwise we would be making fools of ourselves and of course of the citizens as well.

We must also, of course, strengthen the European neighbourhood policy; enlargement must be accompanied by the European neighbourhood policy and, in particular, it must be directed towards the crucial Euro-Mediterranean region. In that regard, the European Parliament's role must be key before and after each process.

The Socialist Group will therefore give your report its strong and decisive support, Mr Stubb.

**Alexander Lambsdorff (ALDE).** – (DE) Mr President, it is evident from the debate on these two reports that there is a heartening consensus within this House on the need for massive institutional reform to be carried out before we can accept new candidates. We all know that the European Union is not in good condition, and so it is right that this House, when considering enlargement policy, should focus on the European Union's capacity for integrating new members, which, contrary to what certain Members sometimes claim, is not a new criterion, but an important element neglected in the past. Past enlargements were successful, but, in 2004, the EU was enlarged without prior or simultaneous deepening, thus imperilling the idea of ever closer union. Particularly for MEPs such as ourselves, this idea of renewal must run through all that we do, and for that we will need effective institutions, the political will, and, above all else, the support of the public, which they will give us only if we are credible, and one of the things that credibility means is that we have to be willing to try new paths and examine alternative options for cooperating with future candidate countries and drawing them closer to us. Contrary to what Mr Brok said, the choice is not between the constitution and Mr Verhofstadt; we should have a vision of a constitution and Verhofstadt. I should like to add that I believe we should be conducting this debate in Brussels rather than in Strasbourg.

**Angelika Beer (Verts/ALE).** – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to start by saying something brief about the Commission's report on the enlargement strategy, which – for good reasons – is divided into three parts, and to which the communications strategy for which the Commission calls is crucial.

This debate is one in which politicians such as ourselves get involved, and we have every right to do so, but we should put this communications strategy into practice ourselves rather than talking about things being hidden in the depths of reports when they are not actually there at all. Let me also make it abundantly clear – and I am speaking here with reference to Mr Brok's report – that it is also unfair to exploit such things as national sensitivities and partisan sentiment in expressing opposition to the enlargement strategy or the Constitution. Yes, of course, some parts of the report are highly ambivalent, but if you have made the effort to read through it in draft, you will know that it achieved the form in which we are debating it today only as a result of massive amendments brought in by the Liberals, the Greens and the Social Democrats.

I think the attempts being made now by some elements, not only among the conservatives but also among the socialists, to have the candidates bear the cost are irresponsible, and, since enlargement policy to date has been a policy for peace, and since we want to hold fast to it, I ask the House to endorse our Amendments 12 and 14.

**Mary Lou McDonald (GUE/NGL).** – Mr President, I welcome this debate and would like to make a few brief points.

Mr Stubb identified different classifications of people and politics on this issue of enlargement and the Constitution. I am very much pro-enlargement because I believe it has been successful and will continue to be. But I am also against the Constitution.

The concept of integration capacity is, potentially, one that will be used to sell or portray the Constitution as simply a matter of tweaking the institutions to allow for enlargement in practice. That would not only be a misrepresentation of that text, but would represent a real failure on our part in terms of what we keep talking about: communication with the citizens of the EU. To communicate, we must listen, and we must have that very fundamental debate on the direction of the Union. Where citizens see public services and workers' rights undermined, there is no good way of communicating that, so we need to be receptive.

Finally, on the issue of Turkey, I support accession, but the issue of Cyprus must be sorted out. This is a matter of a continuing illegal occupation.

**Jan Tadeusz Masiel (UEN).** – *(PL)* Mr President, while we continue to talk of enlargement instead of finding a new solution, the world is changing. I agree that enlargement is one of the Union's more important policies and that it guarantees peace and security in the region. It is also true that the previous enlargements have been successful. But one day, this success could turn to failure. In the world of physics, only the universe can expand infinitely. Other systems all burst at some point if they continue to expand. Instead of talking about enlargement in a rigid, outmoded and redundant manner, we should develop tools for action which we should offer our neighbours, tools such as cooperation, neighbourhood policies and association agreements.

Moreover, a further, cultural criterion should be added to the list of criteria drawn up in 1993 in Copenhagen that candidate countries have to fulfil. Let our citizens themselves decide by referendum whether they want Turkey to become a Member State of the European Union or to simply be an associate country. If we want to expand further, then the purpose must surely be to extend European Union membership to countries that are, and have always been, European, such as Serbia, Ukraine or Belarus.

**Gerard Batten (IND/DEM).** – Mr President, the European Union has a seemingly limitless need to absorb more countries. More and more power is taken away from democratic nation states and concentrated in a centralised and undemocratic European Union. As Mr Stubb puts it, he wants to see a single entity with a unified structure and a legal personality, in other words, a 'United States of Europe'.

Mr Stubb will not be surprised to know that the UK Independence Party does not agree with that, but I have found something in his report that we can agree with. When speaking of a revised Constitution, he calls for the adoption of a clause enabling Member States to withdraw from the European Union. Eventually, Britain will leave the European Union, Constitution or not, withdrawal clause or not, but at least Mr Stubb has the decency to recognise that countries should have the right to secede from the new European empire.

**György Schöpflin (PPE-DE).** – Mr President, sometimes it is worth asking simple, even simplistic, questions: why enlarge the European Union at all? The simple answer is: in order to enlarge the zone of democracy and stability that Europe has created.

However, the matter is more complex than appears at first sight. Democracy is not static, but demands constant improvement with the aim of empowering the people. This is what the deepening of integration is fundamentally about. It is in this context that enlargement raises a particular problem, and one that has to be tackled. The European Union insists that future Member States arrive with fully functioning democratic systems – as is proper – yet this overlooks the changes that enlargement brings in its wake within the EU itself.

The problem is this: the entry of new Member States involves not just the states but the new citizens who are added through accession. Therefore, the enlargement of the European Union simultaneously means the enlargement of the European demos, the citizens of Europe. Their voice is seldom heard in the enlargement debate, yet leaving out the citizens threatens to exacerbate the democratic deficit.

An EU beset by a democratic deficit cannot be fully effective in extending the zone of democracy to future Member States. On the contrary, it could even result in exporting the democratic deficit. That would be completely counterproductive. Enlargement must take the wishes of the citizens of Europe into account when it comes to their own enlargement, and not take their voice for granted. Failure to do so would undermine the goal of extending Europe's zone of democracy and stability.

**Jo Leinen (PSE).** – *(DE)* Mr President, I would like to point out to the gentleman from UKIP that the constitutional treaty does give every country the right to secede from the EU, but no country has as yet done so, and nor will any – not even the United Kingdom – in view of the fact that there are far more advantages to staying in the European Union than to leaving it. This is not something I would worry about. There is nothing new about this sort of propaganda on the part of Members who make a speech and then walk out. It is not worth talking about.

We all agree on the need for a deeper EU, something that we have been promised ever since Maastricht, when there were twelve Member States as against the present twenty-seven, so it is now past high time that we got it. The same will apply after all future enlargements. One amendment gives the impression that Croatia and South-Eastern Europe could even now be exempted this requirement, but, on the contrary, the EU must be made deeper before any new countries join it.



It must also be made plain that the blame for these problems lies with the EU itself rather than with the candidates – a point that has been made already. Our task is to tell people about the objects and benefits of enlargement, not least for our own countries, and explain to them what these are. All the old Member States benefit to an enormous degree from the arrival of the new ones; since the old export to the new far more than they import from them, this is a ‘win-win’ strategy, although that is not – alas – communicated to the public. That is where we have some catching up to do.

There is another problem I want to mention, and it has to do with the procedure for ratifying new accessions. If individual countries start announcing referendums on the accession of a new Member State, that is going to make matters difficult for us. That is another issue we will have to address.

Overall, though, my congratulations to the twins on finding the right way ahead, which this House should adopt.

**István Szent-Iványi (ALDE).** – (HU) In today’s debate almost everyone concurred that enlargement is a success story. If this is so, then we have to continue steadfastly with the obligations we have accepted, because Europe has a crucial need for success stories. The reform of the decision-making procedure and the debate over integration capacity must not slow down the process of enlargement, and must not be a pretext for putting the brakes on enlargement.

Croatia must be judged on its own merits. The negotiations with Turkey must go on, but Turkey also has to show good faith and must fulfil the conditions. For Macedonia, we have to clearly define the conditions for starting negotiations. For potential candidate countries, there must be precise conditions for accession even in the medium term, provided they are ready to fulfil those conditions. The European Union also has to guarantee more resources, more money and clearer, more easily attainable conditions for the pre-accession funds; otherwise our intention to continue enlargement will not be credible.

**Cem Özdemir (Verts/ALE).** – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, its own enlargement is one of the most effective foreign policy instruments and means of conflict prevention in the European Union’s history, but there are both challenges and opportunities in store for us.

After the accessions of Romania and Bulgaria, we can expect to have to deal with that of Croatia, and then, in a later round, not only that of Turkey, but also that of the countries of the Western Balkans, who must not be forgotten in all this. Difficult a task though it is, the EU must, as it is enlarged, also become deeper, and that will call for reform of the institutional framework. The problem we have is not so much with the public or with the candidate countries as with the European elites, and that is why I urge Mr Brok to take as his model that great European Helmut Kohl, who had the courage to bring home to the public the importance of a broader and deeper EU.

The time has come for a new initiative to resolve the Cyprus conflict and to bring to an end the isolation of the island’s Turkish North. I rejoice at the undertaking given by the Greek part of the island, but what is also needed is a new initiative under United Nations leadership, which will make possible a final settlement of the conflict and enable the EU to treat the negotiations with Turkey as a matter completely separate from it.

**Sylvia-Yvonne Kaufmann (GUE/NGL).** – (DE) Mr President, although we cannot predict which countries we will be able to welcome into the European Union, or when, the main thing is that three facts stand out. The first is that, after Bulgaria and Romania, there will be other accessions to the European Union; the second is that all European states that share our values and meet the Copenhagen criteria are entitled to apply to become Member States of the European Union, and the third is that the Treaty of Nice is not suitable as a basis for future enlargements. It follows from that that extensive and in-depth reform of the 27-member EU is long overdue.

That would have been an accurate appraisal even six years ago, at the time of the adoption of the Laeken Declaration; it is now more relevant than ever. I believe that the deepening of the EU before any more enlargements take place is an indispensable requirement, and that the constitutional treaty is the key to the European Union’s future viability. It is not acceptable that unilateral demands be made of the candidates for accession and that they alone be expected to work on themselves, and I therefore hope that it will prove possible, during next year, to find a way out of the constitutional crisis that represents a solution acceptable to all twenty-seven Member States, but the fact is that the complex political *melée* will make this extremely difficult.

What will be crucial in terms of integration capacity will be that it should not involve aiming at a merely minimalist – perhaps merely institutional – reform of the European Union. There must be no retreat from the constitutional treaty in 2009. It is also absolutely vital that we should succeed in narrowing the gulf between the EU and its citizens; the message must go out loud and clear – and not only to the people of France and the Netherlands – that we are willing to learn from the ‘no’ votes in those countries, and that that means that we are willing to look at other ways of doing European politics in the future. That, in my view, means above all that the creation of a social Europe must be put at the heart of European politics – and must stay there.

**Mario Borghezio (UEN).** – *(IT)* Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, this debate needs to send the Commission a clear pointer that it must make its vast enlargement programme contingent on the need for an overall strategy regarding the European Union’s political role now and in the future.

That also – perhaps essentially – involves making a geopolitical decision about what the EU’s borders ought to be. That is particularly true and imperative in relation to the highly sensitive issue of Turkey, for which privileged partnership is finally starting to look like a solution.

I agree with these reports on one point, which is that the Commission communication on the enlargement strategy has not given sufficient thought to an essential aspect: the danger that, if future EU enlargement does not involve adequate political, economic, financial and also cultural integration, then it will inevitably result in the weakening, if not the failure, of the European Union as a political project.

It is a fact that the Commission is advancing this enlargement programme with disturbing levity, without even pointing out what financial impact it might have, whereas it is absolutely essential to be fully conscious of that prior to any accession.

We are well aware of the hard work in store for us after Bulgaria and Romania join, so perhaps the time has come to make it clear to the countries waiting to join that, for now, different prospects are opening up for them, as we have pointed out in the case of Turkey. Let us not forget that it was extremely difficult to reach a compromise on the current financial perspective, which needs to be reviewed soon, by the way.

These arguments make us realise that the position of those governments – like the Prodi Government – that insist at every turn on extending enlargement to the Balkan countries without taking these real difficulties into account at all is the result of irresponsible levity.

Furthermore, the excessive leniency shown in previous accession procedures towards serious matters such as corruption and crime can no longer be tolerated if we want the integration of Europe to continue to conform to the standards and values in which our fellow citizens and our peoples believe.

**Paul Marie Coûteaux (IND/DEM).** – *(FR)* Mr President, we, for our part, will also vote against this report, because it has sought to distance itself from the wise Europe of the early days, that is to say, a Europe of the Six, six Member States cooperating with each other in order to strike an Atlantic-wide balance.

Those who believe in supranationality have blown their project out of all proportion by enlarging here, there and everywhere, without even knowing where their borders are. The fact is that, by demolishing internal borders and by no longer even knowing what a border is, these Euro-maniacs no longer know where to stop. Consequently, their project is not truly political because, I repeat, there can be no politics without the concept of borders.

Today, these Euro-maniacs are discovering that there is still someone behind the wall, that they still need to enlarge further, because they cannot say ‘No’ to anyone. Here they are deprived of any constitution – let them not be under any illusions! – permanently deprived of any constitution. They are faced with a huge void, forced as they are either to give ground, that is to say to invent a two- or three-speed pragmatic Europe, which would be the most sensible option, or to launch themselves into a breathtaking headlong flight.

Here they are involved with Turkey, here they are faced with new candidate countries in the Caucasus, for example: after all, Georgia is well and truly part of the Council of Europe ... Why not the countries of the Maghreb, or Lebanon, the history of which is so closely associated with that of our nations?

Well, let us get down to it! Since this poor Europe no longer has any structure, let us keep on enlarging it and, in doing so, let us be careful not to forget States that have been strangely sidelined – Serbia, Russia – perhaps because these countries reluctantly accept the US hegemony? That says everything there is to say, Mr President, about the failure – yes, the failure – of the so-called European Union.

**Reinhard Rack (PPE-DE).** – *(DE)* Mr President, again and again, and over a period of years, this House, at first cautiously, then – as today – very clearly, has sent out the twofold message that there can be no new enlargement without a working constitution. By enlarging without ifs or buts and with ever-greater haste, we are doing nobody any good; on the contrary, by dividing Member States into two classes by means of derogations, and alienating Europe's peoples, we imperil that which has already been achieved.

Although enlargement is one of the EU's real successes, many people are more and more inclined to see it as a threat, and to counter that we must be opinion formers in the best sense of the word. That is not exactly easy, for a constitution possesses little political sex appeal, nor, to a large degree, can it have any, for it essentially has to do with getting institutions to work better and with getting decisions taken by a majority in public view rather than by means of high diplomacy behind closed doors. It has to do with a financial model that rationally balances functions against the money available for them, and, in many respects, too, with new functions for Europe, even though, even today, very many people already feel that Europe makes itself too much of a nuisance. Even in warm weather, the energy issue has a European dimension to it, and it is an issue we must address together.

Let me conclude by saying something about Croatia, a candidate country of particular importance to the country from which I come. Our demand for the Constitution does not mean that we want to stand in the way of Croatia's accession; the contrary is the case. It is perfectly conceivable that it will join us in 2009 or 2010, provided that the German Presidency manages to breathe new life into the procedure for ratifying the Constitution and reviving the Constitution as an issue. We wish the incoming German Presidency every success in doing that.

**Richard Corbett (PSE).** – Mr President, Mr Stubb said that enlargement has been the most successful EU policy, spreading stability, peace and prosperity across our continent.

That logic still applies. Of course it means that the European Union must adapt, especially in terms of institutional reform. However, does it mean that we should block any enlargement until all institutional reforms have been achieved? If that were the case, the last enlargement would never have happened, because the Treaty of Nice was clearly insufficient. Perhaps even the 1973 enlargement might not have happened.

The fact is that enlargement is one of the factors that drive reform. Some Member States that are reluctant to embrace institutional reform often accept its necessity as a consequence of enlargement. Therefore supporters of reform should be supporters of enlargement. Yet Mr Méndez de Vigo said that there should be no future enlargements without the Constitutional Treaty. Indeed, paragraph 9 of Mr Stubb's report states that 'any enlargement requires...' – and then there is a long list of items that are all contained in the Constitutional Treaty. We have a slight difficulty with that absolute position.

Mr Brok said that those who push hardest for widening are often those who oppose deepening. Yet if you want to force both, you need to press for both. There is a real danger that, on the one hand, you will have people who say that they do not want enlargement until we have institutional reform and, on the other, you will have those who say that we do not need institutional reform until we have enlargement. If you want to drive forward both agendas you need to support both, because it is both that will drive us forward to having an enlarged and a reformed European Union.

That is why our group has tabled an amendment to paragraph 9 to make it clear that we do not see as a precondition having every single part of an institutional agenda accepted before any single enlargement takes place. We believe that the two processes – enlargement and reform – will go together; they will drive each other forward and they may, perhaps, end up being enacted on the same day – a new treaty and an accession treaty perhaps rolled into one.

**Ignasi Guardans Cambó (ALDE).** – *(ES)* Mr President, enlargement must not be a goal in itself. It is a way of expanding a project and we cannot allow that project to be weakened as a result of enlargement.

At the end of the day, this debate is really undermining our ability to talk about what Europe wants to be, what it wants to do. Paragraph 8 of the Brok report is very clear. Sadly, we may be, and in fact we are, rushing ahead in a manner that is preventing us from talking about our own problems and difficulties on the pretext of enlargement.

There are institutional reforms that cannot wait, enlargement or no enlargement. There are political and financial measures that can be implemented now without any reform. There are serious legitimacy problems and shameful actions on the part of the European Commission, such as secretly approving rules in the field of airport safety to be imposed on airports, without any kind of democratic control and without informing the citizens. There are many actions that damage the democratic legitimacy of our institutions.

All of that needs to be resolved. We must clearly open up the debate on enlargement, and the two fronts must be opened up in parallel. But enlargement must not be used as a pretext for failing to tackle the serious problems facing the European Union today, with or without Turkey, with or without enlargement.

**Milan Horáček (Verts/ALE).** – *(DE)* Mr President, I would like to thank Mr Brok and Mr Stubb for their reports and highlight the problems around the possible accession of Croatia, a country that has made considerable progress in recent years and can therefore meet the political and economic challenge of the Copenhagen criteria. Since its integration capacity would not thereby be put to the test, the EU should devise a clear and purposeful strategy for Croatia's speedy integration. We cannot make the country a hostage to the EU's internal problems, and should take a flexible line on its accession. If it happens, it will mean relatively little for the EU, but a great deal for Croatia in terms of its democratic future.

**Kyriacos Triantaphyllides (GUE/NGL).** – *(EL)* Mr President, I wish to comment on one of the two reports we are debating today, the Stubb report.

It is a report that promotes efforts to increase the operability of the Union at the level of decision-taking procedures and to institutionalise it such that decisions are basically taken by its leading nucleus without any right of veto for the smaller and once more independent states.

The rapporteur has obviously not listened to public opinion, which has twice rejected the Constitutional Treaty. There is no other way to explain the fact that it digs up a dead text and adopts its anti-democratic provisions. The content of the changes deepens the lack of democracy rather than reducing it or abolishing it. They aim to promote the Constitutional Treaty with its anti-grassroots content by 2009. Instead of extending the rights of citizens and information for them, they clearly understand the operability and the decision-taking procedure of the European Union as an almost exclusive right of the strong circles of the European Union. How very sad that once again the citizen has been left out.

**Andrzej Tomasz Zapalowski (UEN).** – *(PL)* Mr President, when debating the European Union's enlargement strategy, we should consider our vision a common Europe. Hitherto, ruthless political attempts to force the constitution through have reflected a desire to create a supranational political organisation where the largest European countries have the deciding majority. The issue of European Union enlargement is generally discussed in this light. Economic issues are sidelined. The European Union wants to welcome as many countries as can be dominated by the largest European countries. That is why, from the point of demographic potential, the prospect of Turkey or Ukraine joining the European Union next couple of years is not acceptable to the decision-makers.

I would like to stress that the European Union can only survive if economic issues prevails over political considerations and over the ambition of creating a new, twenty-first century Roman Empire ruled by just three or four countries.

**Jacek Protasiewicz, (PPE-DE).** – *(PL)* Mr President, I would like to express my thanks to Mr Elmar Brok and Mr Alexander Stubb, colleagues from my political group, for the effort they have put into their reports. Both texts display a thorough and competent approach to one of the most important challenges facing the European Union, namely its further enlargement. As a citizen of a country which joined the European Community two and a half years ago, I can appreciate the benefits of membership, both for the Polish economy and for the lives of millions of Poles.

I am also convinced that the most recent enlargement benefited not only the new members. The whole Union benefited, both in economic terms and in terms of security and stability. The same was the case

for the earlier enlargements of the European Community. Both the new members and the existing Member States benefited.

The European Union is an example of a successful venture because it has never confined itself to an elite circle of founding members, but has been able to grow wisely, thereby becoming an increasingly influential player on an increasingly global stage.

I have no doubt that further enlargements are in store for the European Union. The Balkan states and the Union's eastern neighbours will one day be part of the European Union and this too will benefit our Community.

I do not doubt the need for institutional reforms before the next enlargement. However, I would like to express my fear that making this process totally dependant on adopting all the points of the Constitutional Treaty when it has been rejected in the French and Dutch referenda may create the undesirable impression that the Union does not want any new members. This would send a very negative message to societies in countries which wish to join our Community.

We should not and I believe we do not want to restrict ourselves to the current circle of members, which already consists of twenty-seven countries. Our willingness to accept new members should not be a pawn in our internal disputes regarding the shape of the European institutions.

**Csaba Sándor Tabajdi (PSE).** – *(FR)* Mr President, European neighbourhood policy and the presence of Hungarian minorities make Hungary the country most affected by the future enlargement of the Union: Croatia, Serbia, other countries in the Western Balkans. Be that as it may, the main task right now is to strengthen and implement in-depth economic and institutional reforms, without, however, shutting the door on enlargement. It is regrettable that, from the perspective of the history of the European Community, this enlargement should not have been preceded by economic and institutional development: Europe cannot be enlarged with relatively fewer resources and without a Constitutional Treaty!

The 2004 enlargement had a positive, beneficial outcome for the old and new Member States. This is a win-win situation. The ten new Member States were integrated without any problems, without any economic disruption, without any social dumping and without any migratory flows. After the enlargement, the European Union was able to adopt the Services Directive, REACH and the financial perspective, and it is going to extend the Schengen system. What is required, however, ladies and gentlemen, is a European campaign, because the countries of the West do not know the real cost of enlargement, and the new Member States have become scapegoats for problems within those countries.

**Marios Matsakis (ALDE).** – Mr President, European values and the principles of justice, democracy, freedom of speech and respect for human rights: fine words, mostly spoken in excess at inconsequential ceremonies and meaningless functions of hypocrisy, but seldom seriously meant or implemented. The decadence of the European spirit, coupled with the championship of subordination to the US Administration, reigns supreme in a European Union that is threatened with disintegration from within by the short-sightedness of Enlargement Commissioners, and through backstabbing by Britannic leaders forever poodling to the wishes of their transatlantic masters.

This is the sorry state of affairs of a Commission and Council that are gradually sinking the EU into disillusion by allowing a military-controlled Asiatic state, instead of fulfilling its obligations, to dictate its terms for granting us the honour of joining the EU.

Dear Colleagues, make no mistake. With this kind of Turkish accession, it is not the EU that will be enlarging, but Turkey. So, Mr Rehn, congratulations on your determined efforts to accomplish the successful accession of the EU to a revived Grand Turkish Ottoman Empire, and good luck to our citizens who are watching in dismay and helplessness!

**Giorgos Dimitrakopoulos (PPE-DE).** – *(EL)* Mr President, congratulations to Mr Brok and to Mr Stubb on their exceptional work. I have the following comments to make:

Continuing enlargement policy: it is important and must be extended in a coordinated manner to the remaining countries of the Western Balkans, especially in view of imminent developments on the Kosovo question. European prospects and enlargement policy are policies for peace and cooperation which we are all striving for.

Turkey: a decision was taken the other day which moves in the right direction. However, Commissioner, I call on you to re-examine the idea of the timetable, because this would complement and improve the decision taken and would also help you to protect the credibility of the European Union.

Neighbourhood policy: the Commission communication is inadequate. However, it is an important policy, which must be developed. Consequently, we await a new communication, an improved and more integrated communication.

Finally, an enlarged Europe will be more democratic, more efficient, more transparent and with more social sensibilities if it finally acquires its Constitution. The procedures are restarting, the right approach is a step by step approach to the issues and problems which constitute it, but this step by step approach also has a sell-by date.

**Inger Segelström (PSE).** – *(SV)* Mr President, I would like to thank Mr Brok and Mr Stubb for this debate on the enlargement process and for their reports. I would like to start by commenting on the views expressed by Mr Brok in recital F to the effect that enlargement should not undermine the political nature of this project. I come from Sweden, a country that has clearly stated in every study that a continued enlargement process is one of the most important issues facing the EU. My worry today is that we are not speaking clearly about continued enlargement and about the future membership of Turkey. Many Members of this House are opposed to Turkey's membership, a fact that has already been made clear by the request from the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats for the vote on Turkey's membership negotiations to be by secret ballot. Many of us, myself included, found it incomprehensible that politicians are afraid to stand up for their opinions before their voters, the citizens of Europe.

In the past year views have been put forward on numerous occasions that have made me wonder whether there is any will for continued enlargement, even if we solve the central issues that are at the top of our agenda. We need a new Constitution, irrespective of whether more Member States join the Union, to ensure, amongst other things, a modern decision-making process. We need to reform agricultural policy to ensure the new jobs of the future and a sustainable Europe. We need a bigger budget for future funding. I wonder what Mr Brok means when he says, in paragraph 11, that the Union can only function if all of its members share common values arising from a European identity. Am I to interpret that as closing the door on Turkey?

My group, the Socialist Group in the European Parliament, has tabled an amendment, number 29, which we call on everyone to support. We are in complete agreement that Turkey must meet the requirements we set out from the very beginning in respect of Cyprus, the Kurds and human rights, as well as the requirements that apply to everyone else. Let us speak clearly, however, and keep these different agendas apart.

#### IN THE CHAIR: MR MOSCOVICI

*Vice-President*

**Hannu Takkula (ALDE).** – *(FI)* Mr President, first I want to thank the duo of Mr Brok and Mr Stubb for their reports. As we know, they are both highly competent and gifted, but the direction in which they want to take the European Union is not necessarily the one that I am in favour of.

It is true that reforms are needed, and it is true that enlargement has in many respects proven an excellent and effective way to take the European Union forward. On some points, however, we also need to remember the limitations of enlargement. The European Union policy cannot be one where we just expand and expand the whole time, and when there are problems we create new agencies. We also need to be able to discuss in greater depth what the European Union will be like in the future, what sort of Union we need, and what its work really consists of.

In this respect I hope that the limitations will also be taken into account in this debate on enlargement. We often ask questions about limits to growth in our keynote addresses, but now that we are talking about the enlargement of the European Union we forget that there are certain limits to this aspect of growth too.

**Bogdan Klich (PPE-DE).** – *(PL)* Mr President, the plan of enlarging the European Union further is today losing public favour. The most recent enlargement was logical, as it represented the definitive

overcoming of the artificial division of Europe that was a consequence of the Yalta Conference. The question now being asked is what is the point of further enlargements. This question brings into question the purpose of the great project that is the European Union. What is a common Europe and what should it be? Is it only a political community which is meant to ensure the stability of democratic government for its members, respect for human rights and civil freedoms, acceptance of the rule of law and, ultimately, prosperity, thanks to an efficient market economy? Or is it a community of values, reaching back to common roots and a common cultural heritage? In that case, what are those roots and what is the heritage?

Cultural historians highlight the fact that the contemporary European identity is the product of many historical traditions. In each of us, as in each of the European nations, something remains of the Greek philosophical tradition and of Roman republicanism. We are the heirs to the humanism of the Renaissance and rationalism of the Enlightenment and, regardless of whether we admit it or not, we also have a Christian heritage. Let us not deceive ourselves. Even if some of us today do not want to accept this tradition, it is still part of contemporary European identity. If nothing else, it is present in the fundamental principle of human dignity, which is the basis for a whole package of basic laws.

As Mr Elmar Brok's report states that the 'Union can only function properly if all of its members share common values arising from a European identity', he must have in mind an identity that includes our Christian heritage. We must not forget to refer to this heritage when we draw up a constitution.

**Józef Pinior (PSE).** – *(PL)* Mr President, today, the day on which I utter these words, is the twenty-fifth anniversary of the imposition of martial law in Poland, of the attempt to destroy the Solidarity trade union and the movement of Polish society towards freedom and democracy. Twenty-five years later I am speaking in an entirely different world, in the European Parliament, in a Europe based on the principles of democracy, peace, the rule of law and justice.

This personal reference to history clearly proves the good that the European Union represents for all Europeans. Today, we are facing the challenge of balancing further enlargement with the European Union's absorption capacity. On the one hand, the European Union cannot turn its back on countries aiming to achieve membership, to shut itself away in an ivory tower of wealth and Western civilisation. On the other hand, it cannot allow the social and legal foundations of the Community to be diluted or to disappear completely.

The European Union should fulfil its obligations towards countries aspiring to membership, and pay particular attention to how these countries perform in implementing the rule of law, an independent judiciary and respect for fundamental rights. The institutions of the European Union have to provide a more precise definition of a stronger Neighbourhood Policy. To this end we need to establish a European Union-Black Sea community.

Relations between the European Union and Russia remain a fundamental issue and cover both trade and energy, as well as, first and foremost, issues of human rights, the rule of law and democracy.

**Henrik Lax (ALDE).** – *(SV)* Mr President, the period of reflection has clearly shown that the great challenge now is to convince the people of Europe that they can take part in decision-making and influence the future of the EU. It is important that they dare to trust in their abilities to influence and that they also want to give their support when, in future, the EU wants to accept new Member States, and potentially many of them.

Every European must be able to feel that he or she is represented in the European Parliament. This goes without saying for many, but not for everyone. As a result of the national electoral systems and the regulations on the distribution of seats in the European Parliament, a large group of Europeans will be excluded from Parliament when the enlargement process continues. I am referring to the regional and national linguistic minorities that today constitute around 50 million people. That is fully 10% of the population of the EU. Even in the last election we lost four minorities. It is deplorable if large groups are to be systematically excluded from decision-making within the EU. If that happens we should not expect automatic support from these people for the European structure in future. This issue must be taken seriously when the EU's Basic Treaty is reviewed. The EU must not create second-class citizens.

**Camiel Eurlings (PPE-DE).** – *(NL)* Mr President, I too should like to extend a huge compliment to the two rapporteurs, Mr Brok and Mr Stubb, for their excellent work. Enlargement, as many have said before me, is one of Europe's biggest success stories. If people think that is obvious, all we need to do is to remind ourselves of Mr Milinkevich, yesterday's speaker in this Chamber, who has been in jail

many times himself. His son was in prison last time he was here, as are hundreds of people, simply for fighting for freedom. Things could have been very different for Eastern Europe, and the democratic reforms of all those countries that have joined in such a short space of time are a remarkable feat in which Europe should take a great deal of pride.

In order, however, to retain support for this effective enlargement, the right balance must be struck in a few areas. One could compare this with a house. If one continues to add bedrooms on the first and second floors, one will need to reinforce the foundations, and that is why it is very important that Parliament should now speak out so emphatically in favour of introducing a new treaty before the next enlargement round. This is not so much intended for the new countries as it is for us. Rather than being complacent, we should do now what needs to be done.

Much has been said about integration capacity. It is indeed to be welcomed that the concept has been introduced, although it now needs to be deepened at institutional, financial and treaty level. Since, however, integration capacity also involves public support, we need to explain to them that enlargement is a good thing, we can make certain demands of the candidate Member States, and we must, by carrying out convincing reforms, try to retain the European public's support for this process.

Finally, with regard to Turkey, a clear penalty was needed, because conditions are there to be met. At the same time, a clear and additional signal has been sent by the Council, moments of assessment have been built in, rules for Turkey have been stepped up to some degree; at the same time, there is also pressure on us to put arrangements in place for the sake of the Northern Cypriots. I should like to repeat emphatically that we are behind the reformers in Turkey. We hope that next year, progress will be made as regards Cyprus and we hope, above all, that we will now once again be able to turn our attention to the necessary reforms in Turkey. I urge the reformers to make headway now in the areas of the free expression of opinion and freedom of religion, so that next year this rapporteur can be more positive compared to last year.

**Stavros Lambrinidis (PSE).** – *(EL)* Mr President, I should like to make four points:

Firstly, there is a myth – because it is a myth – that enlargement and deepening are conflicting states. In fact, since the beginning of the 1980s, it is this enlargement which has imposed further deepening on us: Structural Funds, EMU and greater cooperation in order to combat organised crime, immigration and peace in the world. That is why it must continue.

The second point naturally concerns the Western Balkans. I am delighted that the process of their integration is not being questioned, nor should it.

Thirdly, the saga of 'absorption capacity' or 'integration capacity', by which we mean the capacity for new countries to accede. This is Europe's obligation. Its obligation. Just as the Copenhagen criteria are an obligation for the other countries. We are not like journalists or statisticians monitoring whether this capacity exists or does not exist. We must create it, precisely in order to allow further enlargement.

The fourth point concerns Turkey. What a pity about the haggling I have witnessed over recent days. While the Commission talks about the need for 'strict conditionality', meaning clear preconditions, in the case of Turkey it is sending out a conflicting message. It does not exert pressure on it directly to apply its obligation concerning the protocol, it does exert pressure on it to recognise one of the 25 Member States, Cyprus; it haggles over whether one or two or three ports will open, completely ignoring the root of the problem, which is a military occupation that infringes all the European values that we maintain should be strengthened for the purpose of enlargement.

I call on the Commission, intensely, to get this effort back to basics with a timetable and demands on Turkey, for the benefit of Turkey itself and the democrats in that country.

**Arūnas Degutis (ALDE).** – *(LT)* Expansions, both the most recent and the earlier ones, have strengthened the Union, encouraged its economic growth and increased its importance in the world. Therefore, we must maintain our commitment to further expand the European Union, as this is an historic opportunity and responsibility to create a unified and flourishing Europe.

However, expansion must be carried out together with the deepening of the EU, with the adaptation of its institutions to continue to operate with new members on board. From this year forward, the EU structures apply to 27 Member States. In order for Europe to be able to expand and function effectively, we need to perform a few urgent tasks:



1. We need to strengthen public support for expansion, and for this we need to comprehensively explain the advantages of European expansion, its gains, economic benefits and historic responsibilities;
2. We have to revise the financial plan, including the financial system, to adapt it to the new requirements of an expanded Union;
3. We need to undertake the necessary institutional improvements and changes.

Therefore, it is most important that the countries, which will share the EU presidency until 2008, take the initiative to make the Constitutional consensus a reality.

Finally, I would like to note that looking to the future it is essential to revitalise Europe's neighbourhood policy, which would allow countries participating in it not only to develop reforms quicker and expand links with the European Union, but, if they wish, to ultimately aspire to become members.

**Zsolt László Becsey (PPE-DE).** – (HU) Speaking also on behalf of my colleague Pál Schmitt, chairman of the delegation to the EU-Croatia joint parliamentary committee, I congratulate Mr Brock and Mr Stubb for their excellent and realistic report.

We Hungarians are glad that the reports strengthen the Copenhagen principle according to which each state wishing to join must proceed towards negotiations on its own merits. Accordingly, in the case of Croatia, presently engaged in negotiations, we can declare with confidence that we will welcome them as new members in this wave, on the basis of the Copenhagen criteria. In fact, Croatia's entry is essentially the completion of the fifth wave of EU enlargement, that of the Central European region. Croatia is linked to this wave mainly through Slovenia, Austria and Hungary, by its level of development, by its legal and institutional culture and by its thousand-year-old heritage.

On another level, Croatia may serve as a good example for states wishing to begin the enlargement of the European Union in the Western Balkans. Fortunately Croatia's admission, given its size and development, does not present problems with regard to either the internal market or the budget. As for the institutional conditions for accession, these can be fulfilled by amending the Treaty of Nice, a task that, in the absence of a Constitution, will have to be addressed eventually for purposes of accession.

At the same time, the principle of specific merits and further enlargement really need to be examined more seriously, henceforth in the Western Balkans as well as within the Union. That is the case as regards Croatia's neighbour, Serbia, which entertains great hopes and where the northern province of Voivodina may serve as a bridge precisely on account of its western roots. It could keep playing this bridging role if Serbia were to strive to preserve the region instead of continuing its present practice of suppressing the traditional culture of indigenous EU peoples. If the latter continues, then rather than a European Union based on our own cultural values, we will instead be looking at a Byzantine Union.

**Marie-Line Reynaud (PSE).** – (FR) Mr President, I should like to begin by thanking Mr Stubb for his work on this very sensitive subject. His report has the virtue of tackling the problem of integration capacity from different angles. I am therefore delighted that the text is not limited to mentioning the institutional aspects of this issue, but that it also highlights other major reforms, without which the Union could not accommodate new members. I am thinking, in particular, of the review of the Union's financing system.

I am also grateful to the rapporteur for having succeeded in making sure that this report is neutral towards the candidate countries and in preventing the pitfall that would have consisted in expressing, on that occasion, a position on the entry of a given State.

Finally, this report rightly emphasises the enhanced role that should be granted to Parliament, not only in the context of the accession process, but also in that of future institutional reforms.

I do have one criticism to make, however: it seems to me, in fact, that, in perhaps wanting to do too much of a good job, the rapporteur has somewhat shifted the report away from its initial aim by making it more a report that concentrates on all of the reforms necessary within the European Union than on the more specific issue of integration capacity. Rather than enumerating a long list of institutional reforms, it would have been better, in my opinion, to have concentrated solely on the reforms that constitute genuine prerequisites for any further enlargement.

**Olle Schmidt (ALDE).** – *(SV)* Mr President, Commissioner, the EU enlargement process has been a great success, with the number of Member States having increased from 6 to 27. We have been able to see a whole new Europe take shape. To start to have doubts now and talk of ‘fatigue’ in respect of continuing enlargement would be to take a step in the wrong direction. Obviously, the criteria relating to democracy, human rights and a well-functioning state under the rule of law must be met. We have also seen the earthshaking transformation of the old Eastern and Central Europe. It is true that the EU needs new forms of decision-making, but the Union must not introduce new conditions for those countries that are currently attempting to become members. Commissioner, I personally find the forces within the European Union that are attempting to put obstacles in the path of a future Turkish membership quite disquieting. Our vision of the future must be of a complete Europe – and that includes Turkey.

**Bernd Posselt (PPE-DE).** – *(DE)* Mr President, in contrast to one of the earlier speakers, I regard enlargement as an instrument not of external policy, but rather of European domestic policy; that is why the process of enlarging the EU must not be allowed to burst the bounds of Europe through the accession of a large country like Turkey, which is either only partly European or not European at all. Were that to happen, the European Union would become a Eurasian structure like the Council of Europe, with the addition of an internal market, something that cannot be an attractive prospect to anyone who seeks a really effective Europe that replaces our nation states in the exercise of essential functions, the sort of Europe that convinced federalists – myself among them – want.

On the other hand, though, we cannot block the entrance to countries that very definitely are European, and so I repudiate those attempts at interpreting the Brok report – certain points in which certainly are amenable to interpretation – in such a way as to make the adoption of the constitutional treaty appear an indispensable requirement for the accession of a central European country such as Croatia. In their own recent resolutions, the European People’s Party, the CDU and the CSU have explicitly stated that Croatia constitutes an exception in terms of the enlargement process by reason of its size, its position in Central Europe and its preparedness, and that it should actually have been taken together with Hungary and Slovenia. It might well be described as a leftover – *de facto* rather than *de jure* – of the enlargement process that we are currently completing, and that is why I will resist all attempts at interpretations that would make Croatia – as Mr Horáček so rightly said – a hostage to the constitutional process. Yes, of course we have to move the constitutional process forward in this decade; yes, of course we need the constitutional treaty in order to be able to make further strides in the next decade by welcoming into the European Union states – such as those in south-eastern Europe between Croatia and Greece – whose European nature is not in doubt, first among them Macedonia, which already has the status of a candidate state. It is countries such as these that have an entitlement to full Member State status, and that is an entitlement we will uphold.

*(The President cut off the speaker)*

**Helmut Kuhne (PSE).** – *(DE)* Mr President, I would like to say something about communication. I too object to the idea of enlargement as a foreign policy instrument, but my reasons for doing so differ from Mr Posselt’s; I do indeed believe that we have problems, for you can see for yourself how whole brigades of well-meaning global strategists, laden down with foreign policy instruments, scurry through Europe and beyond, proclaiming: ‘Worried about the threat of civil war? Join the EU!’ and see in all its clarity the reason why so many citizens of the EU say: ‘No thanks, I am not an instrument. I do not exist to solve foreign policy problems. That is not why I regard myself as a citizen of the EU; if that is what the European Union is about, I would rather not have anything to do with it.’

The second thing I want to say about communication is that it raises the question of what actual relation there is between the constant claim that we have to discharge the obligations into which we have entered, and our willingness to take a rigorous line with candidate countries both in the course of negotiations and in the run-up to them, in order to get these countries to make commitments and stick to them, when, in this debate – and congratulations to Mr Posselt – every conceivable back door is opened in the hope of getting one party or other’s favourite candidate into the EU before the Constitution has been adopted. The man and woman in the street is very well aware of the message that sends out, so there is no cause to talk about enlargement fatigue in an accusatory tone of voice.

Those who think the only problems have to do with matters of fact would do better to get stuck in to these communications problems.

**Alojz Peterle (PPE-DE).** – (*SL*) I should like to welcome both these reports as a clear expression of the political will of the European Parliament, which strengthens the credibility of the European Union. I see them as an expression of our responsibility towards the future of the European Union, and also as an expression of our joint responsibility towards global progress.

I will not make any specific comments about the two reports, but I am, in any case, in favour of replicating their philosophy. It seems to me somewhat paradoxical that while, on the one hand, we are talking about a crisis in the European Union, on the other, we are this Christmas literally faced with the fact that a large number of countries, in Europe and even beyond, are keen to join the European family. Our response should not be that there are not enough chairs around the European table or that we are having problems drawing up house rules.

I am particularly pleased to note that Mr Brok's report clearly specifies that close multilateral relations do not mean an alternative to fully-fledged membership, but an additional opportunity for countries which are currently a long way off from achieving fully-fledged membership. In addition, I support the clear stance towards the countries of South-East Europe. I should like to see them all included by name in the next report, as none of them deserves to be mentioned in a list of the countries left over (I think that this is important for us).

Also, the following principle should be applied to Croatia and to all the countries following in Croatia's footsteps involved in the so-called Thessalonica process: as soon as a candidate country is ready, the European Union should be ready, too. The European ambition should be rewarded.

**Genowefa Grabowska (PSE).** – (*PL*) Mr President, I will begin by congratulating both rapporteurs. Now, moving on to the matter at hand, I would like to draw your attention to the following issue. The European Union has proved to be a very attractive project and it has, for many years, attracted new countries. That is why, in my opinion, today's debate on whether the European Union should expand further is academic, as the Maastricht Treaty provides the answer. Article 49 of the Treaty clearly states that any European country that meets the political and economic criteria may join the European Union. These criteria were drawn up in Copenhagen in 1993 and we should not tighten them up now.

Today's debate is meant to answer the fundamental question of whether we can change the criteria for further enlargements as current needs and expectations dictate. I do not think that we can. I believe that we are bound by the principle of keeping our word, of upholding agreements and the ancient Roman principle of '*pacta servanda sunt*'. That is why the so-called absorption capacity cannot suddenly appear as a criterion used to block access to the European Union for countries which have fulfilled the Copenhagen criteria.

All successive enlargements have strengthened the Union, and have favoured its growth. However, these enlargements had to be well planned. I think that only a European constitution will make it possible to ensure that further enlargements are well planned.

**Tunne Kelam (PPE-DE).** – Mr President, I agree with Mrs Lehtomäki that enlargement has to continue as an open process because, in defiance of many warnings and fears, all previous enlargements have turned out to be a big success for the EU as a whole. It has been, and will continue to be, a win-win process for all the players involved.

Mr Stubb was right to remind us that every new round of enlargement has forced the EU, in a most positive way, to deepen its internal preparedness through new reforms. The message today is that the Nice basis is no longer sufficient for a new enlargement round. There is no alternative to the adoption of the Constitutional Treaty and applying it in practice.

However, the integration capacity is not to be seen as an additional criterion for the new applicants. It should be seen as an internal commitment to make maximum efforts to achieve the necessary new quality of our cohesion. The EU should not send the wrong signal that we will close our doors to new applicants. Every European nation is entitled to join the EU and is entitled to be treated not as a guest, but as a potential and welcome member of this ever-growing family. Therefore, we need to show maximum openness to the interested nations, including Mr Milinkevich's home country.

Finally, enlargement is not only about the budgets and institutions. There is a huge undercurrent of popular opinions, fears and prejudices. This is popular psychology into which the Constitutional Treaty has tumbled. Therefore, we need openly to address these needs and fears by stimulating frank and

friendly debate between old and new Member States on our different and historic cultural experiences. My experience is that these fears and prejudices are actually very similar, and that most of them prove to be unfounded. There is a huge reserve of popular support for the Constitutional Treaty.

**Ioannis Kasoulides (PPE-DE).** – Mr President, finally there has been no collision of trains! The Government of Cyprus has agreed with its partners to the so-called ‘delay’ of Turkey’s train. Let us not fool ourselves. We are not supposed to open most of the suspended chapters anyhow as it will take some years to gather the benchmarks and closing a chapter is a formality – it means nothing once all the other work has been completed.

As to the reviews, these take place every year anyhow. Cyprus has often been overplayed as the reason for the collision of the trains. Now, it is essentially out of the way. The European Union is free to see reality face to face. Turkey has ignored and still declares that it will ignore its obligations concerning its Customs Union agreement, an obligation that existed well before the issue of the so-called isolation of the Turkish Cypriots.

The real questions are now in front of us: freedom of expression, freedom of religious minorities, the human rights record in southern Turkey, treatment of women, the issues of corruption, the intervention of the military in government and judiciary affairs. Only two days ago, General Buyukanit admonished the Erdogan Government for not getting his permission for what finally proved to be a conditional opening of one port to Cypriot ships.

Some say that we should not see Turkey as it is today. Think of how Turkey will be in 15 years’ time! Turkey has given us some idea as to its will to become a true European democracy. It knows how to get away with it!

**Ioannis Varvitsiotis (PPE-DE).** – *(EL)* Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I absolutely share the concerns of numerous European citizens who wish, before there is any further enlargement, for the institutional problems to be resolved.

It is senseless for us to want to function satisfactorily with 27 members with rules which applied when there were 9, 10 or 15 members in the Union. Unfortunately, the Constitutional Treaty, which contained numerous positive elements, was not accepted by two nations. Since then the matter has been on ice. I am delighted that Chancellor Merckel has expressed her intention to table proposals on the procedure and timetable for resolving the problem.

However, I believe that, at this stage, we must aim to settle a limited number of issues, which are nonetheless important to the smooth functioning of the Union, such as the creation of the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs and President of the Union, a reduction in the number of Commissioners, an increase in the responsibilities of the European Parliament, a reduction to the minimum in the need for unanimity in the method for passing decisions in the Council, the legal personality of the European Union, the abolition of the system of three pillars and strengthening the institution of reinforced cooperation between the Member States and wherever else it is considered necessary to efficient functioning.

I wonder, though, how many of the Member States, old and new, will overcome their internal pettifoggery and set as the sovereign objective the smooth functioning and efficiency of the Europe of the 27 Member States. In all events, I believe, to close, that if we do not make the Union operational, there is no point in debating further enlargement.

**Tadeusz Zwiefka (PPE-DE).** – *(PL)* Mr President, anyone who is fortunate enough to be a citizen of the European Union would be committing a mortal sin by suggesting closing this door of opportunity to others who want it. The question of limiting enlargement is ridiculous. It is like putting limits on freedom or to democracy.

Today’s discussion has shown that we view the capacity for and effects of enlargement largely from the perspective of the European Union’s internal situation. We talk about the need for far-reaching reforms, and quite rightly, as we cannot afford to be weak if we want to achieve success. The reforms are necessary, but they need to follow a diagnosis of the situation and a carefully thought-out programme of improvements.

I think it would be a good idea to internally restructure the work of the European Commission. If today we have twenty-seven Commissioners deciding on the scope of their portfolios, then perhaps it might

be sensible to appoint two or three Commissioners who would be responsible for analysing the situation in the European Union and preparing the reform programme in such a way as to ensure that we are capable of further enlargement.

However, we cannot view this capability solely through an internal perspective. We must remember what the citizens of the countries aspiring to join us think of the European Union and of potential European Union membership. My own personal experiences of work in delegations with countries of the Southern Caucasus, as well as Moldova and Ukraine, have shown that ordinary people there do not believe that they will get instant membership, but they do want to be sure that the door has not been slammed shut. They are prepared to wait twenty or even thirty years for the chance to join us. This is a door of opportunity we cannot close to them.

The EU's information policy should clearly state what the EU is about, what its aims are and what it means to be a member of the European Union. We must not forget this.

**Charles Tannock (PPE-DE).** – Mr President, the smooth successive waves of EU enlargement are a magnificent achievement of the EU. The fifth wave, which enlarged the Union to 25 Member States two years ago, has actually been a great success, in spite of warnings that the Union would be paralysed without a constitution and that countries such as my own would suffer unsustainable immigration flows, including from the Roma population.

Regrettably, the Brok report seeks again to link further enlargement to the absolute need for an EU Constitution, whereas British Conservatives, whom I represent, would argue that this is not the case and that what we really need are Treaty adjustments, via an amended Nice Treaty, to reflect the new voting strength in the Council, the number of MEPs and Commissioners, after the expected relatively painless accession of Croatia in the next couple of years.

I am of the personal opinion that we now also need to look seriously at the top-heavy Commission. However, I believe we should not rotate Commissioners absolutely equally amongst all Member States, but some mathematical formula must be found to preserve, at least in a semi-permanent presence, the Commissioners of the big Member States – but I know this is controversial.

The new Member States have, broadly speaking, been more Atlanticist: they believe in freer markets and competitive rates of low taxation, which is an approach I welcome. I believe that the accession of Romania and Bulgaria on 1 January 2007 will also prove to be a great success.

As rapporteur, I believe that the European Neighbourhood Policy must be split into a southern EuroMed dimension through the Barcelona Process and a new eastern concept of an enhanced free-trade and visa-facilitated EU-Black Sea community to further strengthen our ties with European countries such as Ukraine, Moldova and the three Caucus republics. I call on the Member States to inform Moldova and Ukraine that they are in the longer term entitled, in my view, in the same way as all the countries in the Western Balkans are entitled, to become potential candidates for EU membership.

**Andreas Mölzer (NI).** – (DE) Mr President, the vision of a Europe united and at peace was born, as we know, in the ruins shortly after the end of the Second World War, and it has been further worked on and developed ever since. In much the same way as a conglomerate's headlong expansion can put its workforce under intolerable strain, the EU and its own people have parted company, and I do not believe that the acceptance that has been lost will be won back by PR campaigns when what matters more is that existing problems – such as jobs, globalisation, terrorism, crime and refugees – be resolved. Nor, indeed, do I regard the worries about the EU's integration capacity as anything more than another sedative intended to take people's minds off the delusions about enlargement that we already have.

Up to now, we have insisted only on the applicants fulfilling the Copenhagen criteria, while the question as to whether the EU itself could achieve the goals of cohesion and integration was treated as unimportant. If we are to be able to cope with the feeling of dealing with something incomprehensible and boundless, we need not only to impose geographical limits, but also to become clear in our own minds just how much in the way of social and cultural differences the EU can handle, and I do believe that the policy of unhindered immigration over recent years means that we are dealing with far more people than we stand any chance of integrating.

**Paula Lehtomäki, President-in-Office of the Council.** (FI) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, first I wish to thank everyone for this diverse, wide-ranging and constructive debate. Although there seem to

be certain areas of disagreement, a fairly strong common attitude is discernible in Parliament. It is very clear that, for enlargement to succeed, we have to ensure that the Union develops internally and that it remains able to function in all situations. This is a key element in integration capacity and, as was stated in this debate, the European Union needs to do its homework. As for the enlargement processes and negotiations under way, we should remember that the homework has not been done with regard to the latest processes either.

On Monday the Council reached political consensus on the objective of enhancing economic development in North Cyprus as quickly as possible and even earlier, especially given the decisions taken in April 2004. The other aspect of enlargement and the other responsible party is obviously the candidate countries and those interested in membership of the European Union, and they must fulfil the EU membership criteria. The extent to which they do this needs to be judged very objectively and, if need be, critically too, and we naturally have confidence in the very worthy Commission, its willingness and its ability to carry out this assessment. This is certainly a good way to proceed, in order that prospects of membership increase on the basis of progress made, and not that dates agreed beforehand define when membership is to be finalised.

Much has been said in this debate about the Constitutional Treaty and its future. We all share the view that the Constitution contains plenty of elements that are important for improving the Union's integration capacity. We nevertheless have to bear in mind that the Constitutional Treaty, or reform of the Union, is not needed for the sake of enlargement: it is needed to improve the Union's present situation and ability to function.

It is also important to remember that we cannot entrust the Union's ability to function solely to the Constitutional Treaty. Treaties are, after all, just a tool to implement European Union policy. Without the political will and commitment to the common European project, not even the best treaties can yield the desired result. In other words, above all we need commitment to, and the will to accept, a common process, and if the will is there then the reform of the treaties is certainly possible.

Neighbourhood policy is linked to enlargement of the Union in a certain way, but that is also an important policy area in itself, and so cannot be seen as a substitute for enlargement. It is obvious that at least the countries interested in joining the EU will not accept a neighbourhood policy to compensate for or take the place of the prospect of EU membership.

Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, we will be discussing this week's European Council and its agenda later on this afternoon, and I am quite sure that in that debate we will also return to those topics that have already been considered this morning.

**Olli Rehn, Member of the Commission.** Mr President, I want to thank you for this very substantive and responsible debate which is so important for the future of Europe. This is a very encouraging debate. You may recall that in my introduction I said that in Europe we have two discourses that do not often meet: one emphasising the strategic significance of enlargement and the other emphasising only our integration capacity.

This debate is encouraging because if you were able to forge a common position starting from the first drafts of the twins – who are not quite identical twins in terms of enlargement strategy – then the European Council should certainly be able to forge a renewed consensus on enlargement that respects both the strategic value of enlargement and our capacity to integrate new members.

Points were made concerning the European Neighbourhood Policy. Indeed the Commission's report of 8 November outlines that not all European countries are engaged in the enlargement process. In fact, the European Union has established a variety of relationships with other European countries. We have a comprehensive structure of bilateral agreements with Switzerland; we have the European Economic Area, which is a very far-reaching arrangement of economic integration; and we have the European Neighbourhood Policy.

With regard to the European Neighbourhood Policy, the Commission considers that our recent communication on strengthening the European Neighbourhood Policy largely responds to the expectations of Parliament. The ENP is distinct from and parallel to the process of EU enlargement. At the same time the European Neighbourhood Policy does not prejudge the future development of those countries' relationships with the European Union, in accordance with our Treaty provisions.

There were some suggestions that cultural criteria should be added to the Copenhagen criteria. I can tell you that the Commission is not in favour of that proposal.

I should like to conclude by referring to some reflections of the sociologist and philosopher Ulrich Beck in yesterday's *Le Monde*. He interpreted the Pope's recent visit to Turkey. Here we have a respected sociologist interpreting the actions of a respected spiritual leader.

(FR) Mr President, I am going to continue in French, and I quote, 'Europe's miracle is that it has learnt from history: make neighbours of enemies; that is the soul of Europe. And maybe that is why the Pope, recognising the universal historical importance of compromise between Christians and Muslims, argues for Turkey's EU membership – in short, for the ongoing Europeanisation of Turkey'.

Ladies and gentlemen, those are wise words that deserve to be reflected on during Christmas and the new year.

*(Applause)*

**President.** – Thank you, Commissioner, for that conclusion in French. As for the rest, each of us will judge the content of the speech, which I, for my part, found interesting.

The debate is closed.

The vote will take place today at 12 noon.

*(The sitting was suspended at 11.55 a.m. and resumed for voting time at 12.05 p.m.)*

#### **Written statement (Rule 142)**

**Gábor Harangozó (PSE).** – Following the reaffirmation of the commitment to full implementation of the Thessaloniki agenda and of the intention to honour the existing commitments made to the candidate and potential candidate countries with regard to future enlargement, we still have to ensure that the Union is able to function.

By integrating new Member States, the Union has to face the consequent political, financial and institutional challenges it implies. The Treaty of Nice does not provide an adequate basis for further enlargements, whereas the constitution offers solutions to most of the reforms needed and constitutes a tangible expression of the deepening enlargement relationship. This is why it is necessary to settle the constitutional settlement before 2009 EP elections. Reforms are necessary before any further enlargement takes place. The enlargement process is a process that spreads democracy and wealth further across the European continent and beyond. We therefore bear a responsibility towards our neighbourhood and particularly towards candidate and potential candidate countries. Finally, while addressing the question of the Union's "absorption capacity", we share the point of view of the rapporteur who prefers the positive concept of "integration capacity".

#### **IN THE CHAIR: MR BORRELL FONTELLES**

*President*

#### **5. Membership of political groups: see Minutes**

#### **6. Agenda: see Minutes**

**President.** I must also inform you that, with regard to Mr Leinen's report on the amendment of Rules 15 and 182(1) of the European Parliament's Rules of Procedure: Election of Quaestors and the Bureau of committees, the vote on which was scheduled for tomorrow, Thursday, in the end the Committee on Constitutional Affairs has not approved it pursuant to Rule 131, and we will therefore hold a debate on it as the final item of tonight's sitting.

**Renato Brunetta (PPE-DE).** – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I understand the need for security, but I must complain about the discourteous attitude and, frankly, even violent behaviour with which some security agents stopped us Members and barred our way outside this Chamber.

That is utterly unacceptable. I understand the reasons for security, but I do think that there needs to be courtesy and respect for our roles on both sides.

**President.** The Secretary-General informs me that we have problems with certain auxiliaries who are involved in an emerging dispute. The security officers are trying to ensure that everything takes place in its normal fashion, but we are facing difficulties as a result of the attitude of certain contracted workers who are affected by industrial arrangements.

**Tadeusz Zwiefka (PPE-DE).** – *(PL)* Mr President, yesterday was a great occasion for the European Parliament. It was a very important day for us, as the Sakharov Prize was awarded to Mr Alexander Milinkevich.

I would like to tell you that when Mr Alexander Milinkevich began his speech here at the European Parliament, the internal broadcasting system in the European Parliament buildings failed, as did the Internet transmission system. In Belarus the Internet was the only way to hear the speech. This meant there was no access to the speech and, as a result, the citizens of Belarus received no news of what happened here last night.

I would like to ask the President to investigate the reasons for this incident and to inform the House of his findings.

*(Applause)*

**President.** Mr Zwiefka, my intention was to give the floor to Mr Florenz. You are not raising a point of order relating to today's sitting.

*(Protests)*

Nevertheless, it is an important issue and I can tell you that the problem that you are referring to is also caused by alterations to the way the services are operating resulting from the industrial conflict that we are facing with certain session auxiliaries. This problem has shown itself in the manner described by the previous speaker. The picture was restored as soon as possible and at the press conference I was able to explain what had happened to the media, which had expressed the same concern as you.

## 7. Announcement by the President

**President.** I feel obliged to express my concern, and that of the whole of Parliament, I imagine, at the Conference on the Holocaust held in Teheran on 11 and 12 December.

*(Loud applause)*

On behalf of the plenary of the European Parliament, I would urge the Iranian Government to do what it must to prevent any act of anti-Semitism, racism, xenophobia, discrimination or denial of historical events and their victims.

*(Applause)*

## 8. Voting time

**President.** The next item is the vote.

*(For results and other details of the vote: see Minutes)*

### 8.1. European Chemicals Agency (REACH) (vote)

*- Before the vote:*

**Karl-Heinz Florenz (PPE-DE).** – *(DE)* Mr President, with the significance of the following votes and the extent of REACH in mind – for 5 000 amendments to it were tabled over the past five years, and the document currently contains 1 000 of them – I would just like to make two brief points.



The first is that I would like to extend very warm thanks to the rapporteur, Mr Sacconi, and to the shadow rapporteurs, for the work they have done, which was a massive job to tackle, and they did it splendidly, so my heartfelt thanks for that.

*(Applause)*

That, Mr President, promptly brings me to my second point, which is to ask just what has emerged from the trilogue. We met with the Finnish Presidency of the Council on five occasions; the meetings were not always totally straightforward, and they were once briefly interrupted. What came out of them is before you today in the shape of Amendment 191, which is at the heart of what today's vote is about, and, for the sake of a compromise into which this House has put so much of itself, in a way it never will again, I urge you to vote in favour of it. To our friends in the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance I will say that the other amendments will lapse or must not be allowed to jeopardise this important and valuable compromise.

**Guido Sacconi (PSE), rapporteur:** – *(IT)* Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I should like to make it clear first of all that I am sitting in this seat not because there has been a ‘palace coup’ within the Socialist Group in the European Parliament, but for logistical reasons, to make it easier to give voting instructions.

Mr Florenz, the committee chairman, has already mentioned the essential points about the content and the difficulty in reaching the outcome that we achieved in the agreement with the Finnish Presidency. It is now my job to say that this outcome is like a fresco painted by a team of artists: many people have been involved – I recall that ten parliamentary committees have worked on it. In particular, two committees have cooperated very closely with the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety. I therefore thank Mrs Ek and Mr Nassauer, the draftsmen for those two committees. Then I thank all the shadow rapporteurs in the Committee on the Environment: Ria Oomen-Ruijten, Chris Davies, Carl Schlyter and Caroline Lucas, Jens Holm, Johannes Blokland and Alessandro Foglietta, as well as the secretaries of the committees and political groups.

We have encountered five presidencies; the British Presidency at first reading and now the Finnish Presidency have played particularly decisive roles. We have also got to know a number of Commissioners, because REACH was launched during the previous parliamentary term. The Commissioners responsible then were Mr Likanen and Mrs Wallström, and now they are Mr Verheugen and Mr Dimas.

We have therefore seen many things, had a great many opportunities for discussion, and distilled all that work into today's conclusion. I have not the slightest doubt that this Parliament's sense of responsibility will confirm our decisions and at last make it possible to send out a strong message to Europe's citizens: REACH will be up and running on 1 June 2007.

Some may say that the result of all this is not a brilliant product, but in the meantime it will start operating, and I am sure that it will produce highly significant results for people's safety, for health, for the environment and, not least, for the competitiveness of European industry.

*(Applause)*

*- Following the approval of option 1:*

**Guido Sacconi (PSE), rapporteur:** – *(IT)* Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, this excellent result, for which I thank this House, will now be followed by a series of amendments not covered by the compromise.

I will agree with many of the amendments, but it is quite clear that voting for and adopting them would mean forcing us to go through conciliation for the sake of some marginal points, and that would really be the wrong thing to do, as it would put back the application of the regulation.

*(Applause)*

**Roberto Musacchio (GUE/NGL).** – *(IT)* Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, on a point of order, I should like to point out to the Chamber that, in respect of this debate, two speeches have been made in which voting instructions have been given during the vote.

Please, this is a sensitive moment, and the positions of those who are going to vote in favour of the amendments, for example, should also be respected.

*(Applause)*

*- Before the vote on Amendments 176 and 178:*

**Carl Schlyter (Verts/ALE).** – *(SV)* Mr President, the rapporteur said that there will be conciliation if these amendments are adopted. We do not know this for a fact, however. If we approve the amendments, the Council may well accept them, but we will not know this until COREPER has made a decision. There is thus no automatic link between adopting the amendments and conciliation.

*(Applause)*

*- Before the vote on the common position:*

**Guido Sacconi (PSE), rapporteur.** – *(IT)* Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I should just like to say thank you once again.

In this House today, I think that Europe ‘batte un colpo’, as we say in Italian: it has scored a victory on a very sensitive subject for the people and for the companies involved.

*(Applause)*

## **8.2. Amendment of Directive 67/548/EEC on dangerous substances (REACH) (vote)**

**IN THE CHAIR: MR FRIEDRICH**

*Vice-President*

## **8.3. Inclusion of Bulgarian and Romanian among the languages of procedure for the Court of Justice (vote)**

## **8.4. Inclusion of Bulgarian and Romanian among the languages of procedure for the Court of First Instance (vote)**

## **8.5. European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (2008) (vote)**

## **8.6. Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities (vote)**

## **8.7. Draft amending budget No 6/2006 (vote)**

## **8.8. Coordination of certain of the Member States' provisions on television broadcasting (vote)**

*– After the vote on Amendment 167:*

**Ruth Hieronymi (PPE-DE), rapporteur.** – *(DE)* Mr President, I shall speak very briefly, since I have only a point about the translation to make. In order to avoid misunderstandings in the translation of the term ‘production aid’ and to relate it explicitly to the German original term *Produktionshilfen*, I ask for a linguistic clarification to the effect that, where the words ‘production aid’ are used in the text, they should, in the English version, be replaced by the term ‘production props’, and rendered in the French one by *aide matérielle à la production*, and in German by *Produktionshilfen*.

*(The oral amendment was adopted)*

**Jacques Toubon (PPE-DE).** – *(FR)* Mr President, allow me to table a procedural motion: as is inevitably the case, there are many small problems, many slight contradictions between language versions in this text. I support what Mrs Hieronymi just said: that we did not want to raise these problems. We believe that, in such an important debate as this, the vote must be as simple as possible.

I would like it, instead, if, when the Commission hands over this text to the Council, these linguistic contradictions were removed: that is why I would like them to be recorded in our Minutes and to be taken into account, because every word counts in such an important matter as this.

– *Before the vote on Amendment 160:*

**Christopher Heaton-Harris (PPE-DE).** – Mr President, I rise on a point of order under Rule 166, on the question of admissibility of an amendment under Rule 151(3). It concerns Amendment 160, tabled by Mr Wise on behalf of the IND/DEM Group, which calls for a massive extension of budgetary powers into areas of Member State sovereignty, namely: ‘Member States’ governments and institutions or the EU shall pay for those social policy information campaigns ...’.

Could you advise on this amendment’s admissibility in the light of this massive extension of EU powers?

*(Laughter and applause)*

– *Before the vote on Amendment 219:*

**Ignasi Guardans Cambó (ALDE).** – Mr President, I may be completely wrong, but I do not think we have voted on the original text of recital 44.

**President.** We have voted on Amendment 44, and the original text has in fact been accepted.

## 8.9. Establishing the European Globalisation adjustment Fund (vote)

– *Before the vote:*

**Janusz Lewandowski (PPE-DE).** – Mr President, I wish to inform you and the House that, owing to the agreement with the Council on the globalisation fund, all seven amendments tabled by the PPE-DE Group have been withdrawn, which will make the vote shorter.

**Roselyne Bachelot-Narquin (PPE-DE), rapporteur.** – *(FR)* Mr President, thank you for giving me the floor. It goes without saying that I am grateful to Mr Lewandowski for having withdrawn the amendments tabled by the Committee on Budgets: that is going to make our task much easier. We are on the eve of an agreement at first reading, and this will be a triple victory: a victory for European workers, a victory for the proper functioning of our institutions and, I believe, a victory over ourselves, because we will have been able to overcome our political and national divisions.

## 8.10. Type approval of motor vehicles with respect to emissions and access to vehicle repair information (vote)

## 8.11. Financial contributions to the International Fund for Ireland (2007-2010) (vote)

– *Before the vote:*

**Jim Higgins (PPE-DE), rapporteur.** – Mr President, I wish to thank the members of the Committee on Regional Development for the support they have given to this report. I also wish to thank the Secretariat for its input.

Nothing I can say can adequately express the gratitude that the Irish people on both sides of the border feel for the investment that Europe has made for the economic regeneration of Northern Ireland, the border counties in the Irish Republic and the Northern Ireland Peace Process.

To date the International Fund for Ireland has contributed EUR 803 million of funding and has leveraged a further EUR 1.46 billion in supporting 5700 projects and the creation of 55 000 direct and indirect jobs. It has also played a crucial role in easing sectarian tensions and bridging the divisions between the two traditions on the island. The guns are now hopefully permanently silent and the economies of Northern Ireland and the border counties of the south are beginning to realise their true economic potential.

This will be the last time that we will ask the EU for funding for this programme, as the International Fund will cease in 2010. We have had many false dawns in the past regarding the permanent political solution in Northern Ireland. However, my Irish colleagues and I are confident that we are, at long last, on the brink of a lasting solution and that a devolved government will soon become a reality for the long term.

*(The President cut off the speaker)*

## **8.12. Banana sector (vote)**

*- Before the vote on Amendment 22:*

**Emanuel Jardim Fernandes (PSE).** – *(PT)* Mr President, I should like to table an oral amendment to Amendment 22. In the original French, the phrase '*est subordonné*' should read '*devrait être subordonné*'.

*(The oral amendment was adopted)*

## **8.13. VAT arrangements for radio and television broadcasting and other services (vote)**

## **8.14. Legislative and work programme of the Commission for 2007 (vote)**

## **8.15. Russia-EU Summit (vote)**

*- Before the vote on Amendment 6:*

**Konrad Szymański (UEN).** – Mr President, I wish to point out that Amendment 9, tabled by the PPE-DE Group, is not contradictory to my own Amendment 6 and therefore I should like to ask you to put both amendments to the vote separately.

## **9. Implementation of Directive 85/611/EEC (undertakings for collective investment in transferable securities) (vote)**

### **9.1. Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2006-2007 (vote)**

*- Before the vote on Amendment 29:*

**Elmar Brok (PPE-DE), rapporteur.** – *(DE)* Mr President, I propose that we should adopt Amendment 29, but also incorporate an element from the original text, so that it would end up – as an addition to the Socialist amendment – reading: 'which make up the European identity' as a combination of both drafts.

*(The oral amendment was adopted)*

*- Before the vote on Amendment 16:*

**Elmar Brok (PPE-DE), rapporteur.** – *(DE)* Mr President, we have to adapt our text to take account of the latest developments in the negotiations on Turkey. We have tried to take the Socialist Group's Amendment 16 as a basis for this, and have put it into a form corresponding to the facts of the situation since Monday's Council of Foreign Ministers. Although you have the amendment in printed form, I can read it out if you wish. The rapporteur and the author of the amendment are agreed on this.

*(The oral amendment was adopted)*

*- Before the vote on Amendment 17:*

**Giorgos Dimitrakopoulos (PPE-DE).** – *(EL)* Mr President, in Amendment 17 tabled by the Socialist Group in the European Parliament, I wish to change the term 'Northern Cyprus' to the term 'Turkish Cypriot Community'. I discussed this with Mr Swoboda this morning and, as far as I understood, he accepts it.

*(The oral amendment was adopted)*

**Joost Lagendijk (Verts/ALE).** – Mr President, this is not an objection to Mr Dimitrakopoulos' proposal, but I would like to add some other words to the same oral amendment. After this morning's debate, and after the Council last Monday expressed its support for the renewed UN efforts to solve the Cyprus problem, I would like to add the following words to the oral amendment made by Mr Dimitrakopoulos: 'in close cooperation with renewed UN efforts'.

*(Applause)*

*(The oral amendment was adopted)*

## **9.2. The institutional aspects of the European Union's capacity to integrate new Member States (vote)**

*- Before the vote on Amendment 8:*

**Alexander Stubb (PPE-DE), rapporteur.** – Mr President, on Amendment 8 which has been tabled by the PSE Group, the version we will follow is the French original language version which refers to the 'Lisbon Strategy'. The English version talks about the 'social model', and of course the PSE Group did not mean that.

*(The oral amendment was adopted)*

**President.** That concludes the vote.

## **10. Explanations of vote**

Sacconi report (A6-0352/2006)

**Jan Andersson, Anna Hedh, Ewa Hedkvist Petersen, Inger Segelström and Åsa Westlund (PSE), in writing. (SV)** We are choosing to support the compromise that has been put forward as it represents a clear improvement on the existing legislation on chemicals.

Furthermore, it is our opinion that conciliation would have been risky, since we believe it likely that this would have resulted in a weaker REACH.

**Lena Ek (ALDE), in writing. (SV)** I abstained in today's vote on the second reading of REACH. I did so because I cannot support the dilutions of Parliament's position, as adopted by the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety in October, that the Council has forced.

My criticism of the agreement revolves around three main points, which are as follows:

- The substitution principle does not apply to all chemicals. Instead, many chemicals, including carcinogenic substances, will continue to be exempted from the requirement for substitution, providing that they are 'properly controlled'.
- The right to information is being watered down in that it covers fewer chemicals and will apply to concentrations higher than those deemed desirable by Parliament's Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety.
- The principle of responsibility is not being included in the actual body of the legislative text but is instead being pushed out to the preamble. This is serious, especially for the many chemicals with little or no associated information requirement.

My abstention is not a failure but, rather, represents the laying down of a marker of my dissatisfaction with the Council's position. I do not, however, wish to aim any criticism at the rapporteur, Mr Sacconi. On the contrary, I would like to congratulate him most warmly for his splendid work on a difficult issue over a long period of time.

Today's vote paves the way for REACH to enter into force at the beginning of the second half of 2007. My work, and that of many others, to improve this legislation further starts now.

**Anne Ferreira (PSE), in writing. – (FR)** With today's vote, the EU has provided itself with a text, the scope of which is far from achieving the desired objectives. The project was ambitious: to adopt legislation that will enable chemical substances to be registered and evaluated, with an obligation to substitute dangerous products with a less harmful alternative, where one exists.

This project has not withstood the pressure of certain lobbies from the chemical industry, strongly supported as it is within the European Parliament, which preferred to invoke economic constraints over environmental and public health protection in order to obtain less binding legislation, particularly on substitution. I also regret the exclusion of endocrine disruptors from the substitution procedure and the fact that the chemical safety report should not be compulsory for substances weighing between one and ten tonnes.

The concluded agreement is inadequate, but to reject it would mean running the risk of starting the conciliation procedure and of ending up with a completely meaningless text.

As inadequate as it certainly is, this legislation does exist, and on the strength of that alone, it is well worth our getting more involved in terms of demanding financial and human resources to apply this legislation, to take it forward and to guarantee substitution on a very gradual basis.

**Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), in writing. (PT)** We abstained from the vote on the compromise arising from an agreement between the two largest groups in Parliament – the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats and the Socialist Group in Parliament – because we feel that it does not meet the legitimate rights and concerns of the consumers and of small and medium-sized enterprises as regards protecting workers and the environment.

We believe that it does not strike the necessary balance between protecting workers' health, protecting the environment and industrial development.

Indeed, the rights of consumers have not been duly safeguarded, owing to the restrictions on the right to information; nor have the workers' right to good health been safeguarded, given that information is not made available on the potentially harmful effects of the materials they handle. Furthermore, the report does not take proper account of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, and even large companies that have already expressed a wish to replace dangerous chemicals, given that the cost of registering substances will inevitably rise, without suitable support provided.

That being said, we welcome the fact that the burden of proof has shifted onto industry. This objective, which has now been achieved, underpinned the REACH objectives. We regret, however, that some amendments tabled by our group were not accepted, including the possibility of Member States introducing more stringent measures should they wish to.

**Jean-Claude Fruteau (PSE), in writing. – (FR)** The text submitted to today's vote puts an end to seven long years of work and heated debates between, on the one hand, supporters of the chemical industry, who have persisted in overusing arguments of competitiveness and employment in order to maintain the status quo, guaranteeing, as it does, their own financial interests, and, on the other hand, European officials, who were anxious to come up with responsible legislation aimed at protecting Europeans from the perils of the dangerous chemical substances found in staple goods.

Of course, as is often the case, the outcome does not fully meet our demands. Proof of this is the number of goods covered by the REACH regulation – only 30 000 out of the 100 000 desired. Significant progress has been made, however, if we consider in particular the fact that only 3 000 substances are today being studied, and that it will be up to the chemical industry from now on to assume the burden of proof concerning the toxicity of substances, that is, to demonstrate that they are not harmful to humans.

In the end, thanks to the pugnacity of the Socialist Group in the European Parliament's rapporteur, Mr Sacconi, the European Union will have the world's most binding legislation on this matter. That is why I emphatically endorsed the adoption of this text at second reading.

**Robert Goebbels (PSE), in writing. – (FR)** I supported Mr Sacconi's compromise on REACH because it represents a big step forward for consumers, workers from the sector and even for the industry which, by adapting itself, is going to become the world leader in safer chemical substances.

Admittedly, REACH remains slightly too bureaucratic and does not always take account of the interests of medium-sized and, above all, small enterprises, which make Europe strong. We need to make sure

that neither the Commission nor the Agency give way to a precautionary principle that prevents any risks and any decisions from being taken, and that REACH – which is, in any case, a process stretching over 11 years – is intelligently implemented, which amounts to saying that we need to limit what are, essentially, useless studies and cumbersome procedures.

**Hélène Goudin and Nils Lundgren (IND/DEM), in writing.** (SV) The June List works to limit EU cooperation to truly cross-border matters. Such matters include the internal market and various environmental issues. We are convinced of the fact that a strong chemicals directive would constitute a long-term competitive advantage for Swedish and European industry.

We are therefore critical of the watered-down compromise put forward by the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats, the Socialist Group in the European Parliament and the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe. Under the compromise, the substitution principle has been practically eliminated. Nor is there any legally binding principle of responsibility that would make it clear that the burden of proof is to be on companies, rather than on the authorities of the Member States. The demand for the Member States to be able to adopt more far-reaching chemicals legislation has likewise failed to win approval. This compromise may be a victory for those in the chemicals industry that are behind the times, but it is a defeat for modern and progressive companies, for public health and for our shared environment.

We have voted against this majority compromise on the strength of the views set out above. We have voted to support the more environmentally friendly alternative, which is to say the compromise package put forward by the Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left and the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance.

**Mathieu Grosch (PPE-DE), in writing.** – (FR) REACH is an extremely important step in terms of the EU's chemical policy. The reversal of the duty of care principle, which shifts from the public authorities to industry and manufacturers, is a phenomenal revolution for the entire sector. One cannot underestimate, either, the tremendous gain in knowledge that will result from the registration, evaluation and authorisation process. This gain in knowledge will have consequences for industry as a whole and for our means of preserving humankind and the environment.

The only remaining big regret is that the principle of substitution for 'extremely worrying' chemical substances will not be as binding as one might have wished. Let us hope that, in the near future, this principle will be taken up and accepted by the two European co-legislators and that we will not have to wait 20 years for that, as we have done for this directive.

To have rejected the entire REACH legislation because of this regret would have been like throwing the baby out with the bathwater, and that would certainly not have led to better legislation in the short or medium term.

I call on the future agency to remain pragmatic in its attitude towards certain well-known substances – such as lime, for example – the use of which does not, in principle, present any problems.

**Françoise Grossetête (PPE-DE), in writing.** – (FR) This agreement on REACH will enable us to better protect health and the environment, and our European industry will have to become more responsible while remaining competitive in the world market.

The adopted text includes a number of important improvements: a reduction in red tape, a reduction in useless tests, better protection for businesses' confidential information and the introduction of a compulsory substitution plan.

This regulation is going to enable legislation to be made clearer: the chemicals sector is currently subject to around 40 European directives. This regulation is going to enable the European Chemicals Agency to register more than 30 000 chemical substances over the next 11 years.

I do, however, regret that a long-lasting solution should not have been found to the problem of imports from third countries. Indeed, European importers of chemicals must register them, under a procedure subject to REACH. The problem really lies in the importing of finished goods, the substances contained in which will simply be notified.

**Ambroise Guellec (PPE-DE), in writing.** – (FR) It is very important for the European Union to have a harmonised system for registering, authorising and controlling chemical substances. One Member

State on its own cannot establish an effective system. This system must make it possible, on the one hand, to reduce the risks to our health and our environment, and, on the other hand, to promote innovation and support for economic activities that are non-polluting.

The compromise voted on today successfully rises to the challenge of an ambitious piece of legislation, the principal aim of which is to create an effective system for protecting individuals, without hindering economic development.

**Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), in writing.** I supported the initiative by my group and other members, which was a compromise that would have preserved the best of the REACH proposal whilst answering many of the concerns of business.

As things stand the new legislation is full of loopholes and exemptions and my concern is that this will allow the use of toxic chemicals in manufacturing to continue, even when safer alternatives exist.

**Astrid Lulling (PPE-DE), in writing.** – (FR) I am not thrilled, and I would have preferred a different version of this text, which remains a real bureaucratic monster, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises.

While the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance and the left are strongly criticising me and are going as far as to claim that I am defending the chemical industry at the expense of public health, the chemical industry and, above all, the small and medium-sized enterprises in this sector are accusing us of imposing legislation on them that is costly and difficult to manage, which could lead to large businesses relocating outside Europe and which is liable, above all, to threaten the survival of SMEs.

Some chemical substances, like some of the 130 substances used in the manufacturing of tyres, might no longer be able to be used in Europe, with the result that they would be integrated into finished goods imported from third countries, thus escaping all checks.

An overly perfect REACH is therefore just as dangerous as an extreme REACH because it would be liable to do away with thousands of jobs in Europe without, for all that, helping to improve public health.

One advantage of REACH is that this regulation combines 40 existing directives, which is an improvement geared towards promoting the single market.

**Jules Maaten (ALDE), in writing.** (NL) The REACH issue is one of the most talked about and lobbied issues in the history of the EU. Both industry and environmental organisations have already taken a critical view of the result. Nevertheless, I regard the compromise between the Council and Parliament as viable and balanced. The agreement that has been reached strikes the right balance between economic interests and care for the environment.

Harmful substances must, where possible, be banned, and I am all for industry making funds for this purpose available, as long as the burden – particularly on small and medium-sized enterprises – is not too heavy. The directive provides for this by encouraging the replacement of harmful substances by alternatives and by supporting the SMEs when adaptations are made in line with the updated rules and regulations. With fewer animal tests and better information for the consumer, the directive is a step in the right direction.

Once the dust has cleared, I am convinced that many opponents will gradually come round to showing their support for the directive.

**Thomas Mann (PPE-DE), in writing.** (DE) SMEs and those who work for them cannot be satisfied with everything in the REACH compromise, which incorporates neither Parliament's proposal for less stringent testing where small quantities are involved, nor the concept of better-defined categories of exposure and use, the consequence of which is that the EU is imposing considerable costs on businesses and making them less competitive.

Despite these considerable defects, I have voted in favour of the compromise, since it also bears the stamp of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, the opinion of which I drafted, and on the grounds that the new directive creates Europe-wide legal certainty by replacing forty individual regulations, considerably improves information on 30 000 substances, and reduces to a minimum the safety risks for consumers and workers in the chemical industry. The introduction of a safety report for substances produced in quantities of less than ten tonnes annually has been dispensed with, thereby



freeing SMEs in particular from the substantial cost and effort involved in documentation. There has been a marked improvement in the protection of industrial confidentiality, and it is possible for particularly hazardous substances to be permitted without a time limit, thereby avoiding bottlenecks in supply; the extension of the registration deadline for the first stage to three and a half years is another tangible relief for the chemicals industry.

The directive is due to enter into force in 2007, and the success of its transposition depends on good cooperation between the central chemical agency, the national authorities, and businesses.

**Cristiana Muscardini (UEN), in writing. – (IT)** I am delighted to be able to highlight the success of the trialogue. Despite its barbarous name, it succeeded in finding an honourable solution to the issue of registering chemical substances, as regards both safeguarding consumers' health and protecting the interests of small and medium-sized enterprises. I hope that the compromise reached last week will be approved by this Chamber, thus concluding the work done over three years to bring the 40 existing pieces of legislation together into a single regulation. I am grateful to my fellow Members for accepting some amendments tabled by my group to protect small and medium-sized enterprises and animal welfare. The complexity of the regulation means, amongst other things, that safety assessments will be carried out on about 30 000 substances placed on the market before 1981 and produced or imported in amounts exceeding one tonne per year. That prospect is a further guarantee to safeguard human health.

Despite the considerable number of new provisions, many application-related aspects have yet to be settled in order to make it feasible for REACH to be properly implemented in certain sectors, such as cosmetics, for instance. A great many points have been the subject of debate, as shown by the hundreds of amendments examined, but the end result is, in my view, very well balanced. For that reason, too, I have voted in favour of the final compromise.

**Luís Queiró (PPE-DE), in writing. (PT)** It has taken five years but the EU appears finally ready to pass a law on this important issue. Given that so much time has passed, it is essential we vote for a compromise, even if we may not support it in its entirety. This is particularly important, given that what has effectively been achieved here is a tricky, yet vital, balance between protecting the consumers' various interests, protecting the needs of European industry (which, in addition to employing thousands of Europeans, is crucial to the competitiveness of our economy) and protecting the environment. Otherwise, if in doubt, we must follow the consumers' interests, because it is vital to them that a competitive industry can be maintained whilst protecting the environment. We therefore voted in favour of this report.

I have one other comment, however, which is that five years is too long. We sometimes waste time on issues that do not carry the same weight and significance as this one, and we are sometimes left without time to commit ourselves to what is most important to our economy. We should be mindful of this, I believe, when we discuss the EU's problems.

**Tokia Saïfi (PPE-DE), in writing. – (FR)** I voted in favour of the compromise reached with the Council on 30 November concerning REACH, following in the footsteps of the three large political groups (the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats, the Socialist Group in the European Parliament and the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe). I did this so that our fellow citizens might quickly have legislation – the entry into force of which is scheduled for 1 April 2007 – controlling the use of chemical substances in our staple goods.

Admittedly, this compromise is less ambitious than the one to which I aspired in taking a stand, at first reading, in favour of the compulsory substitution of 'extremely worrying' chemical substances where safer alternatives exist. Nevertheless, as the fruit of three years of preparation and of difficult negotiations, this compromise represents a weak, but necessary, balance between the need for health and environmental protection and the competitiveness of businesses.

I hope, however, that the framework provided by REACH will make it possible, in spite of everything, for the substitution process to be genuinely recognised, even if, in practice, a high number of toxic substances are going to slip through the net. It is the act of monitoring and controlling the implementation of this regulation that will help to consolidate a stronger version of REACH.

**Lydia Schenardi (NI), in writing. – (FR)** We voted against the REACH regulation on chemical substances at first reading, in the belief that the adopted amendments would not make it possible to maintain the balance struck between the three objectives of this regulation: health and environmental

protection; competitiveness and innovation; and the substitution of dangerous substances with less harmful or innocuous alternatives.

The compromise proposed to us today is not a great deal more balanced. Admittedly, it includes some significant advances, as many speakers pointed out during the debate: simplified registrations; a more practical approach; and some, albeit insufficient, progress for SMEs, for example. However, it also has some gaps and ambiguities, not least concerning the constraints on imports and the potential disadvantages of this for European manufacturers, and also concerning the application of the substitution principle solely to dangerous substances, which is already a step forward, but which does not guarantee its effectiveness even in cases where technically and economically viable alternatives exist.

Exchanging one imbalance for another is not resolving the problem. None of the three initial aims of the directive will truly be achieved, any more, I might add, than the aim to simplify the legislation or to make it compatible with other Community legislation will be achieved.

**Peter Skinner (PSE), in writing.** I am pleased to have seen confirmed today an improved proposal to deal with the crucial issues raised under the REACH report. In particular the use of animal testing, which is of great concern to many of my constituents, has been changed to incorporate validation of alternatives. Also, a three-year review allows for the European Commission to consider whether legislative proposals covering this area could be useful to reduce further any need for such testing.

Similarly, the improved text which I voted for today reflects more accurately the views of thousands of individuals and interest groups in dealing with the cumulative effects of toxic chemicals found in hundreds of household products.

**Alyn Smith (Verts/ALE), in writing.** Mr President, after so much work over such a long period this package does not merit the backslapping and self congratulation we have seen today. The alternative package put forward by my group would have worked, and implemented a new regime which would have protected consumers and balanced the needs of business and the economy which must of course be included in our plans. Today's package will not do what it says on the tin, and it is a shame that MEPs from the Labour and Conservative groups did not join us to bring in a better package.

**Bart Staes (Verts/ALE), in writing. (NL)** I cannot possibly be upbeat about the REACH proposal that has been rushed through Parliament. The Commission, the Council and Parliament have all been dazzled by economic profit and have displayed sure signs of apathy. For the first time in many years, the EU had the opportunity to create legislation the usefulness of which would have been plain for all citizens to see: strict, complex, but at the same time concrete and always putting the health of all its residents first.

The half-hearted approach towards harmful chemical substances leaves neither industry nor the public satisfied. It is for that very reason that some regard it as a 'sound compromise'. It is not one. It would be tantamount to claiming that halving the thickness of the Berlin wall would have been a good solution. You cannot trifle with public health. There is no middle ground. Even a little more healthy is still ill.

In Flanders, things have now got to such a pass that harmful substances can be found everywhere. Whilst we know that in many cases, this is unhealthy, we do not know precisely why. A sound REACH would have solved this and would, for example, make Flanders healthy in the medium term. The proposal that has now been voted on does not do this. After all, being more healthy by half is not an option.

**Catherine Stihler (PSE), in writing.** The Regulation, Evaluation, and Authorisation of Chemicals (REACH) is crucial in the protection of public health. This legislation is particularly important in relation to babies' health through breast-feeding. Breast milk, the best source of essential nutrients for a baby, is currently being affected by dangerous chemicals found in the environment, passing through the mother's body. Through REACH, such harmful chemicals would be substituted with safer alternatives where possible. Manufacturers would have a duty of care to protect human health and the environment. In addition to this, REACH promotes both increased transparency in the case of, and alternatives to, animal testing. The compromise reached today is the best we could hope for.

**Marc Tarabella (PSE), in writing. – (FR)** First of all, I should like to highlight the excellent work done by the rapporteur, Mr Sacconi.

I decided to vote in favour of the compromise amendment between the Council and Parliament mainly because this amendment is going to allow certain dangerous products to be controlled better, while making the chemical industry more competitive.

While it is true that this compromise is not perfect, I believe that, if it had not been adopted, the situation would have been more complicated. This compromise provides for the compulsory replacement of the most dangerous substances where alternatives exist, the recognition of a 'duty of care' on the part of manufacturers and the promotion of methods other than animal testing.

This version of the text certainly does not go as far as the text submitted at first reading, but, if the text had been rejected, we would have had to go through the conciliation stage, which would have led to other, less advantageous conclusions.

That is why I thought it wiser to vote for this version of the text, which is admittedly imperfect, but which does nonetheless enable progress to be made and more extensive checks to be carried out on chemicals that we come across in our daily lives.

### Sacconi report (A6-0345/2006)

**Marie-Arlette Carlotti (PSE), in writing. – (FR)** This fund is a new tool: for the first time, the EU will no longer come to the aid just of business and local authorities, but indeed directly to that of employees who have lost their jobs because of relocations. This is all the more so because the European Parliament wanted to extend the profits of this fund to 'small labour markets' where redundancies have a serious impact on employment and the local economy. This opportunity offers promising prospects to the most vulnerable areas of my region, which is something that I welcome.

Equally, I welcome the unwavering commitment of the members of the Socialist Party in the European Parliament, who have taken a strong and tenacious stand in defending the implementation of this tool and tabled many amendments aimed at extending the implementation, amount and number of beneficiaries thereof.

This is the first step towards a more social and more united Europe. The EU cannot, however, merely 'heal the wounds' of globalisation. Today, Europeans expect Europe to help keep their jobs and their lifestyles secure, in the same way that it has been able to guarantee peace and stability for almost 50 years.

**Richard Corbett (PSE), in writing.** The adoption of this legislation is a big step forward for the protection of people and the environment from potentially dangerous chemicals. Some argue that it should have been better, and there is indeed a case for saying that a compromise such as this is not perfect. However, a common set of rules on this important matter is better than a patchwork of perfect (but divergent) rules in some countries, half measures in others and no rules at all elsewhere – in what is supposed to be a common market with common rules. That would have given less protection at greater costs.

**Carlos Coelho (PPE-DE), in writing. (PT)** This new regulation on chemicals is aimed at establishing a system for registering, assessing and authorising the chemicals with which we come into contact every day.

This new proposal will plug significant gaps in our current knowledge about the chemicals available on the market and at the same time will seek to boost European industry and to offer greater protection to human health and the environment.

Although animal testing is inevitable, measures have been proposed to guarantee the lowest possible increase, for example the One Substance One Registration (OSOR) system, which will ensure that tests are not unnecessarily duplicated.

The approach based on quantities produced/imported will lead to less of an administrative and financial burden for SMEs. The submission of a replacement plan should allow sufficient time for companies to adapt and to prepare for the change, when abandoning the most dangerous chemicals. Intellectual property is now properly protected.

By maintaining the substitution principle, albeit via the submission of a plan, we can guarantee that, in the reasonably near future, we will have a world, or at least a Europe, with fewer dangerous chemicals.

The Portuguese Social Democrat MEPs thus support the Sacconi report ...

*(Explanation of vote abbreviated in accordance with Rule 163(1) of the Rules of Procedure)*

**Paul Marie Coûteaux, Patrick Louis and Philippe de Villiers (IND/DEM), in writing.** – (FR) The members of *Mouvement pour la France* in the European Parliament have refused to support the compromise proposed for the vote at second reading on the draft directive on dangerous substances, the so-called REACH Directive.

Now that the directive has been examined by the various European institutions, there is little left of its original good intentions.

Thus, the compromise text voted on this morning is very inadequate in terms of environmental and consumer protection.

Furthermore, the new burdens that it places on European businesses are not compensated for by similar obligations imposed on imports of finished goods, creating a distortion of competition that jeopardises European industry.

**Edite Estrela (PSE), in writing.** (PT) I voted in favour of the Sacconi report on the amendment to Directive 67/548/EEC on dangerous substances (REACH), at second reading, because I feel that the common position adopted by the Council is a good agreement that will benefit the citizens of the European Union.

I feel that this is a well-balanced legislative proposal that has sought to strike a balance between safeguarding the industry's legitimate interests, and especially those of the SMEs, with the need to protect the environment and public health.

The REACH agreement will guarantee, as of June 2007, that substances that are extremely problematic from an environmental and public health perspective are substituted wherever possible by safe alternative substances or technologies.

**David Martin (PSE), in writing.** I voted for the compromise amendments on this report and against all others. I did so to avoid the REACH Directive going into conciliation where I felt it was far from certain to emerge as a piece of legislation. Many of the amendments had much to commend them but they would have threatened the directive as a whole – as so often in politics the best would have been the enemy of the good.

Sacconi reports (A6-0352/2006 and A6-0345/2006)

**Hubert Pirker (PPE-DE), – (DE)** Mr President, the basic idea of ensuring that, in certain cases, materials that give a great deal of cause for concern are replaced by materials or technologies that are less hazardous, provided that economically suitable and technically feasible alternatives are available, is a good one, although, in doing this, particular attention needs to be given to this regulation's potential effects on small and medium-sized businesses and on the jobs they provide. Since, however, it has proved possible to arrive at a compromise that obviates these dangers, a vote in favour of this report has been made possible.

**Philip Claeys (NI), – (NL)** Mr President, what I saw as important about the report was that it considered all the options and alternatives with a view to reducing the number of animal tests to a minimum.

Since the suffering involved in tests on animals – and on mammals in particular – worries many European citizens, the use of such tests should, where possible, be avoided at all costs.

The European Centre for validating alternative methods has been given an important role in this. This institution will, with more funds, need to produce plenty of validated alternatives in order to put an end to animal tests in the long term. We would also argue in favour of transparency and clarity in respect of the numbers of animals and types of tests carried out by research labs.

**Frank Vanhecke (NI), – (NL)** Mr President, it is, of course, difficult to be enthusiastic about a text and a vote that are very complex and on which we will, in fact, be unable to pass a verdict until we have had the time to reread it at our leisure; I in any event have the impression that we have succeeded in striking a balance between respecting our chemical industry's ambition to be competitive on the one hand and the care and attention that are so necessary for our public health on the other. We cannot, in

any case, do other than note with satisfaction that it has become clear in recent years that our chemical industry is acutely aware of its responsibilities and that it has taken on the burden of proof and accepted the principle of duty of care.

I should like to make one final remark. In the case of substances for which there is no alternative, whose use is completely controllable and where the duty to substitute would cause considerable economic damage, it would, I think, be extremely regrettable if our industry were to relocate to competing regions on account of our obsession with rules and regulations.

**Zita Pleštinská (PPE-DE).** – (SK) Following the discussions on this extensive and challenging piece of legislation, which has taken three years to prepare, many of us in this House were of two minds as to what we should do about REACH. Should we support the compromise package, the common position, or turn down the proposal?

On the one hand, environmentalists view the compromise package as too weak; on the other hand, it poses a threat to the chemical industry, particularly SMEs, by threatening competitiveness and jobs. I have thoroughly considered all the arguments of the stakeholders and voted in favour of the compromise package, which bears the distinctive imprint of the European Parliament, since I am convinced that we need rules in order to know more about the thirty thousand chemical substances in the products that surround us in our everyday lives.

We need to replace forty obsolete norms with a single regulation for chemicals covering registration, evaluation, authorisation and, last but not least, restrictions. We need a strong impetus for European research to ensure the gradual and natural elimination of harmful substances where this regulation does not prescribe substitution. I am convinced that this piece of legislation marks a correct step towards improving the quality of life for European citizens.

**Richard Seeber (PPE-DE).** – (DE) Mr President, I, too, would like to emphasise that this compromise would certainly have been capable of being improved, particularly as regards substitution, the rules on which we found to be lamentably unclear, but experience with their implementation will be the main way of showing whether they are usable in practice. This is where the Member States, the Commission and the Chemicals Agency – which is now to be established – need to do something for businesses, and we, in this House, will certainly have to keep a watchful eye out to see that they do a proper job of it.

**Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE-DE).** – (PL) Mr President, I voted in favour of the draft regulation on dangerous substances, otherwise known as REACH. However, I have a number of doubts as to whether the compromise achieved, following lengthy and difficult negotiations, will contribute to the protection of human health and the environment on the one hand, and to encouraging competition and innovation within the chemical industry in the European Union on the other.

I firmly believe that we should gradually withdraw dangerous chemicals from the market in stages, and replace them with less dangerous substances. However, we should be aware that new, restrictive requirements will have a negative impact on European industry, especially on small and medium-sized enterprises. They will have to pay the majority of the costs of adjusting to the legislation. We should therefore think about how to support them. The new regulations should also be applied to imports from third countries and so should be discussed at WTO level.

**Christoph Konrad (PPE-DE).** – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, REACH is in fact an example of how not to do it.

It is not an example of better lawmaking in the EU, and it is for that reason that I have not voted in favour of our new legislation on chemicals. Much will now be dependent on the management of the new Chemicals Agency, but, whatever happens, things look set to get bureaucratic, with over 5 000 pages of rules and regulations putting Europe's small and medium-sized businesses in particular at a disadvantage. REACH is no answer to the demand – repeated paternoster fashion in the EU – for better, in other words simpler, legislation. It is dubious whether it actually does anything to protect the consumer, but certain that it will impose additional burdens on European businesses. This is a fundamental problem, and we would be well advised to steer clear of this sort of legislative project in future.

**Kurt Joachim Lauk (PPE-DE).** – (DE) Mr President, it is a good thing that REACH takes, as its primary purpose, the protection of human life, of jobs and of the environment, but the way in which the protection of people and their environment is organised will have adverse effects on Europe, resulting

in a massive build-up of bureaucracy, several thousand pages worth of superfluous regulations, and, in the long term, the relocation of jobs and a consequent reduction in the active workforce. I do not see this as something that we, in Europe, should be voting for. Less employment and more bureaucracy make for the sort of Europe that we do not want.

The decision was made difficult by the fact that the Compromise 191 with which we were presented was preferable to the alternative that was already on the table, and, that being so, I have neither voted to adopt this poor compromise nor opted for outright rejection. It is for that reason that I have abstained from voting.

#### Hennicot-Schoepges report (A6-0435/2006)

**Patrick Gaubert (PPE-DE), in writing.** – (FR) Closely linked as it is to the ambition to build a European Union that gathers together the nations, intercultural dialogue today represents an important dimension of numerous Community policies and instruments. That is why I welcome the adoption at second reading of the decision to implement a European Year 2008, which will be dedicated to intercultural dialogue.

As draftsman of the opinion of the Committee on Foreign Affairs at first reading, I hope that this European Year will enable all Europeans, particularly young people, to become aware of the need for intercultural dialogue in their everyday lives. It must highlight best practice in this field, with the specific aim of integrating immigrants, and should do so by continuing the actions undertaken in 2007 during the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All. Thus, the promotion of intercultural dialogue should continue within the European Union far beyond 2008, as the adopted text calls for.

**Hélène Goudin and Nils Lundgren (IND/DEM), in writing.** (SV) The June List believes that the whole idea of a European Year of this or that is unnecessary and not something that EU taxpayers should fund.

To invest EUR 10 million in a European Year of Intercultural Dialogue would be quite reprehensible, and it is difficult and perhaps even impossible to see what would be the point of doing so.

We are voting against the amendments to the report in accordance with the view we expressed previously when voting against the report at first reading.

**Katalin Lévai (PSE), in writing.** (HU) I wish to highlight the amendment proposed by Parliament emphasising the cultural and educational aims of the renewed Lisbon Strategy, as well as the need to disseminate information concerning equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination within the European Union.

In this regard I would like to call to mind a phenomenon that brings to the fore the urgent need for intercultural dialogue, namely the situation of migrants, and in particular of migrant women.

According to Eurostat, the proportion of women amongst migrants is steadily increasing. They currently make up almost 54 per cent of all migrants. What makes the problem even more serious is the fact that they face quite high levels of unemployment.

Their dependency is further aggravated by the fact that a considerable number of migrants live on the margins of society and their access to public, political and economic life is very limited. Amongst migrant populations, female migrants are victims of a double discrimination, on grounds of both gender and ethnic origin. The major problems faced by migrants, that is, unemployment, exclusion from education and a position of legal uncertainty also weigh most heavily on women and children. It is tragic that around five thousand migrant women fall victim annually to mental or physical violence, forced marriage, genital mutilation and crimes committed in the name of honour.

In my view, it is of particular significance that the European Commission has designated 2007 as the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All, and 2008 as the Year of Intercultural Dialogue. It is my hope that these programmes will provide an opportunity to deal with all these problems and, as far as possible, to find solutions to them. It is for this reason that I, together with the Minister of Social and Employment Affairs, announced a series of programmes in Hungary on the occasion of the 2007 Year of Equal Opportunities.

#### Pittella report (A6-0444/2006)

**Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), in writing. (PT)** The reduced budget implementation of the Structural and Cohesion Funds is one of the reasons for submitting this amending budget for 2006.

Due to non-implementation, it has been proposed that EUR 2.5 billion in payment appropriations be cancelled, under the following budgetary headings: EUR 1.5 billion under the European Regional Development Fund; EUR 500 million under the European Social Fund; and EUR 500 million under the Cohesion Fund.

Regardless of the reasons behind the Commission's proposal to cancel funds earmarked for cohesion policy for this reduction, we have seen that this is normal practice.

What is needed, therefore, is to assess properly the reasons behind the reduction in budgetary implementation and to not allow this necessary assessment – for example, of the impact of the nominal criteria enshrined in the Stability Pact on public investment in the Member States, and of the reduction in Member State contributions to the Community budget – to be used as a pretext for reducing the amount of money set aside every year in the Community budget for the Structural and Cohesion Funds.

### Hieronimi report (A6-0399/2006)

**Carlo Fatuzzo (PPE-DE), – (IT)** Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I am grateful to you, Mr President, for having given me the floor to explain the reasons for my vote on the Hieronimi report on television broadcasting activities, which I consider very important and well produced.

By voting for the report I was expressing my personal hope and that of all the pensioners in Italy and Europe that, in future, particular attention will be paid in television programming to the dignity and the involvement of the elderly in the world of culture.

It is very nice to see young people in television programmes, and it is also nice for the elderly to see so many attractive men and women, but I think it is important that the qualities of older people should also be aired on television.

**Jan Andersson, Anna Hedh, Ewa Hedkvist Petersen, Inger Segelström and Åsa Westlund (PSE), in writing. (SV)** We voted against the report on the proposal for a directive governing audiovisual media services. Common EU regulations governing television broadcasts and other audiovisual media are necessary in an increasingly borderless Europe. However, we believe that such a directive must guarantee a high level of protection for consumers, particularly when it comes to advertising aimed at children or for alcoholic beverages.

It should, furthermore, be possible for the receiving country to influence the content of programmes aimed specifically at that country. The result of the vote is much too much liberalisation of the rules on advertising. What is more, Sweden's ban on advertising aimed at children and on advertising of alcohol is in danger of being undermined, and that is unacceptable.

**Christopher Beazley (PPE-DE), in writing.** British Conservative members of the EPP-ED Group support the Hieronimi report (COM(2005)0646 – C6-0443/2005 – 2005/0260(COD)) particularly because it includes support for co- and self-regulation and the 30-minute rule for advertising slots.

The other important aspects of country of origin principle, product placement and short extracts have been substantially modified by the rapporteur since the Commission published its original text.

We should like to congratulate Ruth Hieronimi on her diligence in the many public hearings, which included the appropriate regulatory and commercial interests from the United Kingdom, and on her producing a balanced, practicable and enduring piece of work incorporating many improvements suggested by colleagues.

**Dorette Corbey (PSE), in writing. (NL)** Unlike the other Dutch Members of the Socialist Group in the European Parliament, I am in favour of Amendments 170, 156 and 177, which aim to restrict advertising for unhealthy foods intended for children, and my arguments in favour of this position are as follows.

1. In the EU, one in four children is obese as a consequence of incorrect diet combined with a lack of sufficient exercise. Obese children have a bad start in life in terms of both their social and physical development. Research shows that advertising impacts greatly on consumption and buying behaviour.

2. There is wide public support for restricting advertising for unhealthy foods. The Food Centre, the Heart Foundation and the Consumer Association all argue in favour of a ban on television commercials for unhealthy foods intended for young children. Opinion polls (Food Centre) and surveys (in the Saturday 2 December edition of the *Algemeen Dagblad*) show that nearly half of all parents are in favour of restricting or banning aggressive advertising.

3. The question is, of course, whether this situation requires a legal ban or self-regulation. My personal preference would be self-regulation, unless it turned out that codes of conduct were ineffective. Moreover, it is debatable whether a restriction or ban would be best imposed nationally or at European level. I would in any event be in favour of this being allowed at national level. With this Television Directive, we must avoid ending up in a situation where Member States no longer have a say in these matters.

Since the Television Directive is being tabled for first reading, it is not yet a final legal document. This is why it is better at this stage to endorse the amendments that move in the right direction and that also give the Netherlands the best chances of retaining the right to restrict advertising. This would carry a political message to the effect that the health of children is more important than the commercial interests of the food industry.

**Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), in writing. (PT)** The objective is purportedly to amend the existing directive on the pretext of the evolution of television, but the real purpose is to ensure that profits can be safeguarded for private television companies. A number of studies have demonstrated that people are watching fewer advertisements, on the grounds that they can change channel and this is why advertisement breaks are increasingly shown at the same time across the various channels. Profits from advertising are not as high as they were, because the channels cannot guarantee audiences to those buying advertising, and everything in television is measured in audience figures.

Consequently, advertising has to be reinvented so that profits can still be made, for example through product placement, split screen, promotions, virtual advertising and interactive advertising. The same happens with the amount of programme time in which advertising can be shown. There were also a number of proposals on high-calorie food and drink advertising when children's programmes are being shown.

Accordingly, given that the positions that are least favourable to the people were adopted and that the most vulnerable sections of society have not been protected, we did not vote in favour of this report.

**Hélène Goudin and Nils Lundgren (IND/DEM), in writing. (SV)** The June List rejects the Commission's proposal. The Council dealt with this matter in November, prior to first reading in the European Parliament now, in December. A compromise was agreed on, but this compromise was not supported by seven countries, including Sweden.

Sweden – and the June List – question what is known as the country of origin principle, according to which a television company has to follow the regulations in place in the country from which it broadcasts, irrespective of where its programmes are viewed, because this leads to problems when, for example, TV 3 and Kanal 5 broadcast from the United Kingdom where they are covered by British, rather than Swedish, legislation. Sweden has been fighting in the Council for the right of the receiving country to take measures against TV companies that broadcast from a different EU country in order to deliberately circumvent national rules.

The Committee on Culture and Education has tabled an amendment relating to cases where a media service provider has established itself in the Member State having jurisdiction 'in order to avoid the stricter rules in the fields' coordinated by the directive. We would, however, have liked to have seen the matter discussed further in order to have achieved a stronger form of words.

Sweden and the June List believe that both advertising aimed at children and that relating to alcohol should be completely prohibited.

We have attempted, as far as possible, to vote to improve the directive in accordance with the guidelines above.

**Ian Hudghton (Verts/ALE), in writing.** I voted against in the final vote on TV broadcasting, because I believe that programmes will be overrun by advertisements as a result of this report.

I regret that Parliament rejected attempts to ban junk food advertising during children's programmes.



Today's vote will undoubtedly lead to a deterioration in the quality of programmes in the EU.

**Astrid Lulling (PPE-DE), in writing.** – (FR) I voted in favour of the version of the directive on audiovisual services as amended by the rapporteur's compromise amendments because they make the directive viable and reasonable.

The country of origin principle firmly rooted in this directive is of the utmost importance. It will enable television channels to have their headquarters in a Member State and to broadcast their programmes in all the EU Member States from that Member State.

Furthermore, I consider the compromise on product placement to be viable, given that it guarantees independent European producers revenue while protecting consumers from any undue excesses and keeping away from children's programmes.

As regards commercial breaks, I voted in favour of a 30-minute interval because this is realistic given the average length of television programmes in Europe. This interval guarantees private channels an adequate income, thanks to which they can continue funding programme production. I support the authorisation of one-off advertising spots for the same reasons. Stricter restrictions on advertising, as proposed by the left of this Parliament, would have harmful consequences for European television productions and would lead to a significant loss of revenue for private channels, estimated at some EUR 200 million per year.

**David Martin (PSE), in writing.** I voted for this report and in favour of amendments that allow Member States to take action to protect minors, to restrict the timing of alcohol advertising and the advertisements for unhealthy food. I also supported an amendment that allows a Member State to take action against a broadcaster who sets up in another Member State intentionally to get round national legislation.

**Mairead McGuinness (PPE-DE), in writing.** On Amendment 226, which deals with a code of conduct on advertising of foods aimed at children, I voted against as I do not think this amendment is strong enough in its wording to get Member States to address the urgent concerns about increasing obesity levels in children.

I supported Amendment 170 in order to put down a marker that there is a need to control the issue of marketing of unhealthy foodstuffs to children.

On Amendment 169 relating to alcohol, I support calls for a ban on alcohol advertising until after 9 p.m., notwithstanding that in Ireland we do have a strong voluntary code in place. A review of the first year of the code is due in March 2007 and this will assist us in making decisions about the effectiveness or otherwise of such codes.

**Luís Queiró (PPE-DE), in writing.** (PT) By resisting the temptation to regulate everything, to impose its will on everything and to control everything, Parliament has succeeded in making a positive contribution to this proposal for a directive. Naturally, in the search for balance and compromise, some relevant aspects have fallen by the wayside, or have been less well regulated. In the case of non-linear services, I believe that we have gone further than was needed at this stage of knowledge and experience in the field. Furthermore, the solutions reached are balanced despite the well known fervour on the part of some Members of this House for excessive regulation. In the case of radio broadcasting, the consumer is becoming increasingly powerful. This is something positive that should be taken more into account. The rule should be that the facts should be made clear to consumers and that they should then be allowed to act accordingly.

For these reasons, I feel that, broadly speaking, the consumers' and the industry's interests have been duly taken into account, and this fully justifies my vote in favour.

**Frédérique Ries (ALDE), in writing.** – (FR) I voted in favour of Mrs Hieronymi's excellent report on the revision of the European Television without Frontiers Directive with a view to integrating brilliant technological innovations into it.

I am pleased that the directive maintains the ceiling on production quotas of European works and the protection of minors in the face of certain excesses. Promoting cultural diversity and European values of tolerance also means standing in the way of incitement to hatred, whatever the means used to spread it: satellite television or the Internet. That is why I supported the amendments that recommend extending

‘filtering’ to ‘non-linear’ services: that is the best way, in future, of preventing programmes justifying terrorism from being broadcast on European soil.

Finally, I commend the resolutely modern vote cast today by the European Parliament, which recognises the significant contribution of advertising to the creation of quality independent works and of entertaining television that meets Europeans’ expectations. I would also point out that it is commercial broadcasters that are setting an example: with more than 30% of programmes being commissioned to independent producers, not only are they broadly meeting the quota of 10% laid down by the directive, but, above all, they are spending twice as much as their competitors in the public sector.

**Peter Skinner (PSE), in writing.** Advertising on TV for alcohol and tobacco products are a part of this directive's concerns. Yet product placement of these products has been treated differently in this vote today. I voted to keep tobacco off TV screens and to limit alcohol advertising. However, although tobacco was prohibited, alcohol failed to get sufficient votes. Given the distress caused by alcohol in many families' lives across the EU, as well as related ill-health issues, I find this result unsatisfactory. In particular we must keep youngsters from being exposed to enticements to drink.

**Bart Staes (Verts/ALE), in writing. (NL)** Enormous changes are afoot in the audiovisual industry, and so, in that sense, the overhaul of the Television without Frontiers Directive is a good thing. The distinction that is drawn between linear (traditional TV, Internet, mobile telephony) and non-linear – that is to say, on-demand – services requires us to formulate basic protection rules for young people to prevent the incitement of racial hatred or clandestine advertising. The text as approved contains good and bad elements. The good ones include, *inter alia*, a regulation on the transmission of short excerpts from football matches or other events. The proposal to introduce a minimum time during which programmes may not be interrupted by advertising (45 minutes) is also justifiable.

The Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance regrets that the proposal to restrict commercial breaks to at most three per hour did not make it to the finishing line, and that product placement is shrouded in ambiguity. We shall leave it up to the Member States to decide on this. The line between ‘product placement’ and ‘production aid’ is very thin, and that will make doubt and controversy inevitable. Moreover, the Greens regret that the teeth have been removed from the proposal to restrict advertising for unhealthy foods during children’s programmes. It is also unfortunate that the reference to pluralism and prevention of media concentration has only been included in the recitals and not in the articles.

**Catherine Stihler (PSE), in writing.** The health of children in Europe must be one of our key concerns. Therefore the marketing of foods high in sugar, salt and fat to children undermines efforts in the fight against child obesity, a problem faced by one in five children in the European Union. Such marketing makes it increasingly difficult for parents to encourage healthy eating: limits on such marketing are therefore imperative in tackling this problem.

Furthermore, European Ministers (in November) and the EP Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (last week) approved the World Health Organization's call for the introduction of strict legislation in this area. We as legislators must do all that we can to protect children's health and place a ban on the advertising of these types of unhealthy products to children.

Also, I fully back the amendment which would have restricted the advertising of alcohol to after 9 p.m. in the evening.

It is with grave disappointment that I note that the vote today did not go far enough in protecting children's health.

**Marc Tarabella (PSE), in writing. – (FR)** I decided to vote in favour of the Hieronymi report because it includes many advances in the area of television broadcasting.

I welcome, among other things, the adoption of Amendment 227 prohibiting product placement in news and current affairs programmes, political broadcasts, children’s programmes, documentaries and programmes of advice, and permitting it under strict conditions in cinematographic works, films, series made for television and sports broadcasts.

I do, however, have two major criticisms to make of this report. I regret the fact that Parliament has voted by a margin of one vote to interrupt the transmission of films made for television, cinematographic works, children’s programmes and news and current affairs programmes with commercial breaks every 30 minutes instead of every 45 minutes, as voted for in the Committee on Culture and Education.

Furthermore, I regret the vote on Amendment 221 concerning derogations from the country of origin principle, which permits the Member States to adopt more detailed or stricter rules; this amendment is a danger to cultural diversity, a principle that the European Parliament has a duty to protect.

### Bachelot-Narquin report (A6-0385/2006)

**Hubert Pirker (PPE-DE).** – *(DE)* Mr President, globalisation – which is what this is all about – is happening whether we want it to or not, and it goes hand in hand with the opening-up of markets, with international competition, with economic growth, with the creation of new jobs, but, unfortunately also with the loss of jobs in those sectors that are less competitive.

In the light, though, of the need to seize the opportunities presented by globalisation, and to support those workers who are adversely affected by it, the establishment of this ‘European Adjustment Fund’ is a very good thing. The delegation of the Austrian People’s Party, however, with its knowledge of the structure and size of Austrian businesses, has demanded an amendment to the effect that the Fund would become active as soon as 500 – rather than 1 000 – workers were laid off, and should give out a commensurate amount in funds.

We see all the other measures – ranging from microloans to training – in a positive light – and the report as a whole therefore enjoys our support.

**Carlo Fatuzzo (PPE-DE).** – *(IT)* Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for giving me the floor for the second time on this important document by Mrs Bachelot, which quite rightly seeks to protect us citizens of Europe from the problems of globalisation.

I voted for the report, hoping in this case that, because of globalisation, action will be taken for us not only in the form of financial aid, in cash, but also in the form of cultural aid. That is to say that, in my view, it is important for us to realise that globalisation also means a single world, and so I tell the elderly that they must realise not only that they live in a national State, but also that they live in the world, and that in this world all elderly people, as well as all young people, need something.

**Charlotte Cederschiöld, Christofer Fjellner, Gunnar Hökmark and Anna Ibrisagic (PPE-DE),** *in writing.* *(SV)* The increased competition amongst companies and the increased opportunities for new, cheaper and better products for consumers that globalisation brings make new demands in relation to flexibility, new thinking and adaptability.

It is by striving to be better, more efficient and quicker that we will meet the new demands and opportunities presented by globalisation. The effect of the Globalisation Fund already set up will be the opposite. It will put the brakes on regeneration and delay adaptation without taking advantage of the opportunities that globalisation provides.

**Emanuel Jardim Fernandes (PSE),** *in writing.* *(PT)* There is no doubt that the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) will be a worthwhile financial instrument offering a European-level response to job losses caused by the opening up of the markets and by increased pressure from international competition. Redundancies are one of the principal adverse effects brought about by the phenomenon of (economic) globalisation, alongside the acknowledged benefits.

I am bitterly disappointed, however, that the objective of setting up the EGF, under the terms of the Commission's proposal, is to enable the Community to offer support with the aim of reinstating the jobs solely of workers who have lost their jobs due to significant structural changes in world trade. This view demonstrates a misunderstanding of the phenomenon of globalisation. It overlooks the fact that, apart from the liberalisation of world trade, the freedom of movement of capital and the deregulation of the market, which are also driving forces behind globalisation, they too could lie at the root of the job losses attributed to globalisation. Against this backdrop, I tabled several amendments to the proposal, in the context of the opinion issued by the Committee on Regional Development, for which Mrs Madeira was responsible.

Although the report before us maintains the scope of the EGF, it also introduces a series of amendments to the Commission's proposal which significantly improve it, add to it and clarify it. I therefore voted in favour.

**Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL),** *in writing.* *(PT)* We are very disappointed by the rejection of the proposals we tabled aimed at improving the eligibility criteria and in particular at making it possible for aid to be

granted in the event of relocation outside the EU. This may arouse a sense of injustice among the workers that have been laid off following relocation or restructuring within the EU.

The rejection of our proposals made it clearer still that, by setting up this Fund, the EU is seeking to give workers the impression that it is committed to combating the adverse effects of globalisation, whereas in reality it is a symbolic measure that provides no solutions. Its budget is limited and its eligibility criteria are tight.

The Commission estimates that between 35 000 and 50 000 workers could benefit from the Fund, but, by 2005 alone, the number of workers laid off as a result of restructuring had topped 570 000, most of the redundancies being due to relocations within the EU and consequently ineligible.

We therefore abstained from the final vote.

**Bruno Gollnisch (NI), in writing.** – (FR) I am hesitating over a term with which to describe Mrs Bachelot-Narquin's report on the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund.

Demagogic? Yes, because behind an attractive title suggesting that Brussels is going to come to the aid of the economic and social victims of untrammelled globalisation, one finds a more mundane reality: the criteria and methods of granting this fund give rise to the fear that it will not be going either to the employees or to the labour market areas that need it. They may even encourage businesses to use bypass strategies or to look for spin-off benefits.

Redundant? Undoubtedly, as is the European Social Fund.

Cynical? Definitely, insofar as the Commission is pretending to help mitigate the consequences of its own internationalist economic and trade policies. It would be less costly for it to compromise these policies for the benefit of European businesses and employees.

However, the report is not useless in everyone's view, and it is definitely very useful where Brussels' propaganda is concerned. Article 9 of the regulation, further enhanced by Mrs Bachelot-Narquin's Amendment 38, does indeed stipulate that the Member States must make it widely known that the Commission is the one paying. As if this money were not coming out of the Member States' budgets, that is to say, out of the pockets of the Europeans themselves!

**Hélène Goudin and Nils Lundgren (IND/DEM), in writing.** (SV) We are strongly critical of the reasoning behind the establishment of a Globalisation Fund. For a start, the proposal proceeds on the basis that globalisation *per se* is a problem. In our view, globalisation is, on the contrary, an opportunity, especially for poor, developing countries, provided that significant economic actors, such as the EU and the USA, reform their protectionist trade policy positions at the World Trade Organisation.

The Member States of the EU are capable of implementing national measures to support those sectors that they deem to be in need of financial assistance. A special EU fund would guarantee arbitrariness, inefficiency, bureaucracy and unjustified expenditure. How is the Commission to decide, in a relevant way, whether globalisation has had a negative impact on a given sector? We have voted against this report on the strength of the views set out above.

**Ambroise Guellec (PPE-DE), in writing.** – (FR) With a maximum sum of EUR 500 million granted to it each year, this European Fund is intended to soften the blow of globalisation for employees affected by restructuring.

This is not a new form of aid for businesses, but extra assistance aimed at helping to find new jobs for employees who have been made redundant following changes in world trade.

The fund will be introduced on three conditions: there have been at least 1 000 redundancies; they have had a serious impact on employment and the local economy; and they are linked to a disruption in world trade. The fund can therefore only be used in the event of 'major changes in the structure of world trade leading to a serious economic disruption', such as a huge rise in imports, a gradual decline in the EU's market share in a sector, or a company relocating to a third country.

I welcome the adoption of the Globalisation Adjustment Fund, which will enable Europeans to gain a response to their worries concerning the negative effects of globalisation and will help establish more economic and social cohesion within the European Union.

**Carl Lang (NI), in writing.** – (FR) Unlike the rapporteur, I do not believe that globalisation is an opportunity for France and Europe. The financial profits of multinationals are one thing; the economic and social profits in terms of employment and the protection of Europe's industrial fabric are quite something else.

The creation of a European Globalisation Adjustment Fund, disguised as a desire to compensate for relocations, will be just another bureaucratic and demagogic tool. If the pro-Europeans had wanted to be more effective and straight with themselves, they should have thought instead about improving and enhancing the European Social Fund.

I, for my part, believe that only the application of preference and of national and Community protection can save our jobs by redefining fair world trade rules.

This Adjustment Fund is, moreover, unacceptable, not least because it is aimed at undermining the work of the Member States, the thinking being that efforts to promote solidarity should only be made at European Union level and no longer at national or regional level.

Economic analgesics of this kind will not ease the social suffering of our people. The day is coming when they will ask for explanations.

**Astrid Lulling (PPE-DE), in writing.** – (FR) I am among those who believe that this Globalisation Adjustment Fund is totally superfluous, if not counterproductive: it is the prototype of a bad 'good idea', but once such an idea has been floated, it is difficult to stop it.

We have Structural Funds, we have the European Social Fund and other funds that operate and that are perfectly equipped to respond to the challenges and the consequences of restructuring, which is linked to relocation, which itself is arguably linked to globalisation.

What is totally absurd is that some amendments propose assigning objectives to this fund that will not contribute to the structural reform-related improvement of Europe's competitiveness and that are unachievable in the context of this fund.

I know that any opposition to this fund may be interpreted as insensitivity to the negative effects of globalisation-related relocations. That interpretation is unjustified, so conscious are we of Europeans' fears regarding globalisation. We want to remedy the situation with constructive structural reforms and not with a fund that gives an excellent excuse to businesses and leaves them with a clear conscience. The fund actually implicitly encourages them to relocate because they no longer have to worry about the negative effects on employment in the EU.

**Thomas Mann (PPE-DE), in writing.** (DE) I have just voted against the Globalisation Fund. While its approach is the right one, in that it is intended to help, by means of measures to retrain and reintegrate them, those workers who have lost their jobs as a result of international business relocations, the manner in which it is to be implemented leaves a certain amount to be desired.

The fund goes about things the wrong way, in that it addresses the symptoms rather than the causes of the lay-offs; the approval procedures are too complex, and the extensive bureaucracy results in considerable expense.

Above all, though, the refusal to reduce the threshold from 1 000 layoffs to 500 means that it is no use to SMEs, and, moreover, when fewer than 1 000 workers are laid off, only 15% of the funds may be paid out as against the 20% that we seek. Access to the Fund is meant to be permitted when a given Member State reports 1 000 layoffs from its SMEs over a period of nine months, whereas the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs had demanded a period of twelve.

The people on the receiving end are bound to be bitterly disappointed when the money – which amounts to a maximum of EUR 500 million per annum – runs out; if the EU awakens great hopes, but fails to do as it has promised, the result will be frustration among the public. My position is shared by my colleagues in the CDU/CSU group in this House.

**Mary Lou McDonald (GUE/NGL), in writing.** While we strongly support measures to improve the situation of workers made redundant through the relocation of companies, we feel that the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund is not up to the task.

The funds available are totally inadequate, reaching less than 10% of workers made redundant through restructuring operations. SME restructuring and redundancies in smaller Member States, which has a serious impact on national, regional and local economies, will benefit very little from the EGAF.

We welcome the fact that some redundant workers from big companies will have access to this fund, and call on the companies concerned to seriously negotiate with workers' representatives and to not use the existence of the fund to back out of their social obligations.

**Athanasios Pafilis (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (EL)** The European Globalisation Adjustment Fund is a charity fund which pays out lump sums in a bid to disorientate and deceive the workers.

Its objective allegedly is to provide assistance and solidarity to workers made redundant in areas suffering from relocated businesses, in other words where capital aims to maximise its profits by moving to countries where the cost of labour is lower.

The criteria set by the regulation under which it is applied are so narrow that a minimal number of workers will be entitled to it, given that it is paid in areas in which, due to the relocation of companies, there are at least 1 000 redundancies from one company or at least 1 000 redundancies over a 6-month period (or 12-month period as proposed in the committee report), representing 1% of employment in the region.

It can only be requested in an application by the government of the Member State and not by the workers or their trades union and is only paid by the government. Thus, the workers are at the mercy of every government, which can use it selectively and as a means of exerting pressure and coercion on the workers and as a means of guiding consciences and deflating the indignation of the workers.

**Frédérique Ries (ALDE), in writing. – (FR)** Europe is going to help the victims of company relocations. As from 1 January, a globalisation adjustment fund will enable as much as EUR 500 million to be given each year to employees who have fallen victim to international restructuring. These employees will be able to rely on the Union to make it easier, or rather, less difficult, for them to retrain. Individual training, micro-credits, help with mobility: this is clearly about rescuing employees, not businesses.

One question is obviously on all of our minds: will the employees of VW Forest be able to rely on this European solidarity?

The criteria for accessing the Fund are strict: the redundancies must affect at least 1 000 people, sub-contractors included, and they must have a serious impact on the local economy. Above all, however, the Belgian authorities need to be able to prove that the restructuring is the result of 'structural changes in world trade trends', and that is not a given! The Union is faced here with an obvious case of social competition within its territory, and it is for the Commission to demonstrate flexibility in examining the criteria.

Europe's image and our notion of solidarity at EU level are at stake!

**Tokia Saïfi (PPE-DE), in writing. – (FR)** I voted in favour of the compromise governing the creation of a European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF). Globalisation is a reality that can be beneficial when it is fair and equitable.

However, when globalisation has negative effects on employees, the European Union has a duty, out of a concern for solidarity, to mitigate the consequences of changes in the structure of world trade. This fund, which amounts to EUR 500 million, will not serve to fund company restructuring but to help employees who have been made redundant, particularly in their efforts to re-enter the job market.

The EGF is an important instrument because it helps to show that the European Union takes full account of the social impact of globalisation and that it is not losing interest in the fate of employees. It was in 2005, seeing the impact of liberalisation and competition on the textile and clothing sector, and more specifically on its employees, that the idea of such a fund was born. It is in 2007, that is, only two years later, that this fund is becoming effective and is really meeting the expectations of redundant workers. Yes, Europe can be close to its citizens, as it is proving today!

**Olle Schmidt (ALDE), in writing. (SV)** I believe that the effects of globalisation on world development are good and have served us well. We have today voted on a report on a European fund for making adjustments in the light of the effects of globalisation. The report includes a raft of critical statements

in relation to precisely these effects. The re-shaped patterns of world trade have produced nothing like the negative effects that the report would have us believe it has done.

My view of globalisation, and of the ever greater exchange of people, products, services and capital that comes with it, is positive. I believe that a world with open borders and where democracy and human rights are the values that govern relations between people and between countries is worth striving for. Globalisation has created, and continues to create, great opportunities to liberate people from tyranny and extreme poverty, increase prosperity and provide better conditions for democracy. I therefore chose to vote against this report today.

**Bart Staes (Verts/ALE), in writing. (NL)** Since phenomena such as mass dismissals as a result of closures, substantial restructuring within the sectors that are sensitive to globalisation, and smaller-scale collective redundancies as a result of structural changes to the world trade patterns all greatly impact on the local labour market, a European Fund for adjustment to globalisation is a good thing. Unlike other structural funds, the globalisation fund enables the Member States to anticipate quickly and directly acute socio-economic emergency situations, enabling the workers affected, following dismissal, to re-integrate into the labour market. It is also good that the Member States provide 50% of the funding and that support from this fund is only additional to, rather than a replacement for, these efforts.

I am also glad that the Council and the Commission endorse the idea of microloans as an active labour market measure. What is also positive is that older workers are not required to work longer for lower wages, but are instead given financial incentives to remain within the labour market.

That, finally, the fund is constructed in such a way that the contributions cannot be intercepted by 'other players', but are of direct benefit to the workers can only serve as an example to other structural funds.

**Bernadette Vergnaud (PSE), in writing. – (FR)** Globalisation is giving rise to negative consequences for the most vulnerable and least qualified workers in certain sectors. Relocations are producing a climate of harmful social uncertainty for social progress. Businesses are benefiting from a new kind of freedom that flouts borders, leaving hordes of often poorly trained employees jobless, people who will have the greatest difficulty in finding work again. Eleven thousand jobs have been relocated over the last 12 months in France. The fear of relocations is spreading from region to region, at a rate of almost 1 000 job cuts per month, a figure that is more than enough to fuel social unrest.

I voted in favour of Mrs Bachelot-Narquin's report because it provides an initial response to the legitimate worries of European workers. The creation of a European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGM) will provide an annual sum of EUR 500 million in aid to workers who have fallen victim to international restructuring, with the aim of getting them back to work. The assistance provided by the EGM should thus provide solidarity and support to workers who have been made redundant because of changes in the structure of world trade, even though this fund will probably prove to be insufficient.

#### Groote report (A6-0301/2006)

**Richard Seeber (PPE-DE). – (DE)** Mr President, although the approach chosen in this piece of legislation for pursuing an emissions-based policy on air quality is the right one, I do believe a more ambitious line could have been taken as regards limit values on nitrogen oxides in particular, for these pollutants cause major problems, particularly in narrow mountain valleys.

I nevertheless welcome the proposal, and have indeed voted to adopt it, in view of the number-based approach taken to particulates in particular. What the Commission now has to do is to implement this properly in practice. I am also glad to see the information on repairs, which should be circulated to all independent workshops.

**Carlo Fatuzzo (PPE-DE). – (IT)** Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for having given me the floor for the third time on this report by Mr Groote on protecting European citizens from harmful vehicle emissions.

I voted for this document in the hope that in the near future there will also be a directive against government pollution because, unfortunately, even governments sometimes produce pollution that damages people's health and their environment.

I am referring in particular, but not solely, to laws that pollute the air and make it hard, if not impossible for the elderly and pensioners to breathe, since they cannot live on inadequate pensions.

**Jan Andersson, Anna Hedh, Ewa Hedkvist Petersen, Inger Segelström and Åsa Westlund (PSE), in writing. (SV)** We should like to have seen a tighter timetable for the introduction of Euro 5 and lower limits for nitrogen dioxide emissions in Euro 6.

We did, however, vote in favour of the compromise with the Council of Ministers because we believe that it is sound and that a longer process would not lead to better regulations but merely to postponement of the timetable for introduction.

**Françoise Grossetête (PPE-DE), in writing. – (FR)** Transport is responsible for a large amount of environmental pollution and has a major impact on climate change. The new, so-called Euro 5 standard will specifically focus on particles and on nitrogen oxide (NOx), which is emitted by vehicles fitted with diesel engines.

This extra tightening of the limits on vehicle emissions for particles and nitrogen oxide is a significant step forward in terms of public health.

The adoption of this report will enhance the European Union's trade potential with regard to the design and manufacturing of clean vehicles.

The forthcoming Euro 6 standard will include restricted limits on emissions, in particular for nitrogen oxide, and, at the same time, will stimulate technological research for the automotive industry.

The adopted text also proposes a timetable for the application of these two standards that is demanding, but achievable, for the automotive sector.

I do, however, believe that we need to remain alert to the renewal of the car population and thus implement the most recent Euro standards in the hope of achieving significant results on air quality.

**David Martin (PSE), in writing.** I supported this compromise package which will ensure the motor industry is forced to produce greener and cleaner cars which will help to reduce pollution. This package of amendments will mean that cars produced will have to stick to set emission limits in the long run. It will encourage the motor vehicle industry to invest in the technology to make cars greener and to help to protect our environment.

**Luís Queiró (PPE-DE), in writing. (PT)** The proposal on which we voted today provides for a review of the current emissions limits of motor vehicles and the inclusion of vehicles that run on biofuels.

New technologies and scientific discoveries have enabled us to aspire to a high level of environmental protection and to invest in these new areas of the car market.

In this day and age we cannot overlook the environmental challenges facing us, nor can we ignore the fact that there is a new market developing in the area of clean fuels. Consequently, the provision of information to the consumer on less polluting vehicles, on car repairs and on the new items that manufacturers are placing on the market are important measures for protecting and investing in the society of the future.

Once again, the functioning of the internal market, the promotion of environmentally sustainable development and the improvement in the citizens' living conditions are coming under threat.

I therefore voted in favour of the Groote report.

#### Higgins report (A6-0432/2006)

**Marian Harkin (ALDE).** – Mr President, I just want to explain why I opposed Amendment 1 to the Higgins report, in other words the changing of the legal basis from Article 308 of the Treaty to Article 159.

I can understand why many Members of Parliament would support this, as it will extend the power of Parliament because the fund has economic and social objectives. Parliament, of course, is within its rights. However, I am concerned that there may be unintended consequences because I believe that the Council is unlikely to agree and that this will mean a delay. That delay, if it happens, would have the effect of delaying funding to projects that are already under way.



I think this would have very serious consequences because it is a particularly sensitive time politically in Northern Ireland at the moment. We are about to take the final step and I really do not think we need any negative signals coming from the EU. Also, to some extent, it is a hollow victory for Parliament as this will be the last time that Parliament will be asked to approve funding for the programme because it finishes in 2010.

Also, I voted in error on Amendment 169 to the Hieronymi report. I simply pressed the wrong button. I should have pressed 'plus'.

**President.** Your desire to express another view at this point will be mentioned in the Minutes.

**Hélène Goudin and Nils Lundgren (IND/DEM), in writing. (SV)** Even though the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom are two of the richest countries in the world, there are good reasons to support the International Fund for Ireland. Those Member States that wish to contribute to this fund can do so through decisions taken by their national parliaments. Not only is such a process more democratic, but it also means that the Member States' financial resources need not be unnecessarily diverted via the EU budget. We have therefore voted against the report in question.

Fruteau report (A6-0422/2006)

**Jean-Claude Martinez (NI), – (FR)** Mr President, the banana is a subject that has given rise to a genuine soap opera since the 1990s. In Europe, we consume bananas originating from three regions: up to around 850 000 tonnes of European bananas originating from the French West Indies, the Canaries and the Azores; bananas from the ACP countries and, finally, 'dollar' bananas, grown in Latin America, for the benefit of Chiquita and Dole.

Ten years ago, customs duties on the 2.5 million tonnes of US bananas fetched around EUR 850 per tonne; today, they fetch EUR 176. In other words, Europe is giving the US multinationals a gift of EUR 2 billion. Moreover, these bananas are produced in Ecuador by 10-year-old children who are paid USD 2 a day, who inhale pesticides, who have asthma, who have problems with their balance and who suffer from cerebellar ataxia. Elsewhere, working conditions are similar for those who work in the greenhouses used to grow roses.

Under these circumstances, an 18-kilo box of bananas can be sold for USD 3 in Germany. That is called slavery. However, it is true that our Parliament also has recourse to a form of slavery when it employs part-session staff members. My God, one more slave will not make any difference!

**Jan Andersson, Anna Hedh, Ewa Hedkvist Petersen, Inger Segelström and Åsa Westlund (PSE), in writing. (SV)** We voted against Amendment 10. We Swedish Social Democrats in the European Parliament interpret the amendment in question as a means of allowing those Member States that so wish to retain a proportion of the production support for bananas. In the light of the fact that we consistently work towards a de-coupling of agricultural aid, we find this unacceptable. Production support makes it impossible for banana producers from non-EU countries to compete on fair terms.

We are also critical of the proposal overall, as it will lead to higher expenditure. A reform of the organisation of the banana market should, in our view, lead to budget savings.

**Emanuel Jardim Fernandes (PSE), in writing. (PT)** I wholeheartedly support the Commission's proposal, as amended by this report, the objectives of which, bolstered by the amendments introduced, are as follows:

- to maintain Community banana production, the main agricultural activity in some producing regions, that is to say, the outermost regions, and in regions in which it plays a key socio-economic role;
- to safeguard the incomes of banana producers and to prevent the economic situation of the banana sector from deteriorating;
- to give banana-producing Member States control over the granting of aid, so that this can be done as effectively as possible, taking account of the specific priorities of these regions.

I therefore voted in favour of this report.

However, I object to the idea of continuing to make it compulsory for producers to join a recognised producers' organisation in order to receive aid – in line with the wishes of the European banana producers

(members of the European Association of Banana Producers), the authorities of the outermost regions and the banana-producing Member States – as I consider it contradictory and counter to the last objective. I have therefore tabled an amendment with a view to leaving the decision to the Member States as to whether this should be a compulsory requirement, as the Commission proposed.

**Hélène Goudin and Nils Lundgren (IND/DEM), in writing.** (SV) We have voted against this report because it is completely skewed towards the special interests of the EU's banana growers.

We are firmly opposed to Amendment 10 in the report, which proposes special treatment for the support for cotton, olive oil, raw tobacco, hops and bananas.

If individual Member States wish, for reasons of regional policy, to support banana growing on their territory then that is up to them, provided, of course, that they take account of international trade agreements and EU rules. In such a case, however, it would then also be up to the individual Member States to fund this aid, without the involvement of the European Union.

**Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), in writing.** (PT) We are opposed to decoupling production aid, which is the thrust of the Commission's proposal on the reform of the banana sector. The Commission is seeking to end compensation for producers and to promote the liberalisation of the sector within the framework of the World Trade Organisation.

Although the current arrangements are inadequate, we would prefer to keep them or to bring in a reform that actually addressed the problems faced by banana producers, concentrating on the outermost regions and the least favoured regions of the EU.

We welcome the adoption of the amendments we tabled aimed, firstly, at keeping the system of annual advances for the entire period and secondly, at providing for the submission of an impact assessment report on the effect of the regulation on producers' income.

We are very disappointed by the rejection of the amendments that we tabled, which proposed firstly, a one-year transitional period for the regulation to enter into force and secondly that reference period for the calculation of aid date further back, from 2005 to 2004.

We believe that the report improves on some substantial aspects of the Commission's proposal in proposing the partial decoupling of aid and the retention of aid for producers' organisations.

Lastly, we object to the proposal to implement the system of decoupling aid to all other 'non-reformed' sectors.

#### Motions for a resolution: B6-0630/2006

**Michael Cashman (PSE), in writing.** The British Socialist Delegation (EPLP) welcomes the adoption of the resolution on the Commission's Legislative and work programme 2007. It is a comprehensive and ambitious work programme. Whilst there are certain omissions which are regrettable, on the whole we support the Commission's programme. On the particular issue of security of citizens, justice and migration, the EPLP supports the general position of the EP as well as the other institutions in the development of policy in this important field. That said, on the issue of maximising the effectiveness of the decision-making process in this field, we underline that, on this issue, it is solely for Member States in the Council to decide.

**Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), in writing.** (PT) We voted against this resolution on the Commission Legislative and Work Programme for 2007 because it proposes more of the same neoliberal policies, with the disastrous consequences with which we are familiar, such as the growth in poverty and social inequality. What is really needed, on the other hand, is a clean break from such policies and root and branch change, as proposed in many points contained in our group's resolution.

Among the proposals that we tabled and that were unfortunately rejected, we wish to highlight the following: we call for the immediate suspension of the current process of liberalisation of public services and for a firm undertaking to achieve a reduction in working time, without cutting salaries, with a view to creating new jobs.

We also regret that the Commission's Work and Legislative Programme overlooks the situation in the Middle East, and we find it unacceptable that financial cooperation has not been set up between the EU and the Palestinian Authority.

We also criticise the fact that the Commission has not put forward initiatives aimed at improving social policy and that it is pursuing liberalisations in a number of sectors, including the services sector and the energy market.

**Timothy Kirkhope (PPE-DE), in writing.** I and my British Conservative colleagues support the President of the Commission's call for a renewed focus in achieving effective economic reform through the revised Lisbon Agenda which we believe must focus on stimulating growth and competitiveness in Europe leading to more employment.

The completion of the internal market is also something we can endorse and the effective implementation of the Services Directive will be an important element in this. Liberalisation and the pursuit of free-trade policies will lead to a more competitive and dynamic economy in Europe. We also support the emphasis placed by this Commission on deregulation and the rigorous pursuit of impact assessments, something British Conservatives have long argued for. We also welcome any sensible measures that promote the environment and the fight against global poverty. We can agree with the emphasis placed on the fight against fraud and mismanagement.

However, we cannot support the calls in this resolution for the implementation of the EU Constitution, the calls for a Common EU Immigration, Visa and Asylum Policy or the assertion that the EU has insufficient funds to deal with future challenges.

**Luís Queiró (PPE-DE), in writing. (PT)** The Commission's proposed legislative programme for 2007 shows in stark relief how the lack of political leadership in many Member States is complicating matters for the EU. Whilst it is true that the Commission is the driving force of the Community institutions, it is also true that, when the Member States are enmeshed in internal problems, this takes up a great deal of energy.

Nevertheless, it should be recognised that, by placing the emphasis on economic issues – more specifically, the issue of technology and, equally importantly, that of energy – and by not attaching excessive importance to institutional issues, this Commission shows itself to have understood what its priorities should be. The constant commitment to better regulation moreover reveals an understanding of the need to simplify the legislative environment. We hope that 2007 will be a year in which Europe's political web is untangled, so that the notion does not become established that we have neither a mobilising project for Europe nor the political impetus to implement such a project.

**José Ribeiro e Castro (PPE-DE), in writing. (PT)** In view of its business and economic importance and given the clear historic and cultural affinities with the countries that make up the EU, Russia is worthy of our particular concern.

The fall of the Soviet dictatorship aroused genuine hope that it may follow the path of democracy and freedom. Unfortunately, the recent tragic deaths of Anna Politkovskaya and Alexander Litvinenko are clear signs that Russia is still a long way from acceptable standards when it comes to the most basic fundamental freedoms.

In addition to armed interventions in its geopolitical sphere of influence, I must also criticise the trade and energy mechanisms employed by Russia as a means of putting pressure on its neighbours, which are tantamount to discretionary sanctions.

I feel that the EU must continue to establish close cooperation with Russia, both on the international stage and at the common neighbourhood level, but this partnership must be subject to constant vigilance and criticism on our part.

For its own balance and security, the EU clearly needs a prosperous, free and democratic Russia. I hope the Russian people are able to chart a safe course in this direction.

Motions for a resolution: B6-0631/2006

**Bernd Posselt (PPE-DE).** – (DE) Mr President, since our debate, which, regrettably, took place in the context of a mini-plenary, the situation in Russia has continued to get dramatically worse. All I can do

is appeal to President Putin to take good care of the prisoners – the so-called Yukos managers and other political detainees – and to take care that they are not killed in mysterious ways as others have been. The standards of the rule of law apply in Russia, on paper at any rate, and it is a matter of urgency that they should be maintained. World public opinion will be watching President Putin vigilantly in the expectation that they will be.

I want to thank Mr Horáček for having inserted into this fine resolution the reference to the Yukos managers, which insists on their being at last set at liberty or at least treated in accordance with Russian law and imprisoned nearer to their homes.

I would like to use the opportunity presented by this statement of vote to make a personal statement. As I do not know whether I will again have the honour to speak when you are in the chair, I would like to thank you for exercising the office of Vice-President in such an outstanding way.

**President.** Thank you, Mr Posselt, for your kind words.

**Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), in writing. (PT)** As regards the resolution adopted today by the majority in Parliament, it is worthwhile pointing out that there is deliberately no reference to issues such as NATO's advance on Eastern Europe, and the strategic installation of new military bases surrounding and threatening Russia, adding fresh impetus to the militarisation of international relations and the arms race.

Furthermore, the resolution makes no reference to the moves aimed at destabilising the Caucasus on the part of forces linked to NATO, with Georgia used as a point of support for Chechen rebels.

It also says nothing about the thousands of people of Russian origin who suffer discrimination and who are denied citizenship rights in Baltic States that are EU Member States.

What is more, it swings between the carrot and the stick. In other words, whilst this resolution is characterised by interventionism and political pressure on Russia – and on other countries of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, not least Belarus – the forces of major capital in the EU seek to have full access to Russia's plentiful energy supplies.

**Jörg Leichtfried (PSE), in writing. (DE)** The motion for a resolution gets my vote, since I feel that the jointly drafted text is very balanced and takes account of my two principal concerns, namely the European Union's structural deficiencies in energy policy and the quality of Europe's relations with Russia.

We must not be in denial about our current dependence on foreign nationalised energy providers, any more than we must allow European values to take second place to business interests. Business and political interests must not be confused, nor must our misgivings about violations of human rights and of the freedom of the press be suppressed in the hope of making talks about energy more fruitful. What is now needed is for priority to be given to a single European energy policy, so that the European core values of our Community, among them the upholding of human rights, may not be undermined by economic dependency on others.

**Catherine Stihler (PSE), in writing.** The failure to launch negotiations for a new framework agreement between the EU and Russia is deeply concerning. There are many issues, including the recent murder of a former Russian spy, which require answers. I hope that the next Presidency of the EU will also give priority to relations with Russia.

**Brok report (A6-0436/2006)**

**Hubert Pirker (PPE-DE).** – (DE) Mr President, it will come as no surprise to you that I have voted in favour of this report, and I have done so on the grounds that it takes a very realistic view of the European project and sets clear objectives for its future development.

What matters now is that integration be moved forward, so that real use may be made of every opportunity and that the European Union may remain stable. If that is to happen, then new rules will be needed for labour, for the interplay of the institutions and for financing. Our hope is that this work of regulation will be complete by 2008.

With so many states seeking to join the European Union, new strategies are needed. Full membership cannot be the only goal; alternative perspectives for cooperation with the countries in our neighbourhood

must be developed, and this is something to which the Heads of Government should give some thought, not least with reference to Turkey, particularly considering the possibility of a privileged partnership. The idea of Turkey acceding as a full Member State is unrealistic, since there cannot be 71 unanimous votes at EU level, any more than all the national referendums – or, indeed, the vote in this House – can produce favourable results; that makes it all the more important that negotiations should begin right now, that they should be aimed at further developing the favourable climate and that they should have the probable eventual result of according this important partner of the European Union a privileged partnership.

**Frank Vanhecke (NI).** – *(NL)* Mr President, my distinguished colleague Mr Claeys drew attention during this morning's debate to the way in which the negotiations are being conducted with Turkey, a problematic candidate for Member State status. It has now become clear that the European Union is not equal to Turkey's insolent way of negotiating, which my colleague described, somewhat sarcastically but perfectly accurately, as bazaar-style haggling. The way in which European negotiators let each and every ultimatum of their own lapse and let Turkey get away with it is outrageous and sends completely the wrong message to Turkey, giving it the idea that the European Union is prepared to do anything to get it to join, and this completely goes against what most of the European public want. We may well end up concluding that the European Union is as undemocratic as the state – Turkey – that is seeking to join it.

**Carlo Fatuzzo (PPE-DE).** – *(IT)* Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I voted in favour of enlargement of the European Union, as proposed by Mr Brok, because both personally and as the person in charge of the Pensioners' Party in Italy I believe that the enlargement of Europe should embrace the whole world.

Europe should be enlarged all over the world because Europe keeps the peace among the Member States that are part of it. The more countries that succeed in becoming part of Europe, the more peace we will have, not only in Europe but throughout the world. Therefore, Mr President: 'European Union all over the world!'

**Bruno Gollnisch (NI), in writing.** – *(FR)* No, the adoption of a Constitution and the creation of a centralised European superstate are not, under any circumstances, prerequisites for the enlargement of the European Union. We will therefore obviously vote against Mr Stubb's report, which attempts to bring back through the window a Constitution that two European nations have thrown out the door.

Over and above these so-called 'institutional' aspects, which are rather ideological in nature, we must also ask ourselves whether it is not time we took a break. In a very short time, the European Union has gone from having 15 members to having 27, soon to be 28. Aside from the prepared statements, no one, in this Chamber, is able to say today what the advantages and disadvantages of this unprecedented enlargement are either for the EU or for each of our Member States.

Enlargement for enlargement's sake makes no sense at all, except in the case, to which we object, of the nation States being absorbed by the Brussels Leviathan, and of their finally disintegrating.

There would be none of these problems if we built a real Europe of sovereign nations, cooperating in their chosen areas, for their mutual benefit.

**Hélène Goudin and Nils Lundgren (IND/DEM), in writing.** *(SV)* The June List is, in principle, positively disposed towards EU enlargement. It is, however, absolutely essential that those states that want to become members fulfil the requirements made of them before they accede. Those countries that are currently the subjects of a possible future accession have a long way to go. It would not be in the interests of either the existing Member States or of the candidate countries to fix the date for accession to the EU now. This, then, should be a process allowed to ripen slowly.

The report states, amongst other things, that the Treaty of Nice does not provide an adequate basis for further enlargements. The unspoken sub-text of this is the advocacy of a new Constitution, despite the fact that the populations of France and the Netherlands rejected that idea in referendums.

The rapporteur also talks of the EU's 'integration capacity' and believes that it must be made clear that this must in no way be confused with public perception of the impact of further enlargements. There is a perceptible note of contempt here for fundamental democratic principles. If a majority of Europeans

believe that the EU should not be further enlarged, those elected by the people ought to heed what they are saying. This is a clear example of the contempt for the citizens that is endemic in this Parliament.

We have voted against this report in the light of the fact that it uses prospective enlargements as an argument for a future Constitution.

**Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), in writing. (PT)** The report contains some points regarding EU enlargement to which I am firmly opposed. For example, it emphasises the fabricated 'need' to conclude the so-called 'constitutional process' as a (false) condition for any future enlargement.

There is a further point relating to the negotiations with Turkey, which is worthy of firm rejection and which needs to be highlighted. The report 'deplores' the fact that the Finnish Presidency's efforts to 'find a solution to end the current stalemate to ensure full implementation of the Additional Protocol, on the one hand, and to reduce the isolation of the Turkish Cypriot community living in the north of the island, on the other, were unsuccessful'. In other words the report seeks:

- to gloss over the fact that the Turkish Cypriot community's isolation is solely caused by the illegal Turkish military occupation of 37% of the territory of the Republic of Cyprus;

- to link the implementation of the Additional Protocol with recognition of the reality of the (illegal) military occupation by Turkey and the self-proclaimed 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus'; this is what the Turkish authorities want, and they are supported in this by several countries, including EU Member States.

- to manipulate the Cyprus question, in the context of the contradictions surrounding Turkey's accession, by subordinating UN resolutions on Cyprus.

**Carl Lang (NI), in writing. – (FR)** The current enlargement strategy that consists in gathering together forty-odd Member States into one group will lead the Europe of Brussels to suffer the fate of Jean de la Fontaine's frog which, in its desire to make itself as big as an ox, bursts. This will happen for two reasons.

The first is due to the fact that, having been given no geographical boundary, this Europe, after having let in Turkey, will have no grounds to refuse the entry of other Asian or African countries.

The second reason is linked to the ideological nature of the Euro-Brussels project, which is aimed at crushing the identity and sovereignty of the European nations in order to build on their ruins a centralised superstate, the administration of which will be even more burdensome than the national administrations.

Rather than dissolving our nations into this supranational whole, which is destined, like the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia before it, to disappear, let us build a great Europe of free, sovereign nations, united by the humanist and Christian values that made our civilisation great.

**Luís Queiró (PPE-DE), in writing. (PT)** If we want to pay suitable heed to the needs arising from the extraordinary 2005 enlargement process and from any future rounds of enlargement, the word 'accommodate' needs to be part of the Community's vocabulary.

A year and a half on, we must acknowledge that our societies, our economy, our institutions and our mentalities have not completely accommodated the enlargement. This is understandable given that our flexibility is not unlimited. The importance of 1 May 2005 is too great for its initial impact to have dissipated in just 18 months. That being said, we must not confuse difficulties with impossibilities, and certainly not inevitabilities. We can do more and better so that this process settles down and accommodates. Equally, we must prepare for the next phase, as part of the approach whereby enlarging the EU is beneficial for both new arrivals and present incumbents. This is how it should be interpreted. To my mind, this is one of the most important issues.

One of the results of this is recognition of the need to match the institutional context to the reality in the EU, although it cannot be concluded that this is the main difficulty facing us in the years ahead. Accommodation is social, political and economic, rather than primarily institutional.

**Charles Tannock (PPE-DE), in writing.** British Conservatives have always been and remain strong supporters of EU enlargement as it provides a larger single market and a looser and more flexible Europe of nation states. Nevertheless, we do not accept that for this process to progress further that it needs a

fully-fledged EC Constitution with the loss of more powers from Member States to the EU. Therefore, we have abstained on this report.

**Geoffrey Van Orden (PPE-DE), in writing.** I cling to the belief that enlargement is one of the few positive aspects of the EU, provided that the movement of people can be controlled - widening of the EU means less chance of creating a tightly integrated European superstate; it also helps extend the area of stability and prosperity across Europe. In fact, as we have seen, the process of enlargement and the prospects of future enlargement are a major catalyst for change. The reaction to this by the federalists is to try and tighten their grip on the EU as a political project by trying to resuscitate the Constitution and to slow down future enlargement. This is reflected in the Brok report. The report also takes a very one-sided and unhelpful view of the Cyprus problem. I abstained in order to signal, on the one hand, my support for enlargement, and on the other, my firm and consistent opposition to the federalist agenda, to the Constitution, and to the bias against Northern Cyprus.

Stubb report (A6-0393/2006)

**Hubert Pirker (PPE-DE).** – (DE) Mr President, I am glad to see that this House will, with immediate effect, be putting integration capacity at the heart of the enlargement debate, for the success of the enlargement process, and of a more profound process of European integration, depend on it.

Integration must be accomplished before we can even think about a new enlargement; what that means is that the institutions' functioning must be improved to a sufficient degree to enable them to take decisions in an efficient and democratic manner, and the existing financial arrangements must be changed. Enlargement so far has been a partial success, and, in the course of moving forward the integration process, we will use every opportunity to make the European Union more stable.

Since this will be my last speech today, I would like to use this opportunity to extend very warm thanks to the President, for whom I have particularly high regard, for the way in which he has chaired this sitting, backed up by his own unique brand of charm. I wish him all the best for a successful future in this House.

**Richard Corbett (PSE), in writing.** The PES Group supported this report and congratulates the rapporteur on achieving a wide consensus.

However, the UK Labour MEPs and others abstained on this report and several of its paragraphs on the grounds that, while we support most of the measures proposed, they are not all preconditions for enlargement. Had the report not insisted on every one of these reforms being a precondition that has to enter into force before any further enlargement, it would no doubt have gained a larger majority.

**Duarte Freitas (PPE-DE), in writing.** (PT) This proposal, submitted for a second reading, differs from the legislation in force in three key areas.

One purpose of the proposal is that data be submitted annually rather than monthly. According to recent studies, monthly data forwarded up to six months after the event are of limited use in day-to-day market management, whereas the compilation of annual data can be useful for medium- to long-term market studies and can help reduce the workload for the national authorities in forwarding data.

According to the proposal, data submissions are to be required by the flag (or nationality) of the vessels responsible for the landings. This requirement, as opposed to the current submissions by broad groups of EU, EFTA and other vessels will enable the data to be analysed in greater detail and yet will not significantly increase the workload of the national authorities which already collect the data to this level of detail.

Lastly, the proposal for a regulation provides for a more flexible approach, enabling sampling techniques to be used to estimate total landings. National authorities may, to an appropriate extent, use sampling methods for data collection purposes, providing that they justify their use and analyse the quality of the resulting data in a methodological report ...

*(Explanation of vote abbreviated in accordance with Rule 163(1) of the Rules of Procedure)*

**Bruno Gollnisch (NI), in writing.** – (FR) Mr Brok's report on enlargement strategy is very much about 'integration capacity', considered solely from the angle of satisfying Brussels' interests and appetite for power.

According to this report, this 'capacity' should not be confused, I quote, with 'public perception of the impact of further enlargements'. You are wrong. Firstly, because it is the people of the Member States who are most affected by the economic and social consequences of enlargement and who therefore deserve to be heard. Secondly, because it is they who will ultimately decide on these accessions. In France, for example, a referendum will be compulsory for any accession taking place after that of Croatia. This is the 'gift' that a failing Mr Chirac has given us in a vain attempt to prevent us from rejecting the European Constitution.

I also regret that the question has never been asked about Europe's geographical boundaries and about the definition of its common identity. That would enable us clearly to say that Turkey is a great country, but that it is essentially, geographically, culturally, historically and demographically, an Asian country. It would also enable us to put a stop to the humiliating farce for the country that these accession negotiations have become.

**Hélène Goudin and Nils Lundgren (IND/DEM), in writing.** (SV) The June List does not share the rapporteur's view that a more federal EU must be created in order for it to be possible for the enlargement process to continue.

We believe, on the contrary, that it is of the greatest importance that political decisions that are to apply to the whole of the EU should be soundly based in the Council of Ministers. We therefore oppose any increase in the number of areas within which decisions may be taken on a qualified majority basis.

We also think it is of the greatest importance that every Member State be represented in the Commission in order for the latter's work to be credible in all Member States.

We are further unable to see how the creation of the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs would be of benefit to the enlargement process.

June List MEPs have therefore voted against this report in its entirety.

**Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL), in writing.** (PT) As has become the norm, the majority in Parliament has adopted a report based on the idea that EU enlargement should be pursued on the condition that federalism is guaranteed and even deepened, that is to say, on the condition that the domination of the major powers in the EU's decision-making process can be guaranteed, thus pandering to the interests of their large economic and financial groups.

The report begins by positing the populist premise that the institutions need to be reformed in order to guarantee the 'effectiveness' and 'functioning' of the EU institutions. After setting out a long list of reforms, it predictably reaches its ultimate destination, namely the promotion of the inappropriately named 'European Constitution'.

By emphasising the content of the already-rejected proposed Treaty, this report shows the true intentions of the resumption of the so-called 'constitutional process'.

Consequently, we have the usual panoply of measures aimed at centralising power in supranational bodies dominated by the major powers: a new weighting of votes and the end of the rotation of Council presidencies, the extension of the qualified 'majority', the 'Minister for Foreign Affairs', the end of one Commissioner per country on the Commission and the end of unanimity in amending the Treaties.

This is unacceptable.

**Timothy Kirkhope (PPE-DE), in writing.** I and my British Conservative colleagues have always been and remain strong supporters of the enlargement of the European Union. However, we fundamentally disagree with the premise of this report which, in effect, states that further enlargement can only proceed successfully if the European Constitution comes into force.

**Athanasios Pafilis (GUE/NGL), in writing.** – (EL) The report on the institutional aspects of the European Union's capacity to integrate new Member States confirms the constant determination of the political spokesmen of European capital in the European Parliament to resuscitate the reactionary European Constitution, which has been condemned by the people of Europe.

Thanks to their constant desire to integrate new countries into the EU, they are projecting the most reactionary aspects of the European Constitution (such as the full abolition of unanimity, the strengthening of the role of the President of the Commission, the introduction of the position of Minister of Foreign



Affairs of the EU, the simplification of amendments to the Constitution), as allegedly necessary reforms for the effective functioning of the Union, meaning the unimpeded facility for monopoly capital to promote capitalist restructurings and its anti-grassroots, imperialist policy at the expense of the peoples of Europe and the whole world.

With provocative disdain for the declared will of the peoples to reject the European Constitution, they are calling for the campaign to brainwash the people to be intensified, so that they are ultimately forced to accept it; they even set as a target its promotion by the end of 2008.

The pressure, coercion and huge conscience-guiding operation reflect the deep concern of the political forces of the 'one-way street' in Europe at the increasing questioning of the reactionary construct itself by the peoples. That is why we voted against the report.

**Luís Queiró (PPE-DE), in writing. (PT)** One cannot receive guests without a home in which to receive them. If this is what is meant by 'absorption capacity', I am in complete agreement, as I have said on many occasions. Each time it enlarges, the Union must be capable of absorbing those who enter and must accommodate the changes arising from it. This is why I voted in favour of the report. Worse than dashing the expectations of those who are seeking to join the Community would be to dash the expectations of the accession countries and of those already in the Community. Let us look at our capacity to accept new Member States before each new round of enlargement. Do not, however, expect us to help subvert this concept and turn it into something it is not: a euphemism for blocking entry.

Lastly, in this regard I would underline what I have said before: the EU's capacity to enlarge will of course have its limits, but it would be good if the Union's capacity to produce the same results were not limited, beginning with our neighbours in the Mediterranean region. Although we are not, of course, capable of absorbing them, let us be up to the task of 'integrating' them into our area, in a new, broader definition of the term.

**Catherine Stihler (PSE), in writing.** Although there is much to support in this report, it focuses not on what is needed for enlargement but what the EU is missing due to the non-ratification of the Constitution Treaty. Although I am not against the Constitutional Treaty, I do not believe that it should be a prerequisite for future enlargements. I will therefore abstain.

## **11. Corrections to votes and voting intentions: see Minutes**

*(The sitting was suspended at 2.05 p.m. and resumed at 3.00 p.m.)*

**IN THE CHAIR: MR ANTONIOS TRAKATELLIS**

*Vice-President*

## **12. Approval of Minutes of previous sitting: see Minutes**

## **13. Data protection (debate)**

**President.** – The next item is the Council and Commission statements on data protection.

**Paula Lehtomäki, President-in-Office of the Council. (FI)** Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, matters relating to data protection have had a high profile during the Finnish presidential term. On the one hand, the Presidency has encountered challenges relating to the subject and previously known to us, such as taking forward the Framework Decision on data protection under the third pillar. On the other hand, we have faced situations where the Presidency has had to respond quickly and as the circumstances have demanded. Examples of this are the negotiation of the new agreement on passenger name record (PNR) data with the United States of America, and the matter of bank transfer data by SWIFT.

The Finnish Presidency is aware that the European Parliament has said in several contexts that it considers the Framework Decision on data protection under the third pillar and its speedy adoption to be very important. The proposal for the Framework Decision has been one of the priorities of our Presidency in the area of justice and home affairs. It was our ambitious goal to reach agreement on the Framework Decision during Finland's term.

We have taken much time and trouble this autumn to take this proposal for a Framework Decision forward. During our term the first reading was brought to a conclusion, and it went through a second and third reading. In addition, on several occasions the Article 36 Committee and the Permanent Representatives Committee were asked to look at individual questions relating to the matter.

Despite these efforts, the timetable proved too tight. Obviously, consensus will not be reached now during the Finnish Presidency, and the debate on the Framework Decision will be taken up in the German term.

The proposal for a Framework Decision is a broad and multilateral package, whose impact on police cooperation, as well as cooperation on crime and the protection of data of those registered, will call for careful deliberation. The difficulty with it is that certain crucial questions remain unanswered, though much progress has been made. For example, questions relating to the scope of the Framework Decision have not yet been resolved. The main question that remains unanswered is whether the principles of data protection in the Framework Decision would also apply to the processing of data within the Member States, or whether its scope should be limited to cross-border information, which is what some Member States are in favour of.

It was also the task of the Presidency this autumn to negotiate a new agreement on the surrender of PNR data to the US authorities. The agreement that emerged from the talks corresponds very much to the content of the 2004 agreement. The airlines can still operate, and they can still hand over PNR data to the United States. The United States, for its part, is committed to guaranteeing an adequate level of data privacy in the future.

The agreement signed in mid-October is temporary and valid until the end of July 2007. The intention is to have by then a new, more permanent arrangement for handing over PNR data. We will aim to start talks on this, which are not expected to be easy, as soon as possible. A new negotiating mandate is being drawn up at the moment.

The significance of the new PNR agreement to be negotiated in 2007 is underlined in the light of the information that has recently been made public with regard to the Automatic Targeting System (ATS) employed by the US authorities. This system collates information from various different sources, including PNR data on air passengers arriving in the United States. Its purpose is to make it easier to prepare risk assessments on passengers.

The existence of the ATS has been known to the Council and the Commission since the joint review of the first PNR agreement's application was conducted in September 2005. The US Department of Homeland Security did not make the system known to the public, however, until 2 November this year, when the news was published in a US official organ.

The compatibility of the current and future PNR agreement and the ATS is being examined at present, especially with regard to how long information is to be kept, as well as the handing over of data and its relevance. The Presidency and the Commission have sent the US authorities an official enquiry on the matter. The European Parliament will be advised of the outcome in due course.

**Franco Frattini**, *Vice-President of the Commission*. Mr President, as you know very well, on 19 October the European Union and the United States concluded an agreement for the processing and transfer of passenger name record data by air carriers to the United States Department of Homeland Security.

The Government of the United States confirmed a set of undertakings which guarantee the protection and security of PNR data. Against this background, concern has been expressed recently following information published last month by the Department of Homeland Security on the so-called Automated Targeting System. This is a security-screening system making a risk assessment of international travellers, relying among other things on PNR data. The information published by the Homeland Security Department reveals a significant difference between the way in which PNR data are handled within the Automated Targeting System and a stricter regime for European PNR data according to undertakings given by the Department of Homeland Security.

As the President-in-Office has just said, we have today sent a letter to the United States Government to request formal confirmation that the way EU PNR data are handled in the ATS is the one described in the undertakings. The current EU-US agreement on PNR data will expire in July 2007. At the beginning of 2007 the Commission will recommend the Council to mandate the Presidency, assisted by the

Commission, to negotiate a new PNR agreement with the United States. I am sure that any new agreement will provide for a high level of data protection for all PNR data transferred under the agreement, while protecting the security of citizens.

I will keep the European Parliament informed on the preparation of the draft mandate, which I expect to get before the end of March 2007, otherwise taking the position that travellers must be informed when their PNR data may be transferred to competent authorities of third countries. The Department of Homeland Security undertaking expressly acknowledged this.

We need an international agreement with the support of the public on both sides of the Atlantic and of the democratic representatives of the peoples. I have often said that there is an important balance to be struck between measures to ensure security, on the one hand, and the protection of non-negotiable fundamental rights, on the other.

The Commission, assisting the Presidency in the negotiation of future PNR agreements with third countries, will ensure that security issues are properly addressed through the transfer and appropriate use of PNR data, while protecting personal data as guaranteed by Article 8 of the Charter.

Finally, a high level contact group was set up at the EU-US ministerial troika meeting on 6 November 2006 to discuss information sharing and protection of personal data for law enforcement purposes. There is a clear need on both sides of the Atlantic to work more closely together on these issues.

I would also be in favour of close and continuous contacts between this new contact group and both the European Parliament and the Congress of the United States. We need a broader perspective and a long-term vision to tackle, together with the United States, the terrorist threat, while protecting the fundamental rights of individuals without putting them at risk.

More generally, on a subject just mentioned by the President-in-Office, I also remain firmly committed to encouraging and continuing to encourage the Council to approve as soon as possible the proposal I made 15 months ago on data protection under the third pillar. I count on the support of the incoming German Presidency on that.

We face a common problem and threat. Terrorism will continue to exist in the coming months and years. Only a very solid strategy and balanced cooperation with our main international, transatlantic partner will make it possible to reduce if not eliminate this modern form of totalitarianism against democracy.

**Charlotte Cederschiöld, on behalf of the PPE-DE Group.** – (SV) Mr President, we in the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats support Mrs in 't Veld's recommendation relating to the use of passenger data. We also prefer the Canadian agreement to the US one. We hope, moreover, for improved transatlantic cooperation and have faith in Commissioner Frattini's commitment in this regard. We are not, however, participating in this debate in order to comment on newspaper articles, but instead in order to force the pace on the Commission's decision on data protection rules, including when such rules have knock-on effects for the justice ministers in the third pillar, rather than just when we place restrictions on company rights under the first pillar, as at present.

Fundamental rights must provide consumer protection, irrespective of the structure of the treaty. The European Union's Charter of Fundamental Rights covers data protection, as does the Council of Europe's Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which also provides for a right to protection of one's private life. It is also a principle supported by all three of the EU institutions and all the Member States. All of the Member States have legislation on data protection and a data protection authority. We need all of this at EU level too. Parliament and the Council have been in agreement on this since as far back as September, but nothing has yet happened.

The EU has made progress in its fight against crime and terrorism. What is needed next is data protection at the level of the case law of the Council of Europe or, best of all, at the level of the Member State with the best data protection. Parliament always plays its part in the development of the field of rights. The Visa Information System, the Schengen Information System and Europol are no exceptions.

Any institution standing in the way of data protection is in danger, in practical terms, of being an obstacle to effectiveness in the fight against crime. It is not 'either ... or', but 'both ... and' that applies in this case.

If the Council backs proportionality and the necessity criteria, why not say so? Is the Council concerned that the European Court of Justice may defend fundamental rights? Which legislation would then be in trouble? When will we get the proposal on data protection in the field of crime-fighting? The Council has a responsibility to answer the people.

**Martine Roure**, *on behalf of the PSE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, Mr Frattini, Mrs Lehtomäki, the automated targeting system – referred to as the ATS – by the US authorities constitutes a huge database on European citizens who enter the United States. It highlights once again the different approach that Europe is seeking to adopt on this issue and the growing need for greater protection of Europeans' privacy and personal data.

We believe that the fight against terrorism cannot be effective if we treat everyone like a potential criminal. This system also carries real risks of discrimination. Furthermore, we would like to know how this system operates with the processing of PNR data. Is it going to influence the negotiations on the agreement due in 2007? The data from the ATS automated targeting system are supposed to be retained for 40 years. Do the Americans want the same for the PNR data? Is the PNR agreement finally going to enable Europeans to uphold their rights to protection of their private lives before a US court of law, which is not currently the case? It is therefore crucial for us to embark on a process of parliamentary dialogue with our colleagues from the US Congress in order jointly to define a common approach to the safeguarding of our citizens' right to the security and protection of their personal data.

I should like to remind you that, exactly one year ago today, we were debating data retention in this very Chamber and, as part of that debate, I already mentioned the urgent need for the framework decision on data protection to be adopted under the third pillar. We voted in favour of an amendment to the legislative resolution that provided for data access to be regulated by that framework decision. I must acknowledge the genuine efforts made by the Finnish Presidency. A great deal has been done to step up the debates within the Council.

However, we are extremely worried about the turn being taken by the debates between the Member States. We fear the Council stripping this framework decision of its content. We cannot accept an agreement on the basis of the lowest common denominator. The framework decision must guarantee a higher level of data protection by adopting the founding principles of the Community directive in this field and by obviously taking account of the specific nature of police work. Nevertheless, we cannot under any circumstances accept a level of data protection that is lower than the one guaranteed by Directive 95/46/EC and by Convention No 108 of the Council of Europe, which is legally binding on the Member States. The speed necessary for this undertaking must not endanger the quality of the framework decision.

We are anxious to have a frank debate, which will enable us to reach an agreement without doing away with the problematic articles. We stress, in particular, the need to use this instrument in order to deal with the transfer of data to third countries and to private parties. We do, of course, regret not having been informed of the debates held at the Council. We deplore the fact that the opinion unanimously adopted by this Parliament should not obviously have been taken into account as part of the negotiations at the Council.

However, the European Parliament has demonstrated its maturity and its sense of responsibility. Furthermore, we cannot implement the visa information system without having guarantees that a framework decision on data protection will be adopted.

I should like to make it clear that this is not blackmail. We simply wish to reaffirm the determination of a democratically-elected Parliament.

**Sophia in 't Veld**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – Mr President, Mrs Lehtomäki gave me an amazing piece of information when she said that she has been aware of the automated targeted system since 2005. I am sure that our colleagues in the United States Congress will be very interested, because they learned about it about a month ago and they were outraged that this system has been in place in secret for four years, against the explicit wishes of the United States Congress. I would like you to explain that, Mrs Lehtomäki.

Secondly, if you have known since 2005, how come the European citizens did not know about it? Frankly, this is not only a clear violation of the PNR Agreement, but a clear violation of the rights of EU citizens. If I look at the scope of this ATS, we are all talking about the fight against terrorism as a

justification for collecting these data. Well, look at the text of the proposal of the ATS. This is for employers who want to screen job applicants; it is for companies who want to do an audit; it is for authorities that give out licences who want to screen applicants. It goes way beyond the fight against terrorism and I find it unacceptable.

You rightly inquired of the United States authorities how this ATS relates to the PNR Agreement. But I think you also owe it to the European public to see that this inquiry is published. The European Parliament should get a copy of the letter, and you should make a statement to the press and the European public explaining what is going on with their data.

I would like to know, furthermore, if it is correct that PNR data have been fed into the ATS since 2002, i.e., two years before the PNR Agreement. I would also like to know whether, at the two informal meetings held on 6 November and 13 December, i.e. today, this has been discussed; whether you got an answer from the United States authority; I would like to know if data protection was on the agenda and if so, on what basis. I would also like to get an answer from both the Commission and the Council as to whether, in the future, the European Parliament and the United States Congress will be part of the high-level contact group.

I would also like to know if the Council and Commission are aware of similar databases or programmes in other countries. Suppose, for example, that not our American friends but the Russians were to start such a programme, what would we do? I also think that these cases demonstrate clearly the need not only for a European arrangement for data protection, but a global standard that would protect not just the passenger data but also our bank data, our telecommunications data and heaven knows what other data.

Finally, on PNR specifically, could the Commission and the Council confirm that the push system will be tested, as agreed, before the end of this month? Could they also tell me – because I have been travelling to the United States recently and as a passenger have not been informed at all about the PNR programme or about my rights – whether you can confirm that information will be provided to passengers?

A final question, can the Council confirm that the European Parliament will be formally consulted on the mandate for the future PNR agreement?

**Kathalijne Maria Buitenweg**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group.* – (NL) Mr President, I concur with Mrs in 't Veld's views. It is indeed a bit much that you have admitted to having in fact known about this system for over a year. I should like to know whether this was actually discussed in the Council and whether the Commission had been briefed about this. I should also like to know how this has affected the PNR debate. I understand that a number of PNR data are being used for the new system. With regard to the PNR system, a deadline for data storage has been agreed with great difficulty. These data are now being used in a new system where they will subsequently be stored for 40 years. I wonder whether this agreed deadline applies to them.

There are already strange developments taking place, also involving these PNR data. We have all agreed on this maximum storage and on the strictly defined purposes for which they may be used. There is also a Side Letter, a letter by the Americans in which they state, 'oh, what the hell, if we can use it for other things after all, we will do so for other risks too; if we want to use more than those 34 information fields, then we will'. The Council's only response was: OK, but surely we want human rights to be respected and you have not said anything about the status of this letter either. Do you really think that this letter is there for no reason, or is this now the letter indicating the way in which the Americans will be using these data after all? I should like to hear your thoughts about the status of this letter.

Also, if you, this time round as well, request only what the Commission calls a formal confirmation to say that things have been formally confirmed; the Bush Administration will then no doubt respond by saying that they abide by all the rules. Will you now also examine whether it is technically really feasible for these PNR data to be actually stored for this limited period of time? Will you check whether this is possible? As I see it, though, the system makes no provision for this whatever.

I should, in fact, like to study the PNR mandate, for this will need to be written in the next few months and I hope that it will be discussed here in this House. Finally, I have heard that bilateral talks are also being held between the United States and a number of Member States about a new PNR agreement. If this is the case, then we are, of course, sabotaging our own efforts completely, for the United States will then be striking a deal with the country that is the most accommodating, upon which the rest of us will

have no choice but to go along. Has this been discussed in the Council and can you confirm that no bilateral agreement will be concluded between the United States and an EU Member State, whichever state this may be?

**Paula Lehtomäki**, *President-in-Office of the Council*. (FI) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, this debate has first and foremost dealt with work on the EU Framework Decision, and, as I said in my opening speech, this work will continue during the German Presidency. We have worked hard to establish the Framework Decision, but unfortunately we will not now have it ready this autumn.

Regarding exchanges of information between the Union and the United States of America and the debate now being conducted on this issue, I must first say that the Member States, as independent countries, will obviously make agreements with other countries on matters within their own sovereign competence, as they are free to do, and the Council does not have the power to interfere in all bilateral relations between Member States, and will not adopt a position on them.

As regards in particular the Union's PNR agreement and the closely connected US ATS scheme, as I mentioned in my opening speech, we are now examining how compatible ATS is with the PNR system. We have therefore asked the United States to give an account of this compatibility, and just yesterday, at a meeting of the Senior Level Group between the European Union and the United States of America, we, as the Presidency, voiced a special concern that the ATS might not comply with the provisions of the PNR agreement and the undertakings. We have thus focused attention on the issue in a number of ways, and we are awaiting an answer to this enquiry from the United States. As I said, when the answer comes and the talks are proceeding, the European Parliament will be informed of developments, as Commissioner Frattini also mentioned in his speech.

**Kathalijne Maria Buitenweg (Verts/ALE)**. – Mr President, I am especially curious. Madam President-in-Office, you say that you are now worried about the fact that there might be incompatibilities between the new system and the PNR, but you also said that you have known about the system since 2005. The new PNR agreement is from after that date, so why were you not worried about it when you knew about it but were still making an agreement with the US?

**Paula Lehtomäki**, *President-in-Office of the Council*. (FI) Mr President, I assume that you wanted me to comment on this, even though we actually have Council question time in two-and-a-half hours' time this afternoon. I will say that this compatibility between the ATS and PNR is now being looked into, and we have to remember that, as it is only now being looked into, there is nothing to suggest that they may not be compatible. We should not automatically assume that they are incompatible; the matter is being looked into.

**Sophia in 't Veld (ALDE)**. – Mr President, I note with regret that once again the Council has not replied to a single question. I would like to receive replies to my questions in writing and I would like to know now whether we can get the text of the Council's inquiry and whether the Council will inform European citizens about it.

**Paula Lehtomäki**, *President-in-Office of the Council*. (FI) Mr President, as I said, the most important thing at this stage is obviously how the United States of America responds to the enquiry that we and the Commission have made. With regard to procedure otherwise, Parliament may ask the Council questions in an alternative way.

**Franco Frattini**, *Vice-President of the Commission*. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, as the representative of the Presidency has just said, many questions will be answered when we receive a detailed reply to the joint letter that we sent today.

I can tell you that we made a specific request. If the Presidency agrees and if Parliament makes a formal request, I have no problem with providing you with a copy of the letter that has been sent to the US Administration. Everyone will thus be able to see the terms of our demands. I can also add that we are not investigating the United States. The United States is a sovereign country and our main international ally in the fight against terrorism. We want to know whether an agreement is being kept or not. This is a very simple point, and I hope we will get a reply quickly.

The PNR system will be tested before the end of December, as planned. If the agreements are not being kept, we will see when the time period expires, and so I think we will also have a chance to evaluate this first test, which was confirmed in the agreement signed on 19 October.

It is clear, then, as Mrs in 't Veld has pointed out, that the information for passengers must be given to them, since it is necessary information that has been agreed upon, and the PNR test that is to be carried out is also intended precisely as a response to this commitment made by the US authorities.

I believe bilateral agreements between the United States and Member States should be avoided and that the Member States should be persuaded to wait for and to cooperate with the European negotiations. European negotiations clearly have a great deal more force than individual Member States would have.

The more encouragement and political support we receive as European negotiators, the greater our chances of success will be. It is clearly in the United States' interests to have a strong political negotiating partner, but not to have one that considers the US to be a danger. I do not consider the United States to be a danger, and I shall therefore commit myself to European negotiations, which are, I believe, much better than national negotiations. I am also in favour of the European Parliament and the US Congress being involved.

Mrs in 't Veld has brought up a subject that is, itself, also political. My view is that if the European Parliament and the US Congress together ask to be kept informed or, in any case, to collaborate in the work of the high-level group that we have set up, I for one will agree, but of course I am not the only member of this high-level group.

It would, however, be useful if the two parliaments – this House and Congress – could work together. This all needs to happen quickly because, if we want to negotiate a new agreement by early spring, we shall have to ensure that the two parliaments are informed of our intentions by the end of February or the beginning of March.

The final point concerns our negotiating mandate. I have stated on several other occasions that I have no objection to informing Parliament first about the draft negotiating mandate that the Council will give us for the new PNR. It does not depend on me alone, but I think informing Parliament is also a way to achieve a stronger political consensus when we come to negotiate with the US side.

**President.** – The debate is closed.

#### IN THE CHAIR: MR BORRELL FONTELLES

*President*

### 14. Preparation for the European Council (14-15 December 2006) (debate)

**President.** The next item is the Council and Commission statements on the preparation for the European Council on 14-15 December, that is to say, starting tomorrow.

**Paula Lehtomäki, President-in-Office of the Council.** *(FI)* Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for this opportunity to discuss here in Parliament beforehand the European Council meeting to be held on 14 and 15 December. The main themes at the summit that convenes tomorrow will be enlargement, more effective decision-making in justice and home affairs, and immigration policy.

The Heads of State or Government will hold an in-depth debate in the European Council on how to take the EU's enlargement process forward. The Presidency has a clear mandate from the June European Council to hold this debate. The enlargement strategy made public on 8 November, and the in-depth discussion in the General Affairs and External Relations Council on Monday, will provide a sound basis for the European Council discussions.

As I stated here this morning, the aim of the enlargement debate is to consolidate the commitments that we have now made to Croatia and Turkey, who are now engaged in membership negotiations, and to the countries of the Western Balkans.

It is our intention that the outcome of the European Council's enlargement debate should result in a renewed agreement by the Member States on the future of enlargement. It will be based on the Commission's enlargement strategy: keeping to commitments on conditionality and better communications. At the same time, attention must also be paid to the EU's capacity to accept new members.

Enlargement is not the only topic of major importance to the future of the Union to be discussed at the summit starting tomorrow. Over dinner, Prime Minister Vanhanen will give his colleagues his assessment of the confidential consultations which have been held during our Presidency on the future of the Constitutional Treaty. He will also present the most important general conclusions from the consultations.

It was the aim of the Finnish Presidency to move on to a more active phase of the debate on the Constitutional Treaty after a year of silence. Consultations have now been held with all Member States and with Romania and Bulgaria, which will join the Union on 1 January 2007. It has been rewarding to realise that internal debate has begun in the Member States, and has become robust. It has been too early to look for ready solutions, but we have been able to identify certain priorities in the views expressed by the Member States. We will be presenting our detailed analysis to the German Presidency to serve as a basis for the continuation of this work.

One conclusion of crucial significance for the future is that all Member States think that the Treaties need to be reformed to ensure that the Union functions properly. We now need to consider together how best to move forward. We need to come up with a formula that everyone can agree on.

The Finnish Parliament adopted the Constitutional Treaty at the beginning of this month, and the President of the Republic of Finland decided to ratify the Treaty last week. This makes Finland the 16th Member State to ratify the Treaty. By doing this, we want to send the message that we think that the Constitutional Treaty is a well-balanced package and provides a good basis to work on in the search for a solution that is acceptable to all Member States.

The general public expects effective action from the Union to combat international crime, human trafficking and terrorism. There is quite a lot of evidence showing that the Union is currently unable to meet its citizens' expectations as well as it might.

Time after time, the way forwards is obstructed by a small minority of Member States using their veto to block a decision. It is disturbingly easy to come up with examples: negotiations on the European arrest warrant lasted for more than three years; we have made no progress in the past two years in discussions on a framework decision on combating racism; and talks on developing cross-border police investigations petered out. Unfortunately, last week a framework decision on prisoner transfers was scuppered by the opposition of one Member State.

Examples like these explain why the Finnish Presidency made improving decision-making one of its objectives, especially when the decisions are about improving the security of our citizens. We were also given a clear mandate for this by the June European Council.

Police cooperation and cooperation in criminal matters is a difficult area. The Member States' willingness to compromise is unfortunately minimal on many important issues, since the veto can always be used to block a decision at the last minute. Negotiations deliver meagre results and little progress.

Some Member States have said that, instead of striving for more effective decision-making, the Union should concentrate on developing concrete cooperation. Action is the best way to promote areas of common concern to us. Practical cooperation, however, requires ground rules, and it is precisely these rules which we have found difficult to agree on. This problem cannot be ignored.

It is clearly not just the public but also the EU Member States that have been frustrated with the way the Union operates. This has led more and more Member States to ponder the possibility of switching to a model of enhanced cooperation. Some Member States have decided to pursue the path of cooperation outside EU structures. A good example of this is the Prüm agreement.

Finland has proposed switching to qualified majority voting for decisions on police cooperation and cooperation on crime, a change that is already possible under the existing Treaties. It has become clear during the course of the Finnish Presidency, however, that the Member States are not keen on this solution. We are still of the opinion, though, that we need a more effective, more open and more responsible way of making decisions on police cooperation and cooperation on crime.

That is why we want to exhaust all the possibilities provided by the mandate given to us last June to make decision-making more effective. The European Council is set to discuss more effective decision-making in the field of justice and home affairs. We hope that the Heads of State or Government will be able to make a commitment to finding a solution to this problem, which has already been solved once in the talks on the Constitutional Treaty.



The European Parliament has made its views on this matter very clear. The Presidency very much appreciates the contribution Mr Borrell made at the informal meeting of Heads of State or Government in Lahti, where you, Mr President, clearly expressed Parliament's opinion that decision-making in the area of justice and home affairs had to be made more effective.

A great deal of work has been done on various issues relating to immigration during Finland's Presidency. Good progress has been made on implementing the global approach. That has also proven to be the right way to tackle this issue. Immigration is currently one of the biggest challenges facing the Union, but it is also an opportunity.

During the Finnish term, special attention has been paid to cooperation with African countries. We organised two productive ministerial conferences on immigration and development. In addition, Frontex, the EU's border security agency, has coordinated successful operations on the Union's southern borders.

The next major step is to agree on the principles for a global approach for other geographical regions and to extend its scope to other policy areas too.

We have consistently stressed that the EU needs to be able to formulate a comprehensive policy for managing immigration, one that gives due attention to the issues surrounding both illegal and legal immigration, including integration.

The European Council which starts tomorrow proposes to agree on the priorities for next year. The measures agreed will be based on the two Commission communications from last week.

It is important for us to be able to agree not just on long-term action but also on measures that the Union can take in response to sudden and unexpected migration flows.

Since there is only one official meeting of the European Council during our Presidency, a great many hopes and expectations have been pinned on the conclusions of the meeting. We have nevertheless long held the opinion that the Heads of State or Government should see the European Council conclusions as a genuine reflection of their discussions. They should not be just a list of all the pending issues and all matters for consideration. Accordingly, in preparing for the European Council, we were guided by the notion that the conclusions should cover only those issues which were actually to be discussed by the Heads of State or Government, or on which political guidelines need to be set for future work.

Thus, the conclusions for this European Council will make reference not just to the discussion topics that I have mentioned, but will mention innovation policy, energy policy and climate change as a follow-up to the Lahti meeting of Heads of State or Government. These are important themes for the future of the Union, and the European Council will monitor how work is progressing on all of them when it meets next spring.

At the Foreign Ministers' dinner, to be held in conjunction with the European Council tomorrow evening, the discussion will centre on the Middle East, including Iran, and Africa, in particular the situation in Sudan and Darfur.

Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I hope and believe that we will have an active and worthwhile exchange of views on matters for discussion at the European Council which starts tomorrow.

*(Applause)*

**President.** Thank you very much, Mrs Lehtomäki. Following your speech, I would like to thank you on my own behalf and on behalf of all of the Members for your efforts and your work during the Finnish Presidency that is now drawing to a close. You have attended eight sittings, you have taken part in thirty debates on various issues and you have always been available to Parliament. You therefore deserve our appreciation and gratitude.

*(Applause)*

## 15. Welcome

**President.** I would like to inform you that we have with us in the official gallery Mr Ranko Krivokapic, President of the Parliament of the Republic of Montenegro, and Mrs Gordana Djurovic, Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration.

*(Applause)*

As you know, the first interparliamentary meeting between the European Parliament and Montenegro is being held today, and we wish our guests the very best of luck at the meetings being held with us here in Parliament.

Thank you for attending our sitting.

## **16. Preparation for the European Council (14-15 December 2006) (continuation of debate)**

**José Manuel Barroso**, *President of the Commission*. (FR) Mr President, Mr Frattini, ladies and gentlemen, the June European Council marked an important stage in proceedings for several reasons. I should like to mention one in particular. I believe that the June Council put to bed once and for all the idea that there is some kind of arbitration between the institutional progress made by the Union and the implementation of new policies. Previously, it was often said that, if you spoke of the political agenda, an agenda focused on results, on practical projects, you were in some ways sidestepping the institutional debate. If you spoke of the Constitution, on the other hand, you were accused of navel-gazing, of being obsessed with technical aspects. I believe that this idea has been buried for good.

The two-level strategy adopted in June shows how the two aspects are linked and how they can mutually enhance one another. Indeed, for as long as we have to work with a Union that is less effective and less democratic than we know it could be, our efforts to implement the policies expected by our people will never be entirely convincing. Each time we put forward policies designed to improve our citizens' lives, it can only make people feel more confident about a further step being taken on the road to European integration.

The Finnish Presidency has demonstrated a perfect understanding of this state of affairs, hence six months of pragmatic and targeted progress. Those six months have shown that there is a genuine understanding of what Parliament, the Council and the Commission can offer Europe when they work together. The results are there to see: an agreement on sensitive issues, such as REACH, the adoption of the Globalisation Adjustment Fund – I am particularly proud of that because, as you know, it was a Commission initiative – a rapid reaction to the Lebanese crisis, the smooth preparation for Bulgaria's and Romania's accession – sensitive subject that it is! – and efforts to make the Union's external policy more coherent. The conclusion to be drawn from this is that progress has indeed been made.

We come now to the European Council – this week's Council – which will focus on the crucial issues, on which the Finnish Presidency has already shown the Union to be determined and proactive.

I will begin by mentioning innovation. The debate at Lahti on this subject was of a high quality. This debate left behind the image of European leaders who are genuinely determined to act in favour of innovation, and I believe that, right now, it is fair to say that innovation is one of the European Union's most important political priorities: I am delighted about that. As you will see on reading the annual report on the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy for growth and employment, which we published yesterday, innovation is prioritised not only at Community level, but also at the level of the various national policies. I therefore believe that what the European leaders said at Lahti were not empty words: important progress has been made in many Member States. However, if the aim is to stimulate a real change in the European economy, the European dimension cannot be overlooked. Admittedly, we need to make more effort at national level, but we also need to seize the opportunity to make the very most of the European dimension.

Your institution, Parliament, has also focused attention on intellectual property rights, on joint technological initiatives and on standardisation and so many areas requiring action at European level. I believe that the European Council will make progress with these tasks.

On the subject of innovation, as on that of energy and climate change, the Council is doubtless going to prepare the ground for a European Council in spring 2007, which I believe will be very important in this regard. I am pleased that the European Commission has been able to contribute, and to contribute a great deal, to these efforts in the form of our proposal for a European Institute of Technology.

The European Institute of Technology is not simply going to contribute directly to innovation in Europe; it will also be symbolic – it is true that, sometimes, symbols are very important – it will be symbolic, I

would say, of the way in which the European Union can demonstrate ambition and show itself to be innovative. The support of the MEPs for the European Institute of Technology is both welcome and essential. I hope that Parliament and the Council will include the European Institute of Technology among their priorities, so that it might become operational as soon as possible. I should like to thank the Finnish Presidency for the unfailing support it has given to this great project for Europe.

The next issue is immigration: no image hit people harder in autumn than that of the men and women willing to risk their lives in order to land on European shores. There was a real urgent need to act, and I am delighted that Europe showed itself to be equal to the task. Our global approach to immigration, coupled with closer cooperation at maritime borders and with enhanced instruments such as Frontex, will further strengthen our serious reaction with a very far reaching scope and practical implementation. The European Council's adoption of this approach would unambiguously demonstrate that this is a common problem, to which the Union will provide a common solution.

It is true that we still have problems in this area, but I believe that the approach that we have, the global approach that the Commission has formulated, may be the solution for Europe. We must get down to work straightaway and look upon this as a long-term challenge. We should therefore coordinate the use of internal and external instruments by enhancing the dialogue with countries of origin, transit countries and countries of destination, which means paying more attention to integration and to intercultural dialogue, too.

We need to see things as they really are: if we are to act effectively, we need to have adequate tools. It is therefore important for us to improve our decision-making, so that we can start acting quicker, and this in the field of immigration and in the field of justice and internal affairs in general. I strongly agree with what the Finnish Presidency's representative just said. If the Member States really want to show that they are determined to work together in the fight against illegal immigration and on immigration policy, justice and security, they now have a good opportunity to demonstrate this desire: by making the decision-making process at European level simpler, faster, more effective, and more practical! It would make no sense for us to deprive ourselves of the institutional opportunities that already exist today.

Mr President, the final area I should like to raise is enlargement – final in the order of presentation but by no means final in order of importance. To some it might not seem that the issues we face this week show the policy of enlargement as being effectively delivered. I want to explain why this is wrong.

In the first place, I find criticism odd when we are only a few weeks away from another step forward for enlargement. The vote of this House yesterday not only showed your confidence in two new Commissioners but also symbolised the importance this Parliament gives to the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the European Union. It also symbolised the key role this Parliament has played in making enlargement possible and making it work. The benefits of the 2004 enlargement are clear to the Europe of 25. I have no doubt that we shall look back on the move to 27 with similar satisfaction.

However, the European Council will focus on two issues: integration capacity and the accession negotiations with Turkey.

The Commission's report on integration capacity is the recognition that there are legitimate questions about the implications of enlargement. Everyone here knows that there has been no attempt by the Union to conceal the consequences of enlargement. Why should we, when the evidence before us points so strongly to the benefits?

However, we must respect concerns and redouble our efforts to show how seriously the Union takes its responsibility to ensure that enlargement works. Yes, enlargement works for the incoming Member States and for the European Union they join. We should all accept a responsibility to engage more strongly in this debate. I have said very often that enlargement cannot proceed bureaucratically or even diplomatically: it has to be done democratically. We have to win the confidence of public opinion in Europe.

Two weeks ago the Commission made its recommendation on Turkey. As a result, this week the Council agreed to suspend negotiations on a number of key chapters. This is a clear signal that a breach of legal obligations cannot be accepted. At the same time, it is clearly in our own strategic interests to continue with the negotiation process. Both sides need to play by the rules. We hope that the Turkish side will show its willingness to fulfil its obligations.

We understand it is important to show how credible we are when we speak about the conditions for enlargement. We need to have the support of the public for enlargement in order to show not only that we are credible and our commitments should be respected but also that we are fair and firm in the analysis of the progress the different candidate countries make regarding their accession process.

We know that we need to keep candidate countries motivated. Enlargement is such a positive force for progress that it is in all our interests that candidates pursue difficult reforms on a road that is bound to be long. Croatia has made a good start and, if the reform effort continues, is likely to be the next acceding country. The countries of the Western Balkans have also made progress, and we have offered them a clear European perspective and should show them that we are serious about that European perspective for the Balkans.

We need a renewed consensus on enlargement that both recognises the strategic value of enlargement and ensures our capacity to function while gradually integrating new members. The Commission will continue to stick to the core principles: respect for commitments made, a vigorous and fair assessment, and a search to improve the quality of the process. The enlargement process has shown itself to be as resilient as ever.

In conclusion, I want to tell you that I sincerely hope that the European Council this week will confirm that an enlarged European Union will be ready to face the challenges of today and of tomorrow. Thank you for your attention.

*(Applause)*

**Hans-Gert Poettering**, *on behalf of the PPE-DE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, Madam President-in-Office of the Council, Mr President of the Commission, ladies and gentlemen, as the President-in-Office of the Council said, we have to look to the future, and it is precisely that, I believe, that we have to do today – to look to the future, not only of the European Union, but also of Europe and of the world as a whole. As a rule, the best presidencies are those that do not do anything spectacular, but work away with good will and determination, and we know that the Finnish Presidency has been particularly good at doing that.

I hope that, tomorrow and the day after at the Brussels Summit – for which the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats will be preparing tomorrow afternoon – it will prove possible to lay down some guidelines on enlargement. The last thing that the President of the Commission said was a call to us to send out the message that we hold to our undertakings. We are also open to those countries which, in the very ordinary way of things, have a claim on eventual membership of the European Union, and that means not only Croatia, but also the whole Balkan region, although there are of course conditions applicable to them. We have to discharge our obligations; *pacta sunt servanda* – and that means by both parties.

I would very much like to thank you, Mr President of the Commission, and the Commission itself for your far-sightedness, your steadfastness and also the fairness, that you have brought to the issue of Turkey, for there we have a narrow path to tread, without risking any confrontation, any really serious dispute, between Turkey and the European Union, although, on the other hand, if Turkey fails to meet its obligations – as in the case of Cyprus, where it has promised to resolve the problem and recognise the customs union, but has not done so – we may not accept this in a spirit of resignation, but must, for the sake of our own credibility, send out a message that makes our position clear.

If we had sent no signal to Turkey, we would have lost faith in ourselves, and who, then, would put any trust in the European Union? It is for that reason that what the Commission has proposed to do about this, which the foreign ministers have accepted, shows such a high degree of responsibility and has resulted in a sound compromise.

It is now for the European Union to acquire a capacity for integration. I am grateful to the Finnish Presidency of the Council for having, in many bilateral conversations, raised the question of how we can resolve the Constitution issue. I was glad when Mrs Lehtomäki said that it was obvious that all governments were agreed on the need for reform. That constitutes fundamental assent to the content of the constitutional treaty. I would like to say, calmly and on behalf of the European People's Party element in our group, that we need the reforms described in Part 1 to be made reality, and we also need to see laid down that which is, so to speak, the legal foundation of our values, namely that which is set out in Part 2. Quite apart from anything else, all this has already been adopted in Nice in the form of a Charter,

and turning it into binding law should not present any problems. For us in the European People's Party, what we want to achieve is dependent on that.

It might perhaps be said that thanking the Commission now is a bit too much of a good thing, but where such things are justified, they have to be said. It was the President of the Commission who suggested adopting, on 25 March, a Joint Declaration by the European Council, the European Parliament and the Commission; we think this is a very good thing and are all in favour of it, and what we have to say to the governments is that, if anyone is opposed to this House's involvement, they will have a problem on their hands in the shape of our group at the least, for we want a Joint Declaration that commits us to reforms and gives expression to our values.

I would like to add a final thought on a subject of which we will have to become more aware, namely climate change. We may well be free to do as we please on this earth, but, if our climate changes in a way that imperils us and impoverishes large areas, then our political efforts will avail us nothing; it is for that reason that this House and the other institutions must make climate change a priority issue. I wish the President of the Council, the President of the Commission, and of course our own President, who will, as always, have an active part to play, every success at the Council in terms of our joint efforts and of the Europe in which we all share.

**Martin Schulz, on behalf of the PSE Group.** – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, European politics are moving into a decisive phase in the second half of this Parliament's lifetime, which will be dominated by the finding of solutions to a number of questions and problems that are fundamental in terms of Europe's future, and so I want to start by saying, on behalf of my group, that we are ready, during this period, to join with the other institutions – the Council and, in particular, the Commission – in a constructive dialogue aimed at finding a way out of the *cul-de-sac* in which the EU finds itself.

In the first half of our term, we in this House had several justified criticisms to make, some of them directed at the Commission, but we are willing to work closely with it on such things as the preparation and, above all, the evaluation of the forthcoming summit, on the basis that the European internal market will either acquire a social dimension or people will turn their backs on it. At the Congress of the Party of European Socialists, we laid down a number of guidelines and set out certain demands that we are going to make at this summit, and my colleague Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, who was on that occasion re-elected as our president, will shortly be saying something on behalf of our group about Europe's social dimension. We are faced, then, with the choice between social security or popular rejection, but what would happen if the latter were to come to pass, and if the present stagnation of the project of European integration were to threaten to be the ruin of it? In that case, Mr Barroso, the tasks that you have described could not be performed. The cards are on the table. What we have to do is easily described. Climate change is no subject for light-hearted talk; if the Chinese and the Indians – all 2.3 billion of them – claim the right to use as much energy as we Europeans and the Americans do, then the rate at which their economies are expanding will be the death of this planet. Here in Europe, we can reduce our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions as much as we like, but the amount of it they pump out will be many times in excess of it. We need to act, and Europe has to take a leading role in this.

The cards are on the table. Russia is not a flawless democracy, and its internal policies need to be discussed, but it is a state that we need if all the international conflicts that prey on our minds; no conflict with Iran or in the Middle East is capable of being resolved without Russia, which is itself – let this be noted, by the way – under threat from North Korea's nuclear weapons, so let me say that I am grateful to the Finnish Presidency of the Council for having made such a great effort to prepare the partnership and cooperation agreement and to get negotiations started. I hope that the Polish Government, too, will eventually come to see that we need this cooperation and partnership agreement.

The international conflicts that I have described – the Middle East conflict in particular – are a real and acute danger, and making peace will take much astute footwork. One of the steps we need to take if we are to build a bridge to the destabilised regions bordering on Europe, is to give Turkey a prospect of accession. That which has just been adopted is a resolution in the true sense of the word. Above all else, it is a message to the Turkish Government to the effect that we want to carry on negotiating with it, and I appeal to it not to let up in its efforts at reform, not to give in to the temptation to play a domestic political card in the shape of a brief anti-European turn in the hope of a few more votes, only then to say that that was not how it was meant. That is not on, any more than it is acceptable that we, for our part, should send out a different signal from one day to another. That is why Mr Poettering and Chancellor Merkel, when she takes over the Presidency of the Council, will have to decide what they want, whether

or not they want Turkey to have the prospect of accession; in other words, desperately seeking this or that argument with which to be able to say that it will not happen – what one might call the Cyprus excuse – will not work, and so we have a good decision from the Commission and an inappropriate response from Ankara. I hope that Mr Erdogan will think again, but, generally speaking, this prospect of accession is indispensable in terms of Europe's security.

I might add that I say that even though I am well aware that most people take a sceptical view of this, but there are times when politicians must summon up the courage to say that, even though they know about public scepticism and are aware that their voters take a different view, the work of persuading them must be done, that they must put forward arguments without giving in to the opportunism of everyday politics that just might win them the next election. It has to be said, though, that demolishing the bridge to the Islamic world that the Turks' arrival in Europe will enable us to build will be far more dangerous than the loss of one election. The cards for this summit are on the table. The problems can be addressed, and I have tried to describe how we in the Socialist Group in the European Parliament can help to do that.

*(Applause)*

**Graham Watson, on behalf of the ALDE Group.** – Mr President, observers will be delighted to hear that the Presidency-in-Office is cutting down the length of the Council conclusions. I understand that the current draft is about 20 pages, at least in French, compared with the normal 60. They may not be so pleased to hear from Mr Poettering that the European People's Party is meeting tomorrow to prepare the summit. They are so divided over issues like Turkey that, when they prepare the summit, things never get better! In fact, I understand that the Council Secretariat is preparing a letter saying, 'please, if things don't get better soon, we may have to ask you to stop helping us!'

I would like to address three issues that are on the agenda for the summit: enlargement, energy and migration. The Council will discuss enlargement and, no doubt, integration capacity. Perhaps they will find an agreement on where Europe ends, but I suspect that Jean Monnet might have been right when, addressing the predecessor to this assembly, the Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1955, he spoke of a 'broader united Europe whose bounds are set only by those who have not yet joined'. As the Chinese would put it rather more prosaically, 'the people who decide when the bus is full are those on the outside'.

It is important to discuss Turkey and I praise the Commission, and particularly the work of Commissioner Rehn, in taking action and making a firm proposal before there was time for an anarchy of reaction from national capitals; a firm proposal that was supported by the foreign ministers and, I hope, will be taken up by the Council. But let us then recognise that before we talk any more about enlargement, we are going to have to get our own constitutional arrangements sorted out, because the European people will not want us to enlarge further without a clear basis for the further development of our Union. It is not going to do any good to think we can rewrite the Nice Treaty for Croatia. Let us get the Constitution sorted first.

On energy, the great worry of my group, President-in-Office, is that the European Union is in danger of being held hostage. Held hostage to producers, whether they be in Russia or in North Africa or in Central Asia – or perhaps even in Latin America – in the case of biofuels. What we urgently need to do in Europe is to cut consumption by motor vehicles and electrical equipment; cut consumption of heating through better design of buildings; cut the consumption of electronic equipment; and increase production of safe, sustainable energy sources – biomass, as proposed by the Commission, and renewables, perhaps through research by moving to a hydrogen economy or looking into nuclear fusion.

We need to liberalise markets, because one of the reasons we do not have a proper energy policy in Europe is that we do not have a proper liberalisation of the market. I am pleased that even the Social Democrats, meeting in Oporto last week, have finally recognised that competition is going to be important for future development.

On migration, the Commission and the Council are concentrating too much on the security aspects, not enough on the economic or humanitarian aspects. You cannot talk of 'effective management' of migration, of 'reinforcing' FRONTEX and so on, without recognising the human tragedy unfolding on our southern shores because people know they will find jobs here in Europe. The President said this was a long-term challenge – yes, but for five years the Council has done nothing about it, and we must make progress.

Finally, if the Council does come to discuss the site for Galileo – I understand that Prague, Valetta and Ljubljana all want it – why do they not follow the example of this wonderful institution and have a three-site operation? At least those looking at the site for Galileo would be able to say *eppur si muove*!

**President.** You are not being serious, are you, Mr Watson?

## 17. Welcome

**President.** I am pleased to welcome another delegation that is in the official gallery. We have with us a delegation led by Mr Aleskerov, Vice-President of the Parliament of the Republic of Azerbaijan and Co-President of the Parliamentary Committee on EU-Azerbaijan Cooperation. Welcome!

*(Applause)*

## 18. Preparation for the European Council (14-15 December 2006) (continuation of debate)

**Daniel Cohn-Bendit, on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group.** – *(DE)* Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I welcome the presidencies, and, with the forthcoming summit in mind, would like to fire off a few comments in the hope that you catch whatever energy I can charge them with, which would be a first step towards greater energy efficiency and would do the summit no harm either.

Let us kick off with Turkey, about which I should like to say something to which allusion has already been made today. That Turkey's accession is problematic has nothing to do with Cyprus, so let us not act as if Cyprus could be used as a means of resolving the problem of Turkey's accession. Yes, Turkey must accept the customs union. We in the European Union must once and for all lift the blockade of Northern Cyprus and stop allowing the Greek Cypriots to oppress it in the way they are doing, for the people of Northern Cyprus are the victims of two strains of nationalism – Turkish and Greek Cypriot. That is something that we Europeans have to say, and I hope that our doing so will be the making of the Summit.

Secondly, there is climate policy. I am delighted to see that Mr Poettering and his colleagues have got in touch with the reality of climate change. Very good, very pleasant, but please can we now get it right? Here in Europe, we agree on CO<sub>2</sub> reduction, and then we conclude a stability pact; those who fail to stick to their CO<sub>2</sub> limits get criminal proceedings brought against them by the Commission. I have had enough of the verbiage, of the constant need to make statements; when we have to adopt or enact something though, we are somewhere else, like at the next football match. So let us have this Pact; let us say that Europe has to cut back by this or that amount. I have heard that you want 20% renewable energies with effect from 2012, so go ahead and do that, but then those countries that are unwilling or unable to achieve that – whether they be large or small – must get it in the neck from the European Union. That, for once, would be something that would do us some good.

Then there is the issue of immigration. Yes, we do have to sort that out, but when we do, let us do it properly. We have built ourselves a home, our common European home. Unfortunately, we have only built the windows, and forgotten about the doors. If you have a house with no doors, people will come in through the windows. If you are no longer willing to put up with people coming in through the windows, you have to put doors in, and doors, to put it in plain language, can be opened or stay shut. We have to sort out how the doors can be opened, how people can come to Europe legally, and by people I mean not only refugees, not only migrants; there must be a legal way for people to migrate in order to work. This has to be regulated in a positive way, in such a way that people know how, in Europe, the doors open and shut; let us do something practical about this.

There is also Frontex, the oh-so wonderful Frontex that rescues people from the sea. For three years, though, we have been promising people in Africa that we would supply them with ships that would enable them to prevent illegal fishing by the Chinese and others off their coastlines. Did we supply those ships? No, we did not. We did set up Frontex, though. Let us do something practical, something that helps these people and enables them to survive; that is something Europe can do.

The Summit can be a summit in the true sense of the word, and a good one too, if a bit more energy is injected into it, with fewer flowery words, but real action instead.

**President.** Thank you very much, Mr Cohn-Bendit. European energy consumption will have risen a little during the course of your speech.

**Esko Seppänen, on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group. – (FI)** Mr President, Minister Lehtomäki, Commissioner, as the Finnish Presidency ends, the baton will be passed at the summit this week to Germany. During its term, Finland has done its most significant work in secret for Germany. Finland has had bilateral talks with all the Member States on the possibility of awakening the dead within the context of the EU Constitutional Treaty. Finland will report back on the discussions that it has had at the summits.

To carry on preparing the Constitutional Treaty in secret goes against one of the Presidency's priorities, which was to increase openness and transparency in the EU. Preparing things in secret gives a particular image of the Community, as its political elite promotes its own interests, ignoring national opinion and ignoring the results of referendums.

Particularly scandalous was the decision by the government of the Finnish Presidency to ratify the defunct EU Constitution in the Finnish parliament. Many members of government parties voted against ratification. Everyone knows that the Constitution ratified by Finland will come into force anywhere.

At the summit, Finland is putting issues on the agenda concerning an area of freedom, security and justice. Ultimately the aim is to switch to qualified majority decisions on matters under the third pillar, and making use of the 'passerelle' procedure. The proposal did not receive the support it needed at the meeting of Justice Ministers at Tampere. There are countries in the EU which value the legal basis provided by their own laws in matters that have not been legally transferred to the EU's competence. Regrettably, Finland is not one of them.

Finland hopes that enlargement will be discussed at the summits, though not Turkish membership or the position of Cyprus. It remains to be seen how future enlargement will be dealt with by beating about the bush and not calling things by their proper name. The Turkey-Cyprus problem, however, is real.

## 19. Welcome

**President.** I would like to inform you of the presence in the official gallery of a delegation from the Syrian Parliament, led by Mr Numair Ghanem, President of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, who is on his third visit to the European Parliament.

*(Applause)*

Welcome, Mr Ghanem!

I would like to stress the importance of your visit. Your country, Syria, plays a very important role in the Middle East and your visit is of particular significance given the current situation in that region.

Furthermore, Syria is the only country in the Euro-Mediterranean region with which we have yet to sign an association agreement, despite the fact that the negotiations have been completed.

I am convinced that your contacts with the European Parliament will strengthen the parliamentary dialogue and that the talks that you will hold will mark a new stage in the strengthening of relations between the Syrian people and the European Union.

We welcome you and wish you a positive visit, Mr Ghanem and delegation.

## 20. Preparation for the European Council (14-15 December 2006) (continuation of debate)

**Brian Crowley, on behalf of the UEN Group. –** Mr President, I should like to welcome the President-in-Office of the Council and the President of the Commission.

There seems to be some difficulty with the running order of speakers in the House after the changes that have taken place in the size of groups today. I should have spoken earlier on, but we will deal with that later. Obviously, some people still feel upset that there is movement within Parliament.



I thank the President-in-Office of the Council for her contributions, not just today, but over the period of the Finnish Presidency of the European Union. In particular, I congratulate her and her Government on their tenacity and willingness to be involved in what were considered to be many difficult issues. Despite the fact that some of those issues continue to create difficulties, I believe that some progress has been made.

Firstly, with regard to the issue of Russia and the whole energy area, we have made significant steps with regard to creating a partnership of equals. It is not just a matter of one side being dependent on the other; there is an interdependence on both sides of that relationship. However, it is unfortunate that the Russian authorities – the health and agricultural inspectorates – were giving mixed signals with regard to the issue of meat imports into Russia from the European Union and trying to divide the unity that exists within the European Union concerning the whole question of health and food safety, after we fought long and hard within the Union to create a common standard of good quality and guaranteed quality produce. I hope that, at the Council meeting tomorrow, the leaders, the President-in-Office of the Council and the President of the Commission will deal with that issue most urgently.

Secondly, with regard to enlargement and integration capacity, particularly as regards Turkey, despite the efforts of some people to try to simplify the issue of Turkey in terms of being in favour of or against Cyprus, Cyprus is a single, separate issue. It is a matter for the Cypriot people and the Turkish people to find a solution themselves. However, Turkey entered into agreements with the European Union, under the Ankara Protocol, to do certain things. If they are not willing to live up to their prior agreement and their prior knowledge as regards what we expect them to do, then there have to be repercussions, but it should not be a shut-off.

Darfur is the most appalling humanitarian crisis that we have witnessed in the 21st century – continuing genocide and ethnic cleansing – and yet we all stand back, say ‘how terrible!’ and beat our hearts but do not do anything to try to resolve the issue.

These are the issues that we have to deal with immediately, not just for our own credibility but for the safety and security of Africa and the European Union.

#### IN THE CHAIR: MR FRIEDRICH

*Vice-President*

**Jens-Peter Bonde**, *on behalf of the IND/DEM Group.* – (DA) Mr President, tomorrow our Heads of State or Government will meet at a summit in Brussels where they will resuscitate the dead Constitution. Finland is to issue a report on the individual countries’ positions after they have gone through a so-called confessional procedure, and the negotiations have taken place behind closed doors and under the leadership of a country in which two thirds of the voters are opposed to the Constitution. Let us have that report now, Mrs Lehtomäki. How has the French Government responded following the French voters’ rejection of the Constitution? How has the Dutch Government responded following the 62% ‘no’ vote in the Netherlands? The German Presidency will tinker further with the report and prepare for the Declaration of 25 March and the adoption of a Treaty text under the Portuguese Presidency. This text will then be smuggled in by means of national ratifications. It would seem that the response of the political elite to the ‘no’ votes of the people is never again to risk referendums.

Another route could also be taken, and people’s protests listened to. Why not involve people in drawing up new common ground rules? Why not hold direct elections to constitute a new Convention with the task of writing a democratic Constitution and an alternative cooperation agreement between European democracies and then put both proposals to referendums on the same day in all the EU Member States? In that way, we should all know the verdict of the electorate, and it would not be difficult to cobble together an agreement that people would welcome and vote in favour of. If we were to start by deciding that the outcome would have to be voted on in all the countries in which such votes were possible, the authors would be obliged to draw up a text capable of being adopted. The key words would then be transparency, democracy and proximity instead of secrecy, bureaucracy and government from a distance. We should then be able to agree on a text that could ...

*(The President cut off the speaker)*

**Jana Bobošíková (NI).** – (CS) Mr President, I wish to urge the Finnish Presidency, in the strongest terms, to stop beating about the bush and to include a debate on the location of the headquarters of the

Galileo European Navigation System in tomorrow's Council agenda. I was motivated to make this call by the disturbing news that has emerged from yesterday's talks between the transport ministers of the EU-25. Not only did the ministers fail to decide on the headquarters of the agency, but they even called into doubt previous promises made by the Council. In this connection, I would remind the House of the undertakings made three years ago at a summit where EU Heads of State clearly declared that the new Member States would have priority when it came to selecting locations for new agencies. What has happened since then?

Over the past two years, six new agencies have been founded in the Union, only one of which, Frontex, is based in one of the ten new Member States – in this case Poland. The others have ended up in Sweden, France and Greece. Now we hear from diplomats that the old Member States have secretly decided that the headquarters of Galileo will also be located on the territory of the old EU-15. Apart from discussions on the headquarters of the Galileo system, I would also call on the Council to confirm that the three year old commitment on prioritising the new Member States when it comes to locating agencies still stands. Accordingly, Galileo should be located in the Czech Republic, Malta or Slovenia, provided, of course, that these countries can offer competitive projects.

I firmly believe that it should be part of EU policy to respect the conclusions adopted at Council summits. Otherwise, they are nothing more than useless scraps of paper.

**Piia-Noora Kauppi (PPE-DE).** – Mr President, the integration process of the European Union is at a crossroads. It is necessary for the future of Europe that the European Summit finds consensus on the enlargement strategy. The report of the European Commission published in November provides a good framework for this. I highly support the Commission's proposal and the two reports by Mr Brok and Mr Stubb which were adopted today.

The Union should have a wider ideological debate and commit to a sustainable long-term strategy. We should not allow contemporary political issues to influence decisions that have effects on the days to come.

For the European Union, staying open means staying alive. It is my utmost wish that the European Council this week does not focus solely on Turkey. This Monday, as the Foreign Ministers met, the Finnish Presidency successfully dealt with problems created by the failed implementation of the Ankara Protocol. More importantly, in order to solve the conflict, the Council confirmed the Commission's proposal to freeze eight chapters of Turkey's accession talks. However, the other 27 chapters will all remain open for new talks and progress.

Contrary to the picture, Monday's decisions by the Foreign Ministers have not brought the negotiations with Turkey to a halt but are in reality accelerating the phase of talks. If the summit confirms the decision, the negotiators will get moving again; they will not be halted. Also, the constraining deadline of the Ankara Protocol has been removed. This ensures a more open dialogue for negotiations in a less pressing environment.

As discussed earlier today in the excellent report of my colleague Mr Stubb, it is the responsibility of the European Union and not the applicant countries to take care of integration capacity. That is why it is crucial to discuss constitutional matters at the European Council.

Mrs Lehtomäki, everyone is aware that there is a consensus on the need for the Treaty, but we need the real options on the table. I think the Finnish Presidency has done a good job in the preparatory process, but now we need make moves to analyse this and get the options on the table.

**Poul Nyrup Rasmussen (PSE).** – Mr President, I should like to thank the President-in-Office of the Council and the President of the Commission for an excellent job. The list is long and you have also made preparations for the Middle East and for further progress.

I just wish to repeat what my dear friend and colleague the Chairman of the Socialist Group presented to you as an offer that you cannot refuse – a Sicilian offer. Let me say quite seriously that, yes, we want to keep moving forward with regard to Turkey and we do not want to shut the door on the Balkans.

However, to ensure that people are with us, we must do more. People are worried and insecure. They do not have answers concerning their job opportunities, their children's educational possibilities. Do these two things have something in common with each other? Yes, they do. People within the European Union are uncertain about enlargement. Therefore, to make enlargement successful now and in the

future, we need to have more jobs, we need to combine competition and social security, and that is where the PES and our Socialist Group come in.

I was not surprised to hear Mr Watson talk about competition. But I am surprised that he did not know our position. We are not against competition but against a one-sided approach to competition. The only way things work in modern times is to combine social security in a new framework with competition. That is an offer you cannot refuse, President of the Commission. I have it here, signed by me, and with greetings from my good friend, Martin Schulz, Jacques Delors – one of your predecessors – and myself.

What is it about? It is simple. It says: listen, dear citizens, Europe is the extra added value to ensure that our welfare states in the global economy do not enter into a competition of social dumping but enter into a competition of increased qualifications, better organisation of our welfare states, and reforms. They will not be reforms that people fear will take something away from them, but sincere reforms: we are going to reform and it will not be same as before. It will be better.

What I am saying is: let us unite our forces now and send a clear signal not just from the spring Council but each and every European Council. Let it be a fixture on the agenda to the benefit of people, to enlargement and to the unity of the European Union.

**Anneli Jäätteenmäki (ALDE).** – *(FI)* Mr President, the talks on membership between the EU and Turkey are a long process. It is understandable that membership negotiations should raise many questions and even doubts. Turkey's possible membership would alter Europe's borders politically, culturally, economically and strategically, though not geographically. Turkey is and will remain an Asian country geographically: just a small part of Istanbul is on the European side.

Patience is now needed. We have to take our time to wait and see how Turkey develops and how it meets the membership criteria. It will not be easy for Turkey to adapt to all the changes quickly. The decision on EU membership for Finland more than 10 years ago was a tough one, and that has been the case for all the other new Member States. For Turkey it is far, far harder, as the EU requires so many changes. Turkey is not ready to join now, but we have to admit that neither is the EU ready at present to accept Turkey as a member. The time is not ripe. A lot is being asked of the people and the decision-makers on the path towards agreement.

For enlargement to succeed, however, our own internal development also needs attention. The fate of the Constitutional Treaty is therefore important. Minister Lehtomäki has done some excellent work. She has held talks with all the Member States, and I would have liked her on this occasion to shed a little light on these discussions here in Parliament. Openness is the only way for the Constitutional Treaty to come into force in some shape or form in the future.

**Bernat Joan i Marí (Verts/ALE).** – Mr President, there are many important issues surrounding enlargement. As regards Turkey, we can have a consensus concerning the development of enlargement on the basis of the Copenhagen criteria. I acknowledge the difficulties involved in Turkey joining the European Union, but I would also like to point out the dangers we face at the moment. I understand there is an increase in Euroscepticism among the Turkish population, something that was expressed clearly by the Nobel Prize winner, Orhan Pamuk, who wrote about the sadness of a part of Turkish society at this process.

The European institutions will have to be intelligent and cool-headed to steer the process and make it finish in the right way, that is, with Turkey inside the European Union and fulfilling the Copenhagen criteria. We should also bear in mind, however, the paradox that the Copenhagen criteria have not been fulfilled by some EU Member States.

I am also very pleased about the progress made by Croatia, and I hope that in the future we shall also see Montenegro doing the same and providing a good example of how to deal with the western Balkans.

**Kyriacos Triantaphyllides (GUE/NGL).** – *(EL)* Mr President, I should like to comment on two points concerning the forthcoming European Council.

The first is immigration policy. A recent paper by the Defence Council states that globalisation will produce winners and losers at the level of states, regions and communities. In Africa, the average lifespan is 22 years, while the population will gravitate towards large towns with high rates of unemployment and consequences in terms of humanitarian disasters, despair and migration. Consequently, given that

migration is the result of poverty, the summit should address its causes rather than addressing migrants themselves in a fragmentary manner with repressive measures.

The second point concerns the enlargement of the European Union and hence also Turkey's progress towards accession. The decisions by the External Affairs Council are, under the circumstances, satisfactory because they send a message to Turkey, while at the same time the European Union is taking the responsibility to appear consistent in its positions throughout. As far as trade is concerned, which is not the object of Turkey's accession, we shall not waste time repeating that we do not reject it, provided it does not cause deteriorations in the Republic of Cyprus or improvements in the pseudo-state. The Republic of Cyprus is working constantly to improve the standard of living of Turkish Cypriots and the difficulties being addressed in this effort are in fact the result of the illegal occupation of 37% of Cyprus by Turkey. If nothing else, this message must not be further watered down with expediencies and competing interests. It is in everyone's interest for the sake of flexibility and compromise for basic principles and values not to be abolished.

**Ryszard Czarnecki (UEN).** – *(PL)* Mr President, I would like to thank Mr Barroso for making the creation of a European Institute of Technology as one of the European Union's priorities. It is an important institution which, if it is to be effective, should have its headquarters in a number of Member States. I agree with Commissioner Figel's opinion that Poland should be among those countries, and the Polish Government has suggested Wrocław. It is a truly European city, which meets all the requirements for being one of the bases of the European Institute of Technology.

The President of the Commission also spoke about the temporary suspension of negotiations with Turkey. I would say, using an allusion to sport, that we should set a hurdle for the Turks to jump over. But this hurdle has to be set at a realistic height. For example, two metres six centimetres for men and two metres for women, something that is achievable, rather than five metres. At that height, the stringent requirements are nothing more than a pretext for never allowing Turkey to join the European Union.

I am pleased that today we talked about accepting Croatia, followed by the Western Balkan states. We are discussing this matter at a time when a delegation from Montenegro is visiting our Parliament. It is a sign of the times. Mr Cohn-Bendit spoke of windows through which emigrants are pushing their way into Europe. The problem lies in the fact that, in fact, they are coming in through the doors as well as the windows.

Enlargement of the European Union is necessary, more necessary than institutional reforms.

**Nigel Farage (IND/DEM).** – Mr President, it is the end of a pretty unspectacular Presidency and perhaps we should be grateful for that. I expect there will be some more fireworks with the Germans in the next six months!

As we head to this summit I suspect that the headlines will be about the Turkish debate, and perhaps we will hear more about climate change. My concern is what is discussed in the area of freedom, security and justice. There was an attempt made in September at Tampere to change this issue from one of national vetoes to qualified majority voting. Those of us who come from countries with a custom of common law believe our rights to trial by jury, the presumption of innocence before guilt and habeas corpus to be absolutely essential. We do not want the European Union to use the horrors that have happened around the world as a beneficial crisis in order to increase its own powers. Indeed, if we take away from people their individual freedoms and liberty in the name of fighting terror, we have actually conceded a victory to the terrorists.

**Alessandro Battilocchio (NI).** – *(IT)* Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I speak on behalf of the new Italian Socialist Party. Last week I took part in an interesting international conference in Brussels on the role of the European Union in promoting democracy around the world.

A large number of third-country representatives emphasised their confidence in the support that the EU can give to democratisation processes and hence to the promotion of geopolitical stability and peace at a global level. The enlargement process and the neighbourhood policy have both proved to be effective mechanisms for pursuing these objectives. I realised that their expectations were very high, but I also realised that the democratic process in Europe is still sometimes imperfect and that certain institutional adjustments are necessary.

Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate, which the Commission proposed for the current year, is a first step in the right direction, but, for the EU to play the role that it deserves in international affairs and foreign policy, it needs first to confront a number of basic issues that it can no longer put off addressing. For the sake of brevity I shall mention three of them: firstly, ratification of the Constitution; secondly, the question of the single seat in the United Nations; and lastly, but no less importantly, energy security. The EU needs to be able to launch a strategic plan for renewable and alternative energies so that it will no longer be in a position of weakness in relation to its largest partners and so that it can intervene firmly – that is, regardless of economic interests – even in the most serious crises.

**Timothy Kirkhope (PPE-DE).** – Mr President, the Council meets this week to discuss a number of important issues that are going to resonate into the next Presidency.

Firstly, the Finnish Presidency will report on its informal consultations with Member States on the future of the European Constitution. I hope that discussion on this matter will be open and transparent, as the Council should be. We know that there are very serious reservations about proceeding with the Constitution in a number of countries. The British Government has given mixed signals and appears deeply divided, the outgoing Dutch Government does not want another referendum, whilst the German Government wishes to retain as much of the current Constitution as possible. I therefore sympathise with the Presidency in the work it will have to take on in regard to this matter.

However, one thing is very clear: there really is little enthusiasm for it. ALDE Group Members may care to note the words of the British Liberal Democrat leader, who yesterday described it as a ‘tortured document’. I wonder whether Mr Duff would agree with that.

I make a plea that we should now move on and start focusing on a real reform agenda, one that genuinely makes the European Union more outward-looking, flexible and competitive. I believe that is also the way to restore confidence in Europe – and certainly not relying on PSE booklets, which will soon enough be forgotten.

The Council also discussed ideas on the future of justice and home affairs. It is clear that we have not sufficiently explored ways of improving intergovernmental cooperation. We should now get on with this and seek innovative ways of making that route work better.

I hope that we will also take on board the remarks of Mr Barroso, who said he would like to see a speeding-up of structural reforms in Europe. He is right. That is the kind of practical initiative that will improve Europe’s standing in the eyes of the people, and I for one certainly applaud it.

**Reino Paasilinna (PSE).** – *(FI)* Mr President, Minister Lehtomäki, ladies and gentlemen, the decision on Turkey – partially put on ice – was the right one. It has to happen. Turkey was not ready for political solutions. Just think, though, about the cultural changes: they are not going to be so easy either.

Europe cannot achieve its goals either, however. Why is that? We have lagged behind in research, product development and innovation, and we are going to get further and further behind. For example, in the information and communications sector, whose share of GDP is 40%, we are dawdling along cheerfully behind our competitors. The situation as regards researchers is very bad. We need more of them, but instead we are losing them. The bureaucratic barriers are huge, our training facilities are unsatisfactory, our economic growth is slow, development work is inadequate and the lofty objectives of Lisbon are slipping out of our hands. Energy dependence and consumption are on the increase, and our self-sufficiency is dwindling. We ourselves created such crises as these – all by ourselves.

At the summit there needs to be agreement, or at least debate, on throwing in a lifebelt fast: there has to be a dramatic improvement in the development of research. Some of us have given examples of this. The Seventh Framework Programme for research and development is not enough, nor is the Research Council or the European Institute of Technology. We need more money, more innovation, and more investment: an intelligent lifebelt for Europe’s future. That is what we have set our sights on.

#### IN THE CHAIR: MR COCILOVO

*Vice-President*

**Andrew Duff (ALDE).** – Mr President, I should like to thank the Presidency for reporting upon the results of their soundings on the future of the Treaty, although one might have expected a slightly fuller report from a Presidency that has been so properly committed to improving transparency. However, the

truth is that Member States cannot form a constructive opinion about the future without a concrete proposal for its renegotiation from the Commission or from the Presidency.

I would say to Mr Kirkhope that at least my party leader speaks about the issue, whereas Mr Cameron seems far too scared even to speak of it at all!

The Presidency should point out that it is not any good for Member States simply to agree that they all wish to salvage the Treaty and, at the same time, block the removal of national vetoes and the extension of QMV. If they do that, we will have more poor outcomes and slow progress. Therefore, could the Presidency assure us that at the summit it will expose the absurd contradiction between those two positions?

**Vittorio Agnoletto (GUE/NGL).** – *(IT)* Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, we have to realise that Turkey is playing a game with Europe and with the negotiations over its accession to the European Union.

The democratic reform process is at a complete standstill in Ankara. The revocation of Article 301 of the Criminal Code on the freedom of expression has been shelved *sine die*, and the Cyprus issue has turned into a dance of proposals and counterproposals from Mr Erdoğan, which in reality are attempts to avoid the fundamental question of ratification of the Ankara Protocol.

That is not to mention the Kurdish issue and the recognition of the Kurdish people's fundamental rights, which have so far been denied. I confirm that my group is in favour of Turkey's accession to the European Union, but it is now clear that Prime Minister Erdoğan has decided to respond more to extremist nationalism and the Turkish Kemalist military than to Europe.

Instead of making democracy and the rule of law the cardinal points of a new policy for modernising Turkey in the context of the accession negotiations, Mr Erdoğan has clearly chosen to be the leader of old Turkey, at least for now. We therefore endorse the Commission's decision to materially suspend negotiations on eight important chapters in the bilateral treaties.

Turkey should understand that the doors to Europe remain open, but they remain open to a democratic Turkey that respects people's rights and the fundamental freedoms of all – both Turks and Kurds – in Turkey. The ball is now in Mr Erdoğan's court.

**Zbigniew Krzysztof Kuźmiuk, (UEN).** – *(PL)* Mr President, I would like to draw your attention to the very serious problem of the European Union's relations with Russia and, in particular, the problems of energy security and trade. Regarding the first issue, I would like to point out that Russia is still using the supply of raw materials we use to produce energy as a political tool to influence both European Union Member States and third countries. Russia is also trying to draw up a new agreement with the European Union and wants to join the World Trade Organisation while at the same time breaching its fundamental principles by restricting the import of goods onto its market for political purposes.

An example of this behaviour is the year-old embargo on imports of Polish consumer goods to the Russian market. It has cost Polish entrepreneurs hundreds of millions of euros. This is a case where European solidarity is needed more than ever. Unfortunately, this solidarity has not been very noticeable over the last few months and it was only the Polish veto, which blocked the start of negotiations between the Union and Russia, that resulted in more frequent references to solidarity as a necessary tool for solving the most serious challenges facing the European Union.

I hope that the forthcoming German presidency will remember this principle and will actually apply it when it heads the work of the European Council.

**Patrick Louis (IND/DEM).** – *(FR)* Mr President, the German Presidency of the European Union looks set to be a test. A test of the ability of the institutions to take account of the will of the nations. The period of reflection is going to come to an end and the hurdle of the French elections will have been overcome. Those who did not want to accept the demise of the Constitutional Treaty are going to be able to go on the offensive.

Dividing up, decoupling and chopping up: the recipes are many, the plans numerous, but none of them propose a real alternative to the supranational project. Only the means of bypassing the Dutch and French referendums are considered, and the positions adopted – I should say the threats made – by Mrs Merkel

do not bode at all well. While those who are against the Constitution are scarcely tolerated within our Assembly, do not forget that they are heard by the people.

Under those circumstances, I can only reiterate my warnings. The German Presidency must not be the one to do irreparable damage by reviving a Constitution that no one wants, apart from the system, and I dare to hope that this Assembly is not just a chamber that echoes the system, but that it still aspires to represent the nations of Europe, nations that want to remain masters of their own fate on their own soil, that is to say, to be sovereign nations.

**Koenraad Dillen (NI).** – *(NL)* Mr President, the Turkish Government has stated that it will not yield to what it itself describes as the pressure on the part of the Cypriots to get Ankara to take so-called unilateral measures in order to solve the problems between Turkey and Nicosia. It appears that the European Union, to which Turkey is so keen to belong, has caved in to the pressure from Cyprus. The Turkish Government has now made it known that it will not be taking so-called unilateral measures, in other words, it will not meet us halfway in the agreements contained in the Ankara Protocol concerning Cyprus.

I do hope that tomorrow and the day after tomorrow, the European Council will seize the opportunity to cross the T's and dot the I's, because this is not about unilateral measures, but about a situation that is perfectly clear and can be summed up in a few sentences. The fact is that it is unacceptable that a candidate Member State that has held a piece of territory belonging to another EU Member State under illegal military occupation for more than 30 years should become a Member of this Union and – as if that were not enough – should consider it fair to pass the buck to the victim, for this is what this situation amounts to. The fact that Erdogan refuses to open up Turkish ports and airports to Cypriot ships is only a logical consequence of Turkey's imperialist attitude towards Cyprus. The negotiations should not just be suspended, they should be broken off indefinitely.

**Françoise Grossetête (PPE-DE).** – *(FR)* Mr President, Mrs Lehtomäki, Mr Barroso, Mr Barroso recently mentioned the fact that it would be unwise to proceed with further enlargements without settling the institutional issue. The institutional mechanisms already no longer allow the Union to function satisfactorily. This is particularly the case as regards European immigration policy, badly managed as it is as a result of the unanimity rule.

Giving the impression that one is going for broke means quite simply running the risk of endangering the European Union. If the enlargement process is to be completed with the support of the European people, it is crucial that they are shown the need for appropriate institutions to be put in place. The issue of the never-ending enlargement of a Europe without defined borders was an important factor in the 'No' vote when the Constitutional Treaty was rejected. Providing the European Union with a geographical and political framework would appear to be a prerequisite for allowing the people to take back Europe for themselves.

As regards Turkey, I note the decision taken by the Council to partially suspend the negotiations on eight of the thirty-five chapters. Nevertheless, I feel that this is an inadequate measure given that Turkey has not respected its commitments regarding the Ankara Protocol. I therefore believe that these negotiations should be suspended in their entirety. It is unthinkable that Turkey should still not acknowledge the existence of an EU Member State, namely Cyprus, which it has partly occupied for more than 30 years.

Finally, I must emphasise integration capacity. This capacity is not inexhaustible. Moreover, it must become an enlargement criterion, even if we were told otherwise by the Finnish Presidency this morning. We need to act responsibly faced with this key issue of Europe's borders.

On the subject of climate change, I would say this: it is a matter of urgency, it is the major challenge of this century, it requires a universal commitment and any differences must be overcome. We need to convince the other economic powers, too, and make them want to support us. In short, we expect a strong signal from this European Council and, above all, no waffle!

**Robert Goebbels (PSE).** – *(FR)* Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, whenever a presidency's term of office ends, it makes me think of the cry 'the King is dead; long live the King'. After the Finnish Presidency, which has put in a creditable performance, Europe is preparing to work under the new King, the Queen, by whom I mean Mrs Merkel. The presidencies succeed one another; the problems remain.

As from next year, the Union will be represented by 27 commissioners and 785 MEPs: this is clearly an inflationist process, which disrupts the running of our institutions.

I have always worked for the enlargement of the Union. Europe has never been destined to remain an exclusive club for Christian nations. For that reason, Turkey must be given a credible prospect of accession. Turkey is part of our history, of our common culture: the Iliad took place in the so-called 'Asian' part of Turkey. Europe needs a democratic and secular Turkey to act as a link between the different cultures of the Mediterranean basin.

However, before we enlarge again, if only towards Croatia, our Union must reform itself, must change its structures and the way in which it operates. It was a serious political mistake to proceed with successive enlargements without first strengthening the institutions. The Treaty of Nice is just a patch-up. Even though Finland has just ratified it, the Constitution seems to be in limbo. The Union's budget is woeful. The financial perspective is nothing like what it was supposed to be. The Union needs own resources quickly if it is to tackle our economic, social and environmental challenges.

Viewed from the outside, Europe seems to be a kind of heaven on earth, which explains the high number of potential immigrants, of both the legal and illegal kind. Yet, the people of Europe are familiar with the Union's shortcomings and expect real political decisions from their leaders, not just the kind of talk that promises a great deal, but delivers little. Will the Finnish Presidency be able to finish on a high note? There is room for doubt.

**Sarah Ludford (ALDE).** – Mr President, I hope the European Council will express its condemnation of the Holocaust Conference – or, more accurately, the 'Holocaust Denial Conference' – just held in Iran. I appreciate the fact that the President of Parliament did just that this morning. It is essential that the European Union makes clear at the highest level – that of the assembled Prime Ministers – its opposition to this outrageous exercise in mischief and hate.

On enlargement, it is very disheartening that some EU countries and some MEPs seem able to contemplate Turkey only in negative terms of doom and gloom. In fact, Turkish accession would be a great asset for the EU. Of course, there are difficulties and Turkey does have legal obligations it is not fulfilling, but it might help if the Council also fulfilled its political pledge to end the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots. The European Council also needs to fulfil its commitment to keep the door open to the Balkan countries.

On making the EU more effective in law enforcement, the draft European Council conclusions are an exercise in contortion. They start by emphasising, quite rightly, that our citizens want concrete results on cross-border crime and terrorism and that the EU is failing to respond adequately. But they end only by confirming the principles of the Constitutional Treaty – which is great, but gives us no medium-term solution. The fact that the Council could not agree a prisoner transfer measure because of a veto by one Member State just adds to the long list of failures and inaction. The criminals are laughing all the way to the bank.

Finally, a word about extraordinary rendition, torture flights and secret prisons. I can but dream of a united European Council enjoining each of the Member States to carry out a thorough examination into possible complicity. Maybe there would be more of a chance of such an outcome if the Council did not treat the European Parliament's temporary committee with such disdain. In its 2006 Human Rights Report, presumably produced under the authority of Council Secretary-General Javier Solana, it says: 'The EP carried out an inquiry led by Mr Dick Marty', but Mr Dick Marty led the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly's inquiry! If Mr Solana cannot even bother to distinguish between the two bodies, perhaps our draft final report description of him as 'uncooperative' can be considered justified.

**Kartika Tamara Liotard (GUE/NGL).** – (NL) Mr President, the Finnish Presidency has taken the initiative to hold secret discussions with all Member States about what they want to do with the Constitution, the outcome of which will be discussed during the forthcoming Summit. There is not one legitimate reason why such discussions could not be held in public. It is now apparently the intention, since the Constitution has been shot down in public debates in the Netherlands and France, to force this document through in backrooms.

During the Dutch elections a month ago, it was only the parties opposed to the European Constitution that were successful. According to opinion polls, even more Dutch people are now reported to be opposed



to the Constitution. The fact that the Council, the Commission and this House appear unable to accept this reality is a scandal that will continue to undermine the EU's reputation.

**Hanna Foltyn-Kubicka (UEN).** – *(PL)* Mr President, I would like to send a strong message to the participants of the European Council, which begins tomorrow. The message can be summed up in a single word: solidarity. Europe needs to show solidarity with my country and with other post-Communist countries, to show solidarity in its diplomatic relations and solidarity on energy issues. It needs to have a clear and decisive position with respect to Russia. This position should first and foremost reflect the interests of Europeans, and not of the Russia Federation.

I have the fortune to be speaking in this house today, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the shameful declaration of martial law in Poland. I lived under Communism for forty years, I was active in the underground movement and it is hardly surprising that I do not trust Russia. Europe now faces a serious test. The outcome will show whether we can count on its support in issues which are so difficult for us.

**Hans-Peter Martin (NI).** – *(DE)* Mr President, it almost hurts to see the Finnish Presidency of the Council, still spending hours in this place, having now spent half a year sitting there, familiar with the mantras of politics and of its customary to-and-fro, sometimes listening, sometimes not, and sometimes hearing things when nothing has been said. I have a simple request to make of them, speaking as one who, like many millions of Europeans, is predisposed to look favourably on their country. I ask them to consider once more what, over this past six months, was, in their eyes, the main problem, one on which the Germans may perhaps be able to make progress, perhaps a word, a sentence, solidarity, the constitution, subsidiarity, or bureaucracy, but it should be brief and to the point. It should be a message. Perhaps that would help us make a little bit of progress.

**Gunnar Hökmark (PPE-DE).** – Mr President, if we are describing the changes in our societies in the European Union as threats, of course the citizens will listen and be afraid. I am surprised to see that my Danish colleague Mr Rasmussen is not here, considering his comments earlier. However, if we describe the changes we are making as a way of meeting the challenges we face – the global challenge and security threats – that is another matter.

I believe that one of the responsibilities of the Finnish Presidency and of the Commission is to underline what we have achieved this autumn under the Finnish Presidency. We have a new seventh Framework Programme, we have finalised our decision-making with regard to REACH and the Services Directive. That is a change of some magnitude and it is making Europe better. We have prepared enlargement for Romania and Bulgaria and have appointed new Commissioners. Slovenia will enter the euro cooperation. It is a significant moment in the development of the European Union. Does that make Europe worse? Does that make people feel threatened? Of course not. It makes Europe better for its citizens. That is the situation. If we say that clearly and loudly people will also see the rationality of the changes we are making. That should be the responsibility not only of Mr Rasmussen but also of the European Council and the summit meeting.

Regarding enlargement, let us say loudly and clearly that we are laying down tough criteria while making it credible that those who fulfil them can be members. The Presidency should lay the groundwork for a new policy with Russia – firm but open, open but firm. We need Russia for energy security but we also need to apply stringent rules and a firm policy regarding democracy and respect for fundamental human rights. That is the way it should be and that is what we should hope for in this final meeting with the Finnish Presidency.

You have done a good job and you can do even better in the coming days.

**Jan Marinus Wiersma (PSE).** – *(NL)* Mr President, a few weeks ago, Commissioner Rehn said that he did not want a repeat of the Turkey Summit in 2004-2005, and from that point of view, last Monday's Council meeting was a great success. The European Ministers reached agreement about suspending talks on a number of negotiation chapters. This decision is in line with the Commission's recommendation, which our group had already welcomed. It sends a clear message to Turkey to the effect that the implementation of the Ankara Agreement is a non-negotiable part of the accession process, and that failure to implement the additional Protocol fully will inevitably have consequences for the progress of the negotiation process. There has never been any doubt about this, and we would therefore ask the Turkish Government to adopt a more constructive stance in this matter.

At the same time, the Council decision makes it clear that the negotiation process can, and indeed must, go on. It is of the utmost importance that the channels of communication be kept open, and a constructive stance will be required from both sides to ensure that the accession process is not delayed or does not completely degenerate into mutual distrust. So there will be no Turkey Summit, but I hope that the leaders who will be present tomorrow and the day after will nevertheless realise that the door to Turkey is, and should remain, open and that the Commission and Council will need to make an extra effort to do something about the economic isolation of the Turkish Cypriots. Any progress in that area will also help get the Ankara Protocol issue back on track.

**Mirosław Mariusz Piotrowski (UEN).** – *(PL)* Mr President, the forthcoming European Council summit will, to a certain extent, mark the official start of the German Presidency. We all know that we have high hopes for this particular presidency. Today, the list of issues the Union needs to tackle is already so long that it will certainly take more than six months to get through it. That is why it is a cause for concern that one of the issues to be discussed at the European Union summit is the unfortunate constitutional treaty, which was pronounced dead and buried in the French and Dutch referenda. No one is still brave enough to return to the first version of the treaty and instead there is talk of taking individual chapters from the draft and of presenting our citizens with some sort of watered-down treaty.

Instead of providing specific answers to questions relating to the further development of the continent, the peoples of Europe can instead look forward to another serving of newspeak. No amount of linguistic acrobatics can hide the fact that the French and the Dutch people clearly stated their opposition to the draft constitution. They were opposed to the idea of a centralised European superstate.

The European Council summit and, by extension, the German presidency, should send a clear message to the peoples of the Member States that their will, and the previously established rules, are being respected.

**José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra (PPE-DE).** – *(ES)* Mr President, the truth is that reality, any kind of reality, cannot be constructed by simply narrating and evoking the past. If we do not have a clear view of our projects and our possibilities, Mr President, we will not be able to build the future or understand the past.

I am therefore pleased that the Presidency-in-Office of the Council is aware that its role is to try to bring together wills and forge consensuses so that the European Union project can move forward. However, that is a necessary but insufficient condition, because we need all of the institutions to be operating harmoniously.

Within this context, I believe that we should welcome the fact that the Council of General Affairs Ministers has decided that the next three Presidencies – the German, Portuguese and Slovenian Presidencies – should draw up a strategic plan.

Presidencies-in-Office of the Council come and go, however, Mr President, but the Commission remains. The Commission must therefore be closely involved in this strategic plan of the next three Presidencies and it must also be closely involved in the preparations for the European Councils.

It is very reassuring to hear the President of the Commission, Mr Barroso's, message regarding the future of Europe, the internal dimension and external projection, the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy and the progress yet to be made in the fields of security, freedom and justice.

Mr President, I believe that each institution must play its due role according to the balance laid down in the Treaties, but I believe that it is essential to restore the harmonious partnership, the strategic alliance, between Parliament and the Commission, which has allowed us to achieve so much progress and success in the European Union and which should allow the European Union to awake from what some say is a state of lethargy, of institutional siesta, and take a decisive step in the right direction.

**Pervenche Berès (PSE).** – *(FR)* Mr President, Madam President-in-Office of the Council, some great European events have taken place in Helsinki. My impression, however, at a time when you are about to hand over the baton to the German Presidency, is that your own Presidency will not figure prominently in anyone's mind, given the problems that still loom. In the end, however, these problems are the responsibility not of one Presidency but of all of us. We need to pull ourselves together and relaunch the European project.

From this point of view, the debate we have had in this House on absorption capacity – the subject on which we have just voted – is, I believe, fundamental. It again poses questions about how effective and democratic the European Union is and about its financial capacity. I hope that, when you hand over the baton to the German Presidency, these issues will be clearly set out so that, in the near future, we might get Europe back on track again and, above all, enable our fellow Europeans to see Europe as the solution rather than as the problem.

If we are to do those things, two issues need to be dealt with carefully. Firstly, there is the issue of the internal market. I am familiar with the zealots of the internal market for whom that market means nothing more than the free movement of services, goods and capital. Without a social model or a social dimension and without a directive on public services, the internal market will serve only those who are strongest and richest and will militate against what our fellow Europeans expect of the European Union.

Secondly, there is the energy issue. In this area too, I have had experience of those who fervently advocate market liberalisation as the only solution to all the difficulties with which we are familiar. That is a rather limited view of things. The fact is, we also need to raise the issues of research, taxation, interconnections and geostrategy, and I know that, on these points, you have clear views, Madam President. Be firm at the European Council so that we might make progress in this area. Take heart!

**Panayiotis Demetriou (PPE-DE).** – Mr President, it is obvious that the European Union has two major headaches today: one is the Constitutional Treaty and the other is enlargement.

On the issue of the Constitutional Treaty, we have to admit that we did not make much of it – we failed to achieve positive and tangible results. We have to work harder so that we will soon have a constitutional charter for the European Union.

With regard to enlargement, unfortunately, whenever we speak about this, we refer to Turkey, and the situation is aggravated when we take into consideration the lenient position of the European Union towards Turkey. We strongly support the Europeanisation of Turkey. On the issue of the failure of Turkey to implement its commitments towards the European Union, we hope that Turkey will be made to understand that it was Turkey that applied for accession to the European Union and not the other way round. We will have to wait and see. The method of compromise is good, but, when it violates the boundaries of principles and values, it is bad.

Turkey has to get rid of the headache that is the Cyprus problem by allowing a fair solution acceptable to both communities, by withdrawing its forces and by ending the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots, because the cause of isolation is the occupation. The European Union has to play a decisive role in finding a solution to the Cyprus problem based on European values and principles.

#### IN THE CHAIR: MR DOS SANTOS

*Vice-President*

**Libor Rouček (PSE).** – (CS) Ladies and gentlemen, contrary to the pessimistic and even depressing opinions expressed by some previous speakers, I take the view that Europe has made considerable progress in the past six months under the Finnish Presidency. Today in Parliament, for example, the pioneering REACH legislation has been adopted, the Globalisation Adjustment Fund has been set up, the Union has responded flexibly and effectively to the Lebanon crisis, and Romania and Bulgaria will join the family of EU Member States on 1 January. Are these not, ladies and gentlemen, clear examples of progress and success, and evidence of the fact that, despite the huge challenges and problems the EU faces, it is capable of acting effectively?

Yes, the EU needs to make its decision-making mechanisms more effective and more flexible and to adopt the fundamental principles contained in the European Constitution, with which, let me remind you, all of the EU-25 governments have identified. I should like to thank Finland not only for being the sixteenth country to adopt the Constitution but also for taking the debate on the future of the European Constitution further. What we need now is also a clear position and clear statements from the leaders of countries like Poland, the United Kingdom and the Czech Republic that have yet to ratify the Treaty as regards what they want to do next with the document, when they will ratify it, and if they are not going to ratify it, what alternative solutions they are proposing. I would like us to have such a statement this week at the EU summit in Brussels.

**Markus Ferber (PPE-DE).** – *(DE)* Mr President, Madam President-in-Office of the Council, Mr President of the Commission, ladies and gentlemen, today is not yet the time for a final assessment of what the Finnish Presidency of the Council achieved in the second half of 2006; that is something we will be able to do next week in the light of what emerges from the Summit.

I do believe, though, that we must not let go of one very striking point, something that has been a particular motivating force behind what we have been doing over the last few days, that being the question of what our attitude is towards ourselves and all the things we have brought into being over the last 50 years, and whether we are willing to justify them to those who are desirous of accession to the EU. The reason why I say this with a great deal of passion is that I know from experience, especially from conversations with Turkey, that we may well use the same terminology, but actually mean quite different things. For our own sakes, we must become clear in our own minds about what it is that unites us.

The impression I get from listening to this afternoon's debate is that we are a very colourful Christmas tree, under which everyone puts their presents, and, seeing their own there, like the rest of the tree as well, but that is not how Europe functions internally, and nor is it going to be successfully sold to the outside world on that basis.

Even now, I am hearing once more that, even though eight chapters have been put to one side during the negotiations with Turkey, another might be opened after all. We will get nowhere if we do the things that ended up making matters difficult for us in the last enlargement round, that is to say if every presidency of the Council wants to outdo its predecessor in the number of chapters it manages either to open or to complete.

We must define for ourselves what we stand for and what unites us – I have just discovered that there is relatively little that unites me with Mrs Berès – and that is something we now have to sort out internally if we are to be able to communicate it to the outside world. That is the message that should go out from the December Summit and from the Finnish Presidency of the Council.

**Gary Titley (PSE).** – Mr President, I wish to congratulate the President-in-Office on the way in which, with characteristic Finnish honesty but uncharacteristic Presidency bluntness, he has described the difficulties in the Council of getting Member States to agree on things, and how impossible it is to make progress in certain areas where we have unanimity. It is very important that the EU delivers in areas like justice and home affairs and immigration policy, and we must ensure that we make progress for the benefit of our citizens. I would hope that in areas where we have almost reached agreement, such as prisoner transfers and the possibility of a rapid response instrument for emergencies, we will be able to carry these through in a summit.

We can also apply the same principle to Member States in other areas as the Commission did yesterday in taking action about opening up energy markets and on economic reform. Let us not lose sight of the importance of getting Member States to deliver on what they promised to do on the whole Lisbon Strategy.

However, enlargement is clearly the big issue. We seem to have avoided a train crash with Turkey, but that does not guarantee the train is not going to come grinding to a halt, because if that train does come to a halt, the consequences will be very severe not only for the European Union but also for the Balkans. We must move ahead with enlargement. We must not become distracted by things like absorption capacity, because we all know that if Norway wanted to join, nobody would want to talk about absorption capacity. It is a code word for something else. Let us make progress on enlargement; let us keep the show on the road.

**Nikolaos Vakalis (PPE-DE).** – *(EL)* Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I too shall focus on the major issue of enlargement, which has again predominated recently.

First of all it is clear that the European Union must keep its promises. Consequently, the promise we gave of European prospects both to Turkey and to Croatia and the other countries in the Western Balkans cannot be revoked.

It is likewise clear that the integration capacity of the European Union is a serious factor which should be taken into account by all the members. There can be no enlargement if it has an adverse effect on the cohesion of the Union and its efficacy in preparing and implementing policies. This is in the interest

not only of the European Union but also of the candidate countries. This being so and irrespective of the sanctions which will be imposed in the event of non-compliance, it is in the interest of all the candidate countries not to demonstrate a position of filibustering or constant procrastination when it comes to complying with the negotiated framework. This framework is defined by the European Union, not by them.

Progress by the candidate countries in honouring their European obligations may well be a painful process, but it is also the only opportunity for them to modernise and, as such, they must deal with it.

Finally, let us not forget the Union's constitutional problem, which is still unresolved. It is clear that further enlargement of the Union cannot be attempted if this problem is not successfully resolved first, because a European Union which is not functional is very simply unable to accept new Member States.

**Mia De Vits (PSE).** – (NL) Mr President, Madam President-in-Office of the Council, Mr President of the Commission, I cannot imagine that the Council would not say anything about the restructuring exercise at Volkswagen's Vorst plant. Restructuring exercises are becoming increasingly more common and the decision by Volkswagen is a harsh one that will, either directly or indirectly, plunge thousands of families into uncertainty.

I think that Europe can lend a hand not just via structural funds or a globalisation fund, but I think that the Commission should also monitor those exercises. Were the trade unions consulted on time? I think that this can certainly not be said in the case of Volkswagen. Is the restructuring exercise based on economic motives, or did other national motives come into it? The Volkswagen Vorst plant is the second most productive site. It is correct that the automotive sector is producing in excess of requirement, but I think that it is exactly at those times that a real industrial policy is called for. CARS 21 is an initial step, although it strikes me as far from adequate.

**Francisco José Millán Mon (PPE-DE).** – (ES) Mr President, I shall focus on two issues concerning the forthcoming European Council. Firstly, enlargement. Enlargement has been and remains a success for the European Union: it has brought benefits in political and economic terms and it has strengthened Europe's role in the world. I am convinced that it will be positive for Bulgaria and Romania.

The fifth enlargement has demonstrated the so-called 'transforming power of the Union', which has stimulated profound and positive political, economic and social changes in countries that until recently were under the Communist yoke, but since enlargement has been a success story, that story must be properly told. I therefore support the Commission in terms of the importance it attaches to communication. That is to say, the citizens must be made more aware of its benefits. I hope that the forthcoming European Council will also be aware of it.

I also support the idea of conditionality. The candidate countries must fulfil their commitments and carry out the necessary reforms. Naturally, throughout the process, we must take account of the Union's capacity to integrate all of these countries. Furthermore, the enlargement process cannot carry on indefinitely; I therefore also agree with the Commission's idea of consolidation.

The other issue is immigration. In my country, illegal immigration is unfortunately an extremely topical issue. Mr President, I would like to insist that illegal immigration must be a central issue in the Union's relations with third countries. I am pleased that, during the Finnish Presidency, the European Union has held ministerial meetings on immigration and development with African countries in Rabat and Tripoli, but we must move on from final conclusions to actions. For example, it is essential that we sign re-admission agreements. That is unfortunately a long way away. For how many years has the Commission been negotiating the re-admission agreement with Morocco, and the one with the ACP countries? We have the Cotonou Agreement but, despite its Article 13, neither re-admissions nor re-admission agreements are making any progress. I am also rather concerned about the optimism I have heard expressed about the situation of Frontex.

Mr President, illegal immigration is a very serious problem, with far-reaching consequences, and a space without borders, such as Schengen, affects all of us. We must act in a firm and determined fashion in order to ensure that the statements and commitments repeated at so many ministerial conferences are turned into realities. The forthcoming European Council must promote this objective decisively.

**Simon Busuttil (PPE-DE).** – (MT) Mr President, I too will be speaking about immigration. In fact, to be fair, I think we should say that this year could go down as the year during which Europe finally

started to face reality with regard to the issue of illegal immigration. It has been a year during which Europe has realised that Southern European countries cannot be left to face this problem on their own, a very different proposition from the 'doors' and 'windows' mentioned by Mr Cohn-Bendit. In fact, we have started to witness the inception of common action: short-term measures that are just as necessary as long-term measures.

For the first time, we have seen European patrols in the Mediterranean Sea as well as in the Atlantic. Next year, these patrols must not only be continued, but also strengthened and extended throughout all the months during which we are vulnerable. Thanks to this Parliament, we have seen a bigger budget allocated to the Frontex agency, which has a crucial role in this sphere. Moreover, tomorrow we will be voting on four new funds, among which is a European fund aimed specifically at strengthening external borders. This is something we must do if we want the flow to decrease.

I expect these funds to be used in an effective manner as from this January. It is encouraging that these funds will have an emergency clause so that assistance can be given immediately in cases of emergency. Moreover, at the end of November the Commission, which I congratulate, announced new proposals designed to strengthen external maritime borders in Southern Europe. These proposals include the establishment of a network of coastal patrols and of the European system for frontier surveillance. I congratulate the Commission on these proposals.

Therefore, during discussions about immigration, European governments must show the necessary political will and solidarity, so that we can proceed on the road we have finally embarked on – the right way. Moreover, if, during this year we have finally started facing reality, next year must be the year during which we can prove clearly that when we work together we can meet even the most difficult challenges.

**Alexander Stubb (PPE-DE).** – Mr President, I would like to congratulate the President of the Commission on the good team spirit and control he has in his cabinet because it seems they have to have colour-coordinated ties. I think that is very good – it shows that they have things under control!

This European Council is about three things. I thought that the Socialists were against product placement, and I can tell Mia De Vits that this summit is not about Volkswagen, it is about three things: enlargement; the Constitution; and justice and home affairs.

What do I think the key message for enlargement should be? It should be threefold: first, we need to continue our commitment to enlargement. If we get that into the conclusions I think it is a success. Second, I think that integration capacity should be defined but it should not be a condition for enlargement. If you get that through, I think it would be very good. Third, I think we need a little more public debate on enlargement and, certainly, on public defence. Right now, we have a political leadership in many countries that first takes a decision on enlargement and, right after it has done that, starts blaming enlargement for all the bad that we have in the world. I do not think that is the right way to go about it.

Second, the Constitution. As a former civil servant, I understand the necessity for confidential consultations. Nevertheless, it would be nice if you could throw some light on what those consultations would lead to. I would also like to thank the Finnish Presidency and Finland for ratifying the Constitution. I think that was a very important step and an important gesture. There is a lot of debate about the Constitution right now. I, personally, am against the idea of a mini-treaty. I would like to have a 'treaty plus' – in other words a second edition of the Treaty. If we achieve that in 2008 or 2009 I think that would be quite good.

Finally, justice and home affairs. I am sick and tired of hearing people say that we cannot advance on this thing because of the Constitution. No – we decided in Amsterdam to move to qualified majority voting, we reinforced that in Nice and we did it with the Constitution. If we have the political will – and this goes straight to the German Government – we can move to qualified majority voting in all justice and home affairs questions.

I would like to congratulate the Finnish Presidency for a job very well done.

**Paula Lehtomäki, President-in-Office of the Council.** (FI) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, first of all, thank you for this excellent debate and the comments and counsel the Presidency has received during the discussions. In my opening speech I did not go any deeper into the enlargement debate, nor

will I now, because we discussed this in the House very thoroughly this morning. It is one of the European Council's main concerns, but we debated the details in our sitting earlier today.

In several speeches, questions about a social Europe arose. Let me remind you, however, that at the informal summit at Lahti there was also a social summit, and as President Barroso mentioned, this autumn a decision on the Globalisation Adjustment Fund was reached. We in Finland are in the habit of reminding ourselves that you first have to create prosperity for it to be shared, and that is why there was so much attention paid to innovation and competitiveness policy during the Finnish presidential term.

Regarding immigration, the Union is specifically aiming at a comprehensive debate on immigration issues, and this the European Council intends to confirm in its discussions at the weekend. It is comprehensive in the sense that it will not be exclusively about border control or just about illegal immigration. It will also be a tremendous opportunity to discuss legal immigration. In the summer and this autumn we organised two conferences with our African partners on this, so that we might examine the root causes of illegal immigration in particular and get to grips with them over the long term. It is well worth endorsing the work of Frontex, but that is just a small slice of the whole issue of immigration policy.

As for Galileo, there is no decision on its location in sight in the European Council, and there are no plans to discuss it. I would remind members from the new Member States that we sometimes need painstaking effort to establish EU agencies. Finland has been a Member State since 1995, and with the adoption today of the Chemicals Regulation by the European Parliament, Finland now is to have its first European Union agency, after more than 10 years of membership. I would like to thank Parliament for that.

Finally, I would like to return to the debate on the Constitutional Treaty. We have to remember that the bilateral consultations engaged in by the Finnish Presidency are due to the conclusions of the June European Council, which gave Germany the task of reporting on the situation regarding the Constitution for the European Council next spring. The report, however, needs to be based on very intensive consultations with the Member States. We have now got through the first round of consultations. It was done in a spirit of trust, which is why very little information on it was or is being made public, because the intention is for the German Presidency to be able to continue the work, based on our analysis, and then produce a report for the European Council.

As has appeared evident from this debate, everyone seems to have an idea about what others think. We all seem to know very well what people think in different countries. Our round of consultations was an attempt to discuss directly and specifically with governments how they see the situation, and to look for possible ways to proceed. It is still not the time for a decision, however, and not even the time for negotiations. This has simply been an opportunity to hear people's opinions, and there are only very tentative conclusions to be drawn. If the situation had to be described in one word, as one of the Members of Parliament suggested, I would describe it using the word 'reform'. We have broad consensus on the need for reform, and now we are deliberating on how we can proceed and what sort of reform there should be.

Mr President, as this is my last appearance in plenary, apart from question time which follows soon, I would like to thank the European Parliament personally and on behalf of the Presidency for its very diverse, even kaleidoscopic, but always excellent cooperation.

*(Applause)*

**José Manuel Barroso, President of the Commission.** *(PT)* There is no doubt that, despite naturally differing views, this debate has revealed areas of firm consensus, which I would like to highlight because some of them are important.

We are looking to build a new consensus on the enlargement and, let us be frank, the Turkey issue is a sensitive one that strongly divides public opinion in our countries. The fact that the Commission's proposal – supported by the Finnish Presidency and formulated in close cooperation with the Finnish Presidency at every stage – obtained unanimous support from the Member States via their Foreign Ministers was crucial because we could have had a very serious problem on our hands today.

On an issue as sensitive and delicate as this, we have succeeded in achieving a position that we consider to be balanced, credible and fair, and today it obtained a resounding majority among the Members of

this House who had their say. We will now hopefully be able to hold a proper strategic discussion on enlargement. I should like to underline Mr Stubb's remarks, which I found highly pertinent. It is vital that European leaders at all levels, not just the Heads of State or Government, including the European Parliament and others in positions of political authority at national level, hold a serious debate on the issue of the enlargement, regardless of whether or not Europe sees enlargement as a great opportunity, which is precisely what enlargement represents for Europe, politically, economically and culturally, and I would even say historically. For this to happen it was important to 'cleanse' this debate of the most difficult issues that were on the table so that we could focus on the important business.

I hope the Council marks this new consensus. We need it and we need to have the courage to debate, with our citizens, what enlargement represents.

Earlier today I was in Berlin, taking part in an interview with Chancellor Merkel on a popular German television programme, in which the public asked us questions such as how much Germany stands to lose from enlargement and what companies would leave. My job was to explain that, for example, Germany is profiting hugely from enlargement; that enlargement is helping create jobs in Germany; that Germany went from EUR 17 billion in exports to what are now the new Member States in 1994 to around EUR 80 billion this year; that Germany exports more to the new Member States than it imports; and that enlargement is creating, rather than destroying jobs in the EU-15.

The enlargement has been positive for the EU, and this, in my view, has been the main contribution of the Council. Let us work to achieve a new consensus on the enlargement. I do not intend to go over the other issues that were explained so well by Mrs Lehtomäki.

I should like to express my thanks for the positive spirit of collaboration we have enjoyed with the Finnish Presidency and I would add, in response to a question raised, if I remember rightly, by Mrs Ludford – because this issue was not mentioned in my first speech – that the Commission vehemently condemns this so-called conference on the holocaust held in Teheran. If it were not so tragic, it would be laughable. It is wrong to insult the memory of so many victims of the holocaust in this way. On this issue too, we need to uphold a position of principle.

**President.** The debate is closed.

#### ***Written Statements (Rule 142)***

**Richard Corbett (PSE).** – I am astonished that several Members have focused on their opposition to the Constitutional treaty in their contribution to this debate, although the matter is not on the agenda of this Council, but of the one to be held in June.

Nor is it right for them to say that the issue is dead, having been 'rejected'. It hasn't. It has been rejected by 2 countries and accepted by 18, with the remainder waiting to see what happens. What we have is not rejection, but divergence. It is quite right for the European Council to try to overcome that divergence, taking account both of the views of the minority that rejected the treaty and of the majority who support it. To claim that the current treaties should forever remain unamended because of the rejection of this treaty by France and the Netherlands is untenable.

**Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL).** – *(PT)* As we all know, as social problems in the EU pile up, there is ever greater pressure to pursue neoliberal policies, and the disastrous problems we know are associated with those policies, namely unemployment, precarious work, poverty and social inequality. What emerges, on the other hand, is an emphasis on immigration policy, and an attempt to increase the implementation of qualified majority voting, on the pretext of facilitating policy in this area, whereas the real intention is to implement more securitarian measures.

Similarly, there is increased focus on institutional issues, in an attempt to relaunch the so-called European Constitution. It is symptomatic that in meetings with representatives of future presidencies, such as Germany, the institutional question always rises to the top of the agenda, closely followed by the completion of the internal market, and the issue of energy. Equally symptomatic is the way in which social and environmental issues are played down and no mention is made of reviewing the status and guidelines of the European Central Bank, in spite of the dire consequences of its policy on the most fragile economies, families and micro-, small and medium sized enterprises.

**Pedro Guerreiro (GUE/NGL).** – *(PT)* Just a couple of comments in the 200 words available to me ...



Perhaps the most important aspect relating to enlargement is the reaffirmation of the need to comply with UN resolutions on Cyprus and not to manipulate the Cyprus question in the context of the contradictions surrounding Turkey's accession to the EU.

As regards the so-called 'constitutional process', the proposals are clear and the contradictions are still there. While the need to relaunch the 'European Constitution' has been reaffirmed, we now hear of a consensus that is 'less' ambitious but delivers the core elements. They speak of a name change and of a (pseudo) 'mini-agreement', with the accent placed on institutional issues (on the pretext that the EU needs to function, but in reality guaranteeing that the major powers dominate the decision-making process) and on what is termed 'the EU's role in the world' (in other words its militarisation and foreign interventionism). There are even those who say that if we 'sell' the idea of such a (pseudo) 'mini-agreement', referendums will not need to be held in some Member States. This 'mini-Treaty' would take the thrust of the content of the 'European Constitution', and give the impression that it is actually something different.

In other words, this is another attempt to (re)impose the rejected Treaty, and the Portuguese Presidency will be given this particularly unacceptable task in the second half of 2007.

## 21. Council Question Time

**President.** The next item is Question Time (B6-0448/2006).

The following questions have been submitted to the Council.

**President.** Question no 1 by **Marie Panayotopoulos-Cassiotou** (H-0956/06)

Subject: Action by the Finnish Presidency in respect of children and their families

What progress has the Finnish Presidency made towards enhancing the well-being of children and their families in the European Union?

**Paula Lehtomäki, President-in-Office of the Council.** (FI) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, many of the decisions taken by the European Union have a direct or indirect effect on children's lives. Examples of this are laws on social protection, the job market, health, justice and gender equality. The harmonisation of family policy, work and family life and the promotion and preservation of good working conditions are also crucial to the welfare of children and families. These and other matters were on the agenda at the informal meeting in early July of the EU Ministers for Employment, Social Affairs and Health.

Measures that are effective and taken as early on as possible to eliminate poverty and social exclusion enhance the welfare of children and families with children. Last March the European Council stressed the need for action to eliminate child poverty, and this was also discussed at the Fifth European Round Table on Poverty and Social Exclusion held in mid-October. The subject was also included in the National Strategy Reports on Social Protection and Social Inclusion produced by the Member States for the Commission in September.

The harmonisation of work with family life is a major challenge in a changing job market. Child welfare means that both parents have to be responsible for the everyday life of the family. The Finnish Presidency has made fatherhood and the more equal involvement of men in family life the subject of debate. At the start of October a conference of experts was organised called 'Men and Gender Equality', and in December the Council's conclusions were adopted on it. During the Finnish Presidency the Commission forwarded a communication on children's rights. This was discussed by various working groups in the Council and the Permanent Intergovernmental Group *L'Europe de l'enfance*, which is made up of high-ranking officials with responsibility for child and family policy in the Member States.

During the Finnish presidential term, the Council has worked hard on the proposal to establish the DAFNE III Programme. This programme could also be used to finance some of the measures mentioned in the communication on children's rights. The aim is for Parliament and the Council to take a joint decision before the end of the year on the basis of political consensus reached on this in the December Council.

Finally, let me mention that Finland organised an open seminar on pre-school education towards the end of November in Helsinki. It is therefore probably true to say that during the Finnish Presidency the

Council of Ministers has been active in several of those areas of policy that are closely linked to children's welfare. The Presidency is itself also responsible for several important initiatives relating to children and families.

**Marie Panayotopoulos-Cassiotou (PPE-DE).** – (EL) Mr President, I should like to thank the Minister for her update and detailed presentation of all actions, of both the Presidency and the Commission. I trust that the same efforts will be continued by the next Presidency, so that we achieve results. I have no supplementary question.

**Paula Lehtomäki, President-in-Office of the Council.** (FI) Mr President, in the work of the Council we strive to preserve continuity in all areas of policy. The Finnish Presidency has worked very closely in various areas of policy with Germany, the next country to hold the presidency, and I am confident that the good policies will continue and strengthen during the next presidency too.

**Paul Rübzig (PPE-DE).** – (DE) Madam President-in-Office of the Council, we know that most workers are employed in family firms. Family-friendly business plans exist. Do you intend to pursue these further and do you believe that proposals could also be submitted relating to the tax treatment of families?

**Paula Lehtomäki, President-in-Office of the Council.** (FI) Mr President, tax incentives can also be used to harmonise work with family life more successfully, but, as the honourable Member must know, the harmonisation of taxation at EU level is still rather limited. It is nonetheless important that, while we ponder these questions, one of the criteria is surely the family-friendly view.

**Manuel Medina Ortega (PSE).** – (ES) Madam President, the welfare of children in the European Union is still facing certain difficulties, but they have been more or less resolved. However, what happens to children who are in the European Union but are not its citizens? There is international legislation making it obligatory to protect these children, but in some regions numbers of immigrant children have been accumulating because they cannot be returned to their countries of origin, and regional or local authorities have to take responsibility for them.

Has the Council considered the possibility of taking any measures with regard to immigrant children within the European Union?

**Paula Lehtomäki, President-in-Office of the Council.** (FI) Mr President, the matter of integration connected with immigration policy is one important area which also has a direct effect on the children of immigrants. With those families that are the target of active integration measures, children's living conditions and their integration into a new European domicile must be a better and more fruitful option. As I said in my original answer, the Commission has forwarded a communication on the promotion of children's rights in the Union, and it also actually relates to nationals other than those who were born in the European Union. Furthermore, the EU's large-scale action programme to fight social exclusion is an attempt, for example, to improve exchanges of information to prevent social exclusion.

**President.** Question no 2 by **Manuel Medina Ortega** (H-0959/06)

Subject: Immigration strategies

Given the scale of world-wide migratory movement, and the demographic and ageing problems of the countries of the European Union, what strategies does the Council intend to pursue in order to regulate immigration into Europe in the immediate future?

**Paula Lehtomäki, President-in-Office of the Council.** (FI) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the Hague Programme for strengthening freedom, security and justice in the European Union, which was approved in November 2004, and the related Council and Commission action plan of 2005 both establish a framework within which to develop an EU policy on legal immigration. Under the Hague programme, the vital role of legal immigration in, for example, enhancing the Union's economic development, is already recognised. At the same time, the programme states that it falls within the competence of the Member States to decide on numbers of legal immigrants. With this in mind, the Commission intends to submit for approval several proposals for acts set out in the action policy programme on legal immigration adopted in January 2006.

The first of these is a proposal for a general framework directive whose main purpose would be to guarantee common rights for all nationals of third countries who already work legally in a Member State but who do not as yet have the right to long-term residency status in the EU. In addition, the

Commission will submit four separate proposals for a directive with reference to those groups of workers which the Member States generally need. These proposals apply to immigration and residency requirements for highly trained workers, immigration and residency requirements for seasonal workers, immigration and residency requirements for employed trainees, and the procedures for regulating the immigration of personnel sent by their company to another country temporarily, and temporary residency and stays in a country.

Another priority is better access to information on various aspects of immigration, the exchange of information on them, and the more effective dissemination of information. New instruments are intended to be developed for this in the next few years. There will be five of them in all, and the first is this year's European Year of Workers' Mobility, to be followed next year by the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All. The second instrument is the EU's immigration portal, which is to be set up by the end of next year. The third instrument is the interactive information system on Member State measures in matters of asylum and immigration. The fourth instrument is the European migration network, and the fifth is the further development of the European Professional Mobility Portal and EURES Network, as they are considered able to promote the management of economic immigration.

With regard to the integration of nationals of third countries into the society of the host countries, which we spoke about in connection with the previous question, the Union aids integration policies in Member States by means of financial instruments, among which are preparatory measures on the integration of third-country nationals. A newly allocated solidarity instrument within the framework of the financial perspectives for 2007-2013, the European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals, will give a new boost to integration policy in the Member States. The aims of the fund relate to the challenges that crop up in integration and therefore complement measures under the European Social fund. These aims are based on the Common Basic Principles on Integration adopted by the Council in November 2004.

**Manuel Medina Ortega (PSE).** – (ES) Mr President, the number of questions presented on this issue demonstrates the current level of interest in immigration issues amongst us representatives of the peoples of Europe. I would like specifically to thank the Finnish Presidency for the importance that it has attached to this issue.

My supplementary question is: does the Presidency believe that immigration is now a Community issue and that, in compliance with the principle of subsidiarity, it cannot remain in the hands of the States, but rather it must be in the hands of the European Union? Specifically, does the Presidency-in-Office of the Council not believe that this is an appropriate time to apply the passerelle clause?

With regard to the previous question, it did not relate to immigrant children who are in Europe with their families, but rather to immigrant children who arrive in the European Union alone: nobody is dealing with them and the governments do not know what to do.

**Paula Lehtomäki, President-in-Office of the Council.** (FI) Mr President, when before question time we were discussing the agenda for this week's European Council, it was made very clear that the EU Heads of State or Government would also be discussing Union immigration policy this week. In that sense it is becoming very much more a Community issue, because we believe that it would be very useful if we had common guidelines and basic principles relating to immigration policy. As I said in my original speech, however, the Member States will consider, for example, volumes of legal immigration and how many people they want to take from their own point of view. With regard to the 'passerelle' clause, to which the honourable Member refers, during a recent debate I described in detail how hard the Presidency had tried to make decision-making more efficient in justice and home affairs, but we did not succeed in this attempt.

**Danutė Budreikaitė (ALDE).** – (LT) Madam President, you mentioned that a directive is being prepared to encourage and regulate the migration of highly qualified specialists. We have here, in the European Parliament, a Development Cooperation policy which seeks to improve life in countries from which people are migrating. Do these policies and outlooks not clash? We will invite qualified migrants into our countries, will not let them create wellbeing in their own countries but instead will use them to our advantage.

**Paula Lehtomäki, President-in-Office of the Council.** (FI) Mr President, first of all we should remember that it falls exclusively within the Commission's competence to make proposals for legislation, so the Council will not be working on this directive. Instead, the Commission will draft it, although the

Commission has not yet referred it to the legislative bodies. The question of the status of trained workers is just the sort of matter where a very global approach to the European Union's immigration policy is required. On the one hand, the Union is aiming to recruit to some extent highly trained people from developing countries for its own needs. On the other hand, we must also admit and acknowledge that it will be harmful to the developing countries' own development if skilled human resources leave these countries. Accordingly, it is important that these very sensitive issues are also discussed at Union level, and that they are also discussed with our partners, as was the case at the two conferences between the European Union and Africa in the last six months, at which these questions, which are very multilateral in nature, were tackled.

**Derek Roland Clark (IND/DEM).** – Mr President, I do not have a supplementary question. I just wanted to draw your attention to the fact that I am present for my own question, which you have already got tabled.

**Reinhard Rack (PPE-DE).** – (DE) Madam President-in-Office of the Council, do you think it is helpful if European Member States unilaterally carry out as many as 1 million naturalisations over a short period, thereby, of course, setting a precedent for the others? Is this one of the subjects that the European Council can and will discuss over the next few days?

**Paula Lehtomäki, President-in-Office of the Council.** (FI) Mr President, it was not fully clear what the honourable Member is referring to precisely, but, as I have mentioned in this debate, regulation of numbers of immigrants will be in the hands of the Member States. Because, with the principle of free mobility in the Union, one Member State's immigration policy also has an effect on other countries, it is important that we can engage in closer cooperation in this area. We really should remember that proper account needs to be taken of the status of immigrants who have already resided in the European Union for a long time and who therefore have connections and roots where they now live.

**President.** Question no 3 by **Claude Moraes** (H-0961/06)

Subject: Council plans for 2007 Year of Equal Opportunities and 2008 Year of Intercultural Dialogue

What plans has the Council made to stimulate interest in the 2007 Year of Equal Opportunities and the 2008 Year of Intercultural Dialogue?

**Paula Lehtomäki, President-in-Office of the Council.** (FI) Mr President, a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council to declare 2007 the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All was agreed in May. It is the Commission's task to ensure that any forms of discrimination referred to in Article 13 of the Treaty are addressed and dealt with impartially. All stakeholders are to be included in these measures.

The aim, under Article 2, is, firstly, to raise awareness of the right to equality and non-discrimination; secondly, to get those who have suffered discrimination more involved in society; thirdly, to increase respect for diversity and equality; and fourthly, to promote cohesiveness, by eliminating stereotypes, prejudice and violence.

To achieve the aims of the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All, the action taken is to include various meetings and events, information, promotional and training campaigns, and Community or national surveys and studies. Each Member State will be responsible for what it organises over the coming months. To underline the importance of the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All, there will be an inaugural conference on it hosted by the forthcoming German Presidency in Berlin.

With regard to the European Year for Intercultural Dialogue, I would like to say that the Commission submitted a proposal for a decision on it to the European Parliament and the Council in October last year. In the proposal for a decision's explanatory memorandum, it states that the experience gained from the organised projects next year, the European Year of Equal Opportunities, should be taken into account during the European Year for Intercultural Dialogue. The Council's common position on the decision was adopted in mid-November and submitted to the European Parliament.

The proposal for a decision states that the priority task for the Member States and the Commission is to implement the projects and events planned. It states that special attention should be paid to cooperation with the European Parliament. The purpose is to encourage civil society and players at European, national and local level to activate both exchanges of experience and best practices. The main target should be

youth. The challenge is how to bring intercultural dialogue into schools and colleges, work, leisure, cultural and sports centres, and civil society organisations.

**Richard Corbett (PSE), deputising for the author.** – I wish to thank the President-in-Office for that comprehensive answer, and would simply ask what plans there are to ensure the synergy between the two different years – 2007 and 2008 – so that a holistic approach is adopted and that they benefit one another and interact, rather than being organised totally separately.

**Paula Lehtomäki, President-in-Office of the Council.** (FI) Mr President, as I said, the decisions and proposals on establishing the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue embrace the principle that the experience and lessons gained from the Year of Equal Opportunities next year, and the events connected with it, should be exploited in the arrangements for the following year. It is obviously important that there should be close scrutiny of everything that goes on next year and an endeavour to improve things to ensure that the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue is as successful as possible right from the start.

**President.** Question no 4 by **Sarah Ludford** (H-0964/06)

Subject: Counter-terrorism strategy

The European Council adopted an EU counter-terrorism strategy in November 2005. Neither this nor the action plans on terrorism have been the subject of consultation with the European Parliament, despite our repeated requests. The counter-terrorism strategy nonetheless has a section entitled 'democratic accountability', promising a high-level political dialogue on counter-terrorism involving the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission once per Presidency, 'to ensure interinstitutional governance'.

Does the Presidency believe that a last-minute invitation to the chairman of the European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs to attend the May 2006 High Level Dialogue meeting fulfilled the commitment of a true dialogue, real democratic accountability and effective 'interinstitutional governance' in this vital area of EU activity?

**Paula Lehtomäki, President-in-Office of the Council.** (FI) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the Presidency still believes that the High Level Dialogue meeting of the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission on the fight against terrorism is of benefit in the promotion of openness and accountability in the strategy to combat terrorism in the EU. The meeting on 10 May, during the Italian Presidency, was the last indication of this commitment.

With regard to the claim made in the question that the invitation was sent at the last minute, the Presidency wishes to point out that the President of the European Parliament was sent an official invitation on 10 April 2006. It does not fall within the Presidency's competence to guess the reasons why it took so long to send an invitation to the Chairman of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, but we are pleased that the Chairman of the Committee was nevertheless able to attend.

During its presidential term, Finland tried to honour its obligations under the strategy and organise this high-level event, but possible dates were always being cancelled before the invitation was sent, owing to one of the parties or because of some other major problem. The Finnish Presidency regrets that it did not manage to organise the event, despite all its efforts to do so. We hope that future presidencies will meet with more success in this, because regular contact needs to be maintained with the European Parliament on this important issue.

**Sarah Ludford (ALDE).** – Thank you, Minister, but the fact is that second meeting did not take place, so one has to question the priority. And to have the chairman of the committee at just one meeting in one year is really not very stunning.

We as the Parliament were not involved in the drawing up of this counter-terrorism strategy or in the action planned, despite repeated requests. You were having discussions – we had a debate earlier this afternoon about the Automated Targeting System, which you knew about in September 2005, although you did not tell us. If there really is a commitment to keep us informed of all important developments in the field of counter-terrorism, why did we not know about that? Why are we not involved in all the discussions with the United States on security and privacy? I beg to differ on your commitment to this dialogue.

**Paula Lehtomäki**, *President-in-Office of the Council*. (FI) Mr President, as I said, we worked hard to organise this High Level Dialogue, but, unfortunately, it happened not to work out in terms of the timetable. I am sure that those here in this House understand that such things are possible in today's world. If there are a few failures in trying to get all the main parties around the same table, it just shows that six months is a very short space of time.

As for the debate we had earlier today on the US ATS, as I mentioned and as I understand it, this was referred to in September 2005 in papers which were also sent to the European Parliament, but this was never before such a major issue.

**Jörg Leichtfried (PSE)**. – (DE) Important as anti-terrorism may be, one gets the impression – as a shocking example from the United States in particular shows us – that this kind of policy is being used to restrict democratic freedoms, indeed almost to abolish them, and to curtail the freedom of the press. What has the Finnish Presidency done at European level to prevent things moving in that direction here as well, in view of the fact that we will, in the end, have either a democratic Europe or no Europe?

**Paula Lehtomäki**, *President-in-Office of the Council*. (FI) Mr President, human rights and data protection have always been crucially important in all discussions whenever European policy on counter-terrorism has been formulated and implemented. In this House I have frequently expressed the Council's position that human rights and the obligations under international agreements must be respected even when counter-terrorism measures are being implemented. This is also actually the basis for fighting terrorism in the European Union. We have to remember that European society is very much based on individual freedoms. We have to take extreme care that when we are defending and protecting this society and its model for living we do not at the same time introduce measures that in fact undermine this society based on freedom of the individual.

**President**. As the author is not present, Question No 5 lapses.

Question no 6 by **Danute Budreikaite** (H-0973/06)

Subject: Lithuania's energy prospects

Lithuania is one of the new EU Member States that is most dependent on Russian energy, which is used by Russia as a means of attaining its political objectives. Only electric energy is produced in Lithuania itself and 80 % of this energy is provided by the Ignalina nuclear power plant, which is scheduled to close in 2009.

Decision No 1364/2006/EC<sup>(1)</sup> of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down guidelines for trans-European energy networks includes plans for the construction of a link between Poland and Lithuania (Elk-Alytus). However, the town of Elk in Poland does not have a developed energy infrastructure or a high-voltage electricity link with western energy networks. This link does not solve the problem of how to connect Lithuania to the EU energy system. A new nuclear power plant in Lithuania could not be built before 2014. The absence of a common EU energy policy and common energy sources (electricity, gas), coupled with a lack of solidarity on the part of EU Member States, threatens to isolate Lithuania from energy suppliers.

Prior to its accession to the European Union, Lithuania signed Protocol No 4 on the Ignalina nuclear power plant in Lithuania. Under this protocol, Lithuania made a commitment to close unit 1 of the Ignalina nuclear power plant before 2005 and unit 2 by 2009. Without prejudice to this commitment, the general safeguard clause referred to in Article 37 of the Act of Accession is applicable until 31 December 2012 if energy supply is disrupted in Lithuania. Given such an uncertain state of affairs, could Lithuania apply Article 37 of the Act of Accession and prolong the operation of the Ignalina nuclear power plant, provided that safety standards allow, until Lithuania's energy problems are resolved?

**Paula Lehtomäki**, *President-in-Office of the Council*. (FI) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the honourable Member alludes to the application of the general safeguard clause in Article 37 of the Act of Accession. The Council would like to draw the honourable Member's attention to the answer which was given to her oral question H-0815 this year. She will certainly have realised that it is for the Commission, if requested with justification by a Member State, to decide on protection measures that it deems necessary in order to respond to a Member State's request.

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ L 262, 22.9.2006, p.1.

Let me say here that last week an electric cable connection was established between Estonia and Finland, which will connect electricity networks in the Baltic and the Nordic Countries, and so also improve energy security in Lithuania. This will also be an important step forward in developing European networks.

**Danutė Budreikaitė (ALDE).** – *(LT)* Madam President, Article 4 of the Accession Treaty establishes a common defence condition until 1 December 2012. Meanwhile Article 37(1) of the Accession Treaty foresees defence measures in the event of energy difficulties within a three-year period from the date of accession. It would mean until 1 May 2007 for Lithuania. Perhaps the Minister could explain the possibility of reconciling these two normative acts and how they could be applied in practice? I would request a reply in writing.

**Paula Lehtomäki, President-in-Office of the Council.** *(FI)* Mr President, these safeguard clauses may therefore be applied if a Member State makes such a request, if it is thought to be justified, and if the Commission considers that protective measures are necessary in response to it. I would say again, however, that it is for the Commission to decide on protective measures for a Member State.

**Justas Vincas Paleckis (PSE).** – *(LT)* I would like to ask the Minister about the construction of nuclear power plants.

As we know, each European Union state decides for itself whether it needs to build new nuclear power plants. Finland does this and does it successfully. Bearing in mind that nuclear power plants are growing more reliable with every passing year, and that science and technology are reaching ever-newer levels, has the time not come for this question to be reconsidered at the European Union level as well, and for a more positive attitude to atomic energy to be expressed?

**Paula Lehtomäki, President-in-Office of the Council.** *(FI)* Mr President, this question is fundamentally linked to the common European energy debate. The Finnish Presidency has adopted the view, one that has been approved widely in the Council, that decisions on methods of producing energy are now, and will be in the future, left to the discretion of the Member States. This is what happens now too. When we talk about nuclear power, we have Member States where at present more nuclear power stations are being built, Member States that are cutting capacity, and everything in between. It is nevertheless very important from the point of view of the European energy markets and energy security in Europe that we can create and establish an infrastructure which actually connects the European energy networks, though in this we are still virtually at the starting post.

**Paul Rübzig (PPE-DE).** – *(DE)* What can the Council do to get dangerous nuclear power stations taken off line by court order? What proposals can you in the Council make in future for the safety of the European public?

**Paula Lehtomäki, President-in-Office of the Council.** *(FI)* Mr President, the Act of Accession is associated with regulations on certain nuclear power units, and at EU level special attention has also been paid to safety in the means of energy production.

It is nevertheless the job of the national authorities to ensure that these safety regulations are also implemented. This is a crucially important matter, however, which deserves attention.

**Laima Liucija Andrikienė (PPE-DE).** – I should like to ask a question concerning Question 6.

**President.** The Rules of Procedure only allows two supplementary questions per question. On this occasion, however, I shall give you the floor.

**Laima Liucija Andrikienė (PPE-DE).** – President-in-Office, my question is about Lithuanian energy prospects. Lithuania is planning to build a new nuclear power plant in Ignalina. It will be a joint project involving Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Those countries will not be able to do this before 2015. According to our previous agreements we have to close one of our blocks in 2009, and Lithuania will suffer from energy shortages. Do you, as the representative of the Presidency, think it is possible to prolong the life of Ignalina's second block until 2015?

**Paula Lehtomäki, President-in-Office of the Council.** *(FI)* Mr President, as far as I remember, the nuclear plant at Ignalina is due to shut down in 2009, and certain safeguard clauses are connected with this deadline. Let me say this a third time: decisions on safeguard clauses are taken by the Commission,

on receipt of a justifiable request, so it is not within my power to judge the use of one. If we are alluding to a new nuclear plant, I would like to mention that this is a very long-term process which will not solve short-term problems. Consequently, the building of energy networks, that is to say infrastructure, in different directions is a very important step forward in increasing energy security, and that goes for these Member States too.

**President.** Question no 7 by **Avril Doyle** (H-0974/06)

Subject: COP12

In the light of the recent COP12 meeting, the conclusions of the Environment Council meeting of 23 October 2006 and the conclusions of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council meetings of 24-25 October 2006, does the Council agree that avoided deforestation must be included in any post-2012 settlement?

**Paula Lehtomäki, President-in-Office of the Council.** (FI) Mr President, deforestation is one of the most significant factors in the problem of global climate change, accounting for around 20% of the total for man-made greenhouse gas emissions, thus around a fifth of emissions resulting from human activity. It is the aim of the European Union that, in order to reach the fundamental target in the UN Climate Treaty, the overall average rise in temperature of the earth's surface cannot be more than two degrees centigrade above the temperature during the pre-industrial age. To achieve this goal a considerable reduction in total volumes will be required, in accordance with common but differentiated areas of responsibility and capabilities.

Because the destruction of tropical forests has major significance for overall emissions, the developing countries have or may have a key role in alleviating climate change, so that emissions caused by deforestation can be cut and sustainable forestry boosted. Such measures would also help these countries to adapt to climate change and would also have other useful benefits. The EU therefore stresses the importance of examining the various options with regard to how emissions from deforestation can be cut and, in particular, exploiting synergies with measures taken in other contexts.

**Avril Doyle (PPE-DE).** – I wish to thank the President-in-Office for that answer. I did not get a 'yes' or 'no' to my question, but a very interesting résumé of the problems of climate change – all of which I agree with, but I already know.

My question was whether the Council agreed that avoided deforestation must be included in any post-2012 settlement – in other words, the second commitment period, if we are still talking in Kyoto terms. Would it be the Council's view that avoided deforestation would be part of our tools and mechanisms for reducing carbon dioxide emissions?

**Paula Lehtomäki, President-in-Office of the Council.** (FI) Mr President, the Council does not have an ultimate position on this precise question, so I cannot answer it. I refer, nevertheless, to deforestation and work to curb it, which the European Union is doing, for example, in the context of development cooperation. There was some discussion of this question too at the climate change conference in Nairobi, so its significance and importance is definitely appreciated.

**President.** Question no 8 by **Richard Corbett** (H-0976/06)

Subject: Composition of the Commission

When does the Council intend to take a decision pursuant to Article 4(3) of the Protocol on the Enlargement of the European Union annexed to the Treaty of Nice?

Has any preparatory work begun on this matter?

**Paula Lehtomäki, President-in-Office of the Council.** (FI) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the Council has not yet begun any preparatory work on this. It will take the necessary decision in good time in compliance with its obligations under the Protocol on the Enlargement of the European Union annexed to the Treaty of Nice. At this stage, however, it is impossible to say precisely when this will happen. Let me just say that if the negotiated Treaty on the Constitution comes into force, that will do something to resolve the issue.

**Richard Corbett (PSE).** – Thank you for the answer, which demonstrates that, whether it is under the current Treaties as modified by Nice or under the Constitutional Treaty, the Council has to get to work on a new system for the composition of the Commission, presumably with a rotation. If that is the case,



and if it is going to enter into force in time for the next Commission, would it not be a good idea to begin work sooner rather than later?

**Paula Lehtomäki, President-in-Office of the Council.** (FI) Mr President, it is rather hard to say that it would be better to start soon, but we have to remember that these matters are all connected. It is a question of the entire institutional package, which in turn is connected with the Constitutional Treaty, which includes the composition of the Commission. I would say again that the Council has not yet begun the preparatory work.

**President.** Question No 9 has been withdrawn.

Question no 10 by **Bernd Posselt** (H-0981/06)

Subject: Status of Kosovo

How does the Finnish Council Presidency explain that, despite the hopes of the highly competent UN Chief Negotiator Ahtisaari, the question of Kosovo's status will not be resolved before the end of the year, and how does it rate the chances of success for next year?

**Paula Lehtomäki, President-in-Office of the Council.** (FI) Mr President, since the beginning of the year, UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari has been taking forward talks between the parties using mainly a bottom-up approach. In July Mr Ahtisaari organised the first high-level meeting between Belgrade and Pristina in Vienna. The presidents and prime ministers from both sides attended. At the meeting Belgrade and Pristina expressed totally opposite views on the status of Kosovo.

It is still the strategic goal of the European Union to find a quick and lasting solution to the situation in Kosovo, without endangering Serbian democracy and general stability in the region. When notification was received that the Serbian parliamentary elections were to be held on 21 January 2007, Martti Ahtisaari said that he would put a proposal to the parties immediately after the elections, as he did not want the solution to Kosovo's status to become an election weapon in Serbia's future elections.

The European Union continues to support Mr Ahtisaari fully, and also his endeavours as leader of the political determination process in respect of Kosovo's future status as well as his recent moves to produce a comprehensive solution. It is in the Union's interests that the process should have a favourable outcome. Success is vital, because it would offer favourable prospects for the future, both for the inhabitants of Kosovo and for general stability in the region. The European Union is now preparing for its future presence in Kosovo as part of an international civil mission. The EU's preparations for the rule of law and a police operation are also in progress.

**Bernd Posselt (PPE-DE).** – (DE) As you know, the population of Kosovo has been through a great deal, so it is naturally anxious about the continuing postponements. Do you believe this is the last postponement and that the final report really will be presented in February or March?

What have you to say about the fears aroused by the plans for a division of Kosovo or by the territorial claims upon Kosovo contained in the new Serbian constitution?

**Paula Lehtomäki, President-in-Office of the Council.** (FI) Mr President, Special Envoy Ahtisaari has made it clear to the Council that he has no intention of delaying his proposal for a solution after the January elections are over. I would not like to predict yet, however, the content of his proposal for a solution on status.

**President.** Question no 11 by **Bastiaan Belder** (H-0983/06)

Subject: Late abortions at Ginemedex abortion clinic in Barcelona

Is the Council aware of the Danish report on the Ginemedex abortion clinic in Barcelona, which performs late abortions, even after the 30th week of pregnancy, displaying a flagrant disregard for human life which has caused an international outcry<sup>(2)</sup>?

Can the Council confirm that citizens of other EU Member States use this clinic for abortions even after the 30th week of pregnancy, evading the criminal law of their own Member State?

(2) Report on the Danish TV channel DR 1 in the evening of Sunday, 29 October 2006.

Is the Council concerning itself with this evasion of the criminal law of the Member States and this assault on human life?

What efforts will the Council make to reach agreements among the Member States to enable the criminal law of the Member States to be enforced and ensure that the principle of free movement of persons is not used to undermine the rights of viable fetuses?

**Paula Lehtomäki, President-in-Office of the Council.** (FI) Mr President, the Council has never discussed this, because it does not fall within its competence. The European Union treaties have not bestowed on the Community or the Union the competence whereby the Union could regulate on abortions. The Member States thus have the competence to regulate on this and ensure compliance in their territory with the laws that they pass. The EU cannot interfere in unsatisfactory states of affairs due to differences in the legislation of Member States when it comes to areas that are not within its competence.

**Bastiaan Belder (IND/DEM).** – (NL) Mr President, I do indeed understand that this is about who has power over what, but it has to be said that this is a cross-border issue, and so I am surprised that it has not been discussed at all in the Council. If we talk about European values – something which has also been in the news a great deal – and we also consider the issue of the free movement of people, then we have a European problem, certainly if we take into account the fact that Dutch doctors were involved in this affair. In short, I should like to ask you again how this relates to the freedom of movement of people, and whether we are not dealing with a European problem of a cross-border nature.

**Paula Lehtomäki, President-in-Office of the Council.** (FI) Mr President, I would just like to say that the free mobility of people is one of the European Union's basic concerns. The movement of services has also been established for a very long time, and if there are illegal goings-on in Member States, it is their responsibility and duty to monitor them and intervene. In this case it is incontrovertibly clear that big differences between the laws in Member States lead to very different practices around Europe.

**President.** Questions which had not been answered for lack of time would receive written answers (see Annex).

That concludes Question Time.

*(The sitting was suspended at 7.00 p.m. and resumed at 9.00 p.m.)*

## IN THE CHAIR: MR MAURO

*Vice-President*

## 22. Driving licences (debate)

**President.** The next item is the recommendation for second reading of the Committee on Transport and Tourism on the Council common position for adopting a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on driving licences (recast) [09010/1/2006 C6-0312/2006 2003/0252(COD)]

(Rapporteur: Mathieu Grosch) (A6-0414/2006).

**Mathieu Grosch (PPE-DE), rapporteur.** – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, it was a hard task. We started work on it two and a half years ago. The legislative period was not the most auspicious for getting agreement at first reading, but I believe we have brought the dossier to a good conclusion. I would like to begin by thanking my colleagues, because we had a very open debate in committee and found that the issue was not so much party political differences as traditions. My special thanks go to those colleagues who largely backed the project despite the sensitivities in their own countries.

I would also like to thank the Council, because both the Finnish and Austrian Presidencies and not least the Luxembourg Presidency, which created the basis for the compromise, have helped to make it possible for us to reach a good conclusion tomorrow.

(FR) Commissioner, I too should like to thank you because you yourself, as well as your team, have done a very good job of supporting this project. I am particularly keen to emphasise the expertise that has been shown by the members of your administration in dealing with this very complex matter and that has led us to what I believe are worthwhile solutions.

(DE) I believe the challenges with this directive can be summarised as follows:

Firstly, we thought it was important not to create an additional driving licence, the 111th or 130th, but, over a period of time, to introduce a single European one. That was to be seen more as a symbol, however, because when driving licences are exchanged we really wanted a record to be made of the licences in circulation and to have documentation so that we know precisely how many driving licences are in circulation in the various countries and who owns them, so that information can be exchanged.

Ultimately it was also about road safety, and there was a particular need for action here in the area of motorcycles. We achieved that, too. Moreover, the directive also strikes a good balance between economic viability on the one hand and safety on the other, especially where caravans are concerned. These common challenges resulted in a common position. In six years' time, countries will introduce the new driving licence model for new applications. That will gradually affect 300 million citizens. But its value for those citizens is more than merely symbolic. It was this added value that persuaded us all. We see an improvement in mobility. A single driving licence that is recognised everywhere will see the end of the problems over the recognition of acquired rights in the various countries, not only for tourists but for professional drivers as well. That will now be secured once and for all with this proposal. Legal certainty is one of our most important concerns, and we have created it with this project.

Since this is a compromise, we have to speak about deadlines. Personally, I would of course have been very glad if everything, both the initial exchange and the regular exchange procedure, had been completed within ten years. However, some countries insisted that the time allowed for this definitive exchange should be 20 years. I am rather philosophical here on the principle of better late than never. I do hope, though, that it will happen rather sooner than the deadline provided in the directive.

In my opinion, safety remains one of the most important aspects. We have focussed on two important areas here: firstly, the prevention of 'driving licence tourism'. If countries show good will, the data held in different countries can be used to prevent driving licence tourism when licences are withdrawn, restricted or suspended. We believe that a person who is a hazard on the road in one country must also be banned from driving in the other 26 countries. The foundation has been laid; we are waiting for a clear sign from the Member States here.

A second important safety point was in relation to motorcycles. The principle of progressive access to large motorcycles, which may perhaps in time also be expected in other areas, is based on the accident statistics, which are unfortunately not so good where motorcycles are concerned; it is also a good combination of theory and practice. Theory first and then practice will make access easy.

In the area of caravans, a good balance was found between economy and safety. I am pleased that the Commission has accepted our proposal. We have not only required the additional B+E driving licence for mobile homes and caravans, but also, above a certain weight, a small test.

In conclusion I would say that, thanks to the close cooperation between the three institutions, and also between my fellow-Members of this House, this directive represents added value for the public: greater legal certainty, improved road safety, more mobility, less driving licence tourism and also a plus for the economy and tourism. Over all, I therefore believe that with this report we have set an example of the pragmatism that is possible in the Committee on Transport and Tourism.

**Jacques Barrot**, *Vice-President of the Commission*. (FR) Mr President, I do apologise. In fact, a man in my position, having had the honour of participating in parliamentary assemblies for many years, should never be late. Mr President, honourable Members, please accept my apologies.

Having said that, my embarrassment is still greater, since I must pay tribute to Parliament's excellent work on this very important issue of the directive on driving licences. I would like to extend my warmest and most sincere thanks to Mr Grosch, whose report is of an extremely high quality, and to the Committee on Transport and Tourism for the support given to the Commission's proposal.

It is clear from the numerous reactions generated by this proposal during the legislative process that this issue is very important to you. This is to be expected, since the driving licence is the most commonly held qualification in the Union today. Almost 300 million people depend on their driving licence for their mobility and, of course, in everyday life. The number of experts in the field, or those who consider themselves as such, is almost as high as the number of holders of driving licences, and each one has their own opinion on the subject.

However, after the political agreement reached in the Council last March and the vote by the Committee on Transport and Tourism at the end of November, a broad consensus is taking shape, confirming that the other institutions approve of the objectives proposed by the Commission. Although the process has taken a little longer than expected, we are now on the verge of reaching an agreement on second reading with the Council on a very sensitive proposal. We have perceived the need to apply the new comitology procedure to this proposal for a third directive on driving licences. This will make the process of amending its technical annexes more transparent. On this point, an agreement was quickly reached during informal negotiations between Parliament, the Council and the Commission. I therefore warmly welcome Parliament's amendments on this particular subject.

I am going to take the liberty, Mr President, of giving a brief reminder of the three objectives that this proposal for a directive on driving licences is designed to achieve, by expounding on Mr Grosch's very pertinent comments.

The first objective is to aid the fight against forgery. A single model of driving licence, in the form of a plastic card, will in time replace the current system of no fewer than 110 models. The administrative validity of the licence will be limited to 10 years, with a possible extension to 15 years. We will reinforce the principle of a single licence per driver and introduce an optional microchip. These are the measures to combat forgery, as Mr Grosch explained clearly.

The second objective is to improve road safety. Yes, we will introduce a real driving licence for the most vulnerable users of two-wheeled vehicles, namely drivers of mopeds. We will put in place an enhanced system of progressive access for driving motorcycles and heavy vehicles, redefine categories B and B+E for driving cars towing heavy trailers and, finally, introduce compulsory initial and ongoing training for examiners. This point is, in my opinion, particularly important.

The third objective is to facilitate freedom of movement. We will therefore reaffirm the principle of mutual recognition of driving licences within the European Union. We will harmonise both the rules on the validity of driving licences and the frequency of medicals for drivers of heavy vehicles.

I would like to conclude by saying that the common position, accompanied by the amendments on the comitology procedure, represents a successful compromise. I feel that the final text is well balanced and is a real improvement on the current Directive. Thanks to Mr Grosch's excellent work, we have taken a step towards achieving our common aim of cutting the number of deaths on the roads of the European Union by half before 2010.

Mr President, honourable Members, if I may, I would like to concur with the wish expressed by your rapporteur, Mr Grosch, that the Member States will not wait until the final deadline to introduce this European driving licence, which will be a strong symbol of our European citizenship and of the responsibility assumed by each driver when taking the wheel.

**Georg Jarzembowski, on behalf of the PPE-DE Group.** – (DE) Mr President, Mr Vice-President of the Commission, ladies and gentlemen, I will be brief. First, I would like to extend my special thanks to Mr Grosch for all he has done. However, we must first make clear to outsiders what he has achieved, because to the public it looks as though all he has done is to make three applications for the comitology procedure and that otherwise the Council has had its way. It was, however, Mr Grosch who, in cooperation with his shadow rapporteurs, spent weeks and months negotiating to get a proper, acceptable Council common position together at all. We must draw express attention to that, or else people will think that all we are doing is approving the common position. No, we thank Mr Grosch and his colleagues for negotiating for weeks on end to get the Council to present a common position that had been agreed with us.

Two further brief remarks: I am one of the Members who were against mandatory exchange and against limited validity for licences. We then nevertheless agreed that in the interests of road safety and preventing the forging of licences it is acceptable for citizens to have to exchange their driving licences after 26 years. Many of us will perhaps not have to do that, if we are wise. In that regard, 26 years is probably a good compromise and we can readily accept it.

My final remark, Commissioner, is that you were right to say that we hope many Member States will bring all these measures into force earlier. Please see to it that the Member States act on their promise to put into effect quickly the exchange of data on driving licences, for we will be able to prevent driving licence tourism only if Member States exchange the relevant data and know that they must not issue

this or that citizen with a driving licence because he is still banned. So let us make sure the Member States build the information network quickly.

**Ewa Hedkvist Petersen**, *on behalf of the PSE Group*. – (SV) Mr President, Commissioner, at long last, we can begin the move to a common European driving licence. We have, unfortunately, been forced to accept a latest deadline of 26 years for all the Member States to have introduced the common driving licence. This is much too long a period. Like previous speakers, I believe that things will progress more quickly than that. We must now call on the Member States to take this matter seriously and work towards having a common driving licence sooner, and one, at that, that is replaced at regular intervals. We must also call on the Commission to assist the Member States in this work, just as Mr Jarzembowski said.

This is an important issue for Europeans, as it affects so many people. A majority of European citizens possess a driving licence. There is one thing that we know with certainty, and that is that the people of Europe want it to be easy to drive in their own country and in others and to be able to use their driving licences without administrative hassle. However, Europeans also want those driving on the roads to be properly qualified so to do. It should also be possible to punish those who break the law or the rules, even if they come from a different country.

The new common driving licence will, over time, meet all these needs. Clearly, this has to happen in a timeframe shorter than 26 years. As has already been pointed out, this measure will improve road safety, but it will also, at the same time, counteract social dumping, so that those aiming to exploit the fact that there are fake driving licences in circulation will not, in future, be able to make financial gains from this.

I would like to close by thanking all the fellow Members I have worked with for the cooperation we have enjoyed. We have been working on this issue for a long time, and it is no small number of us who have taken an active part in the debate. Finally, I would like to add that I think it is a positive development that access to motorcycling will be on a progressive basis. I believe this is a good thing for road safety.

**Danutė Budreikaitė**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (LT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the recommendation in the European Commission's Directive concerning the new version of driving licences, replacing the 1991 Directive, solves a range of important issues, namely reducing opportunities for fraud, guaranteeing rights to freedom of movement for citizens, and improving road traffic safety.

I would like to highlight the importance of such a licence for freedom of movement for citizens. In the EU there are over 100 various forms of driving licences with various validity periods and different intervals for medical testing of professional drivers.

Free movement of individuals also creates opportunities for the abuse of driving licences: having lost permission to drive because of an infringement in his own country, an EU citizen can get a driving licence in another country. Such behaviour by unscrupulous drivers creates a hazard for traffic safety in all of Europe. Therefore, it is truly essential to implement the principle of driving licence uniformity.

Speaking of the implementation period for the Regulation, it is projected to be unjustifiably long. The driving licence's validity may be extended to 15 years, and changed – about 20 years from the Directive coming into force.

Therefore, such periods truly reduce and make more distant the goals defined by the Commission in the recommendation reducing opportunities for fraud and improving road traffic safety.

**Michael Cramer**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to begin by extending my sincere thanks to the rapporteur. I believe that, together with his colleague Mr Jarzembowski, he spent most of his time trying to get a common position. It was a very difficult task, but he did nevertheless succeed in it, so warm congratulations are due to him.

After a discussion that began more than 10 years ago in the early 1990s, the single EU driving licence in credit-card format will at last become reality and replace the 110 different driving licences. It will have to be renewed with an up-to-date photograph every 10 or 15 years. Even though a medical examination will not be required – it has been an accepted fact of life in Italy for years – the EU driving licence will be a contribution to road safety because it will also prevent driving licence tourism. Anyone who has driven too fast or been caught with alcohol in their blood and lost their licence can at present go abroad and apply for a new licence there. This practice carries serious risks for road safety. Traffic

offenders often go to Poland or the Czech Republic, thus avoiding not only the months of disqualification but also the medical and psychological examination they urgently require.

With the EU driving licence, that will no longer be possible. There will be no more opportunity for all-inclusive packages that have enabled people found guilty of driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs or of speeding to obtain a new licence abroad. In that way, highway hooligans have for EUR 1 000 avoided not only tiresome waiting times but also expensive medical and psychological examinations. Given the high rate of accidents caused by speeding and drunkenness, this is an important contribution to road safety. Random checks have shown that 75% of German car drivers using a foreign driving licence had previously had their licence withdrawn because of alcohol or drug problems. This abuse will be impossible with the EU driving licence because a thorough exchange of data will prevent it.

I regret to say that my home country, Germany, has had its foot on the brake and, after the 15 years it took to reach a decision, has pushed through a further transitional period of 26 years before drivers will have to exchange their existing licences. That is not only an act of social injustice at the expense of future generations – the renewal period means that new licence holders will already be on their second driving licence before the old ones have to be exchanged even for the first time – but also a further instance of the state tolerating organised crime by delaying the exchange of data.

In the interests of road safety and especially because of the length of time taken to reach this decision, Parliament and the Council should not have allowed any transitional period, but instead set uniform rules for the validity of old and new driving licences. Member States are free to shorten the deadlines and I therefore urge you to do so and make the EU driving licence a reality in 10 years.

**Erik Meijer, on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group.** – (NL) Mr President, two major problems surrounding driving licences have been the cause of public annoyance. The first is driving licence tourism, as a result of which people can get a driving licence without having any real entitlement to one, and the other is the dangerous situation for riders of two-wheeled vehicles in amidst busy car traffic. We could solve the second problem nationally, but not the first.

For a very long time, we have been familiar with the situation where people take driving lessons during their holidays, upon which a driving licence is issued in the Middle East or the Caribbean that does not meet the requirements we prescribe at home.

Even more alarming is the situation when somebody who has lost their driving licence following a serious traffic infringement or reckless driving, is given the opportunity to sit another driving test in another Member State of the European Union. Mutual recognition of national driving licences makes it possible for them, even though they have had theirs withdrawn, to be given the right to drive a car in their own country. These people misuse national borders and constitute a serious threat to traffic safety.

One of the EU's core tasks is to fight cross-border nuisances and breakdowns in communication, the present situation involving driving licences being one of them. We must, as a priority, spell out that the Member States of residence should in no way be hindered in combating this dangerous abuse. The text now before us, which has emerged from second reading, goes about making this possible in the right way.

More controversial is the way in which attention is given to accidents involving motorcyclists and moped riders, which often involve young people, whether as the victims themselves or as the cause of accidents to others. Some novice riders on two wheels take pride in showing off to others their ability to perform highly dangerous stunts. We are justified in our attempts to protect people who may cause accidents against themselves and also to protect other road users against the reckless behaviour of a handful.

There is also another side to this: motorcyclists and moped riders are right in believing that car drivers own the roads, which is why the latter would prefer to ban the two-wheelers from them. Motor cyclists experience it as discrimination if they have to meet more stringent requirements than car drivers, and if they, in practice, also have to be older as a result, before they are entitled by law to use the public roads for the first time. Not until the age of 24 can they be given the right to ride the heaviest motorcycles without any intermediary steps. This leads to a clash of interests between the young and old and between drivers of armoured four-wheeled vehicles and vulnerable two-wheeled vehicles.

My group would instinctively prefer to stand up for the riders on two wheels, who are the weakest group, but, in some countries, the aggression manifested by car drivers can lead to a needless increase in the

number of victims within this group. Perhaps this sensitive issue should be addressed in each individual Member State, but in times of increasing cross-border traffic, enforcement would prove impractical.

Three years of discussion about the proposal to harmonise driving licences that were national to date has led to the largest common denominator of requests made by different Member States and pressure groups, which is not to the satisfaction, not by a long shot, of everyone involved, including motorcyclists' organisations. It is likely that the practical experience we will gather with this directive and the possible problems involved will lead to adjustments being made.

Even so, my group prefers this proposal to be in place for the time being rather than perpetuate the present situation. The alternative upheld by Mr Bradbourn may work well in the splendid isolation of the United Kingdom, but not for Member States with national borders that cross densely populated areas.

**Kathy Sinnott, on behalf of the IND/DEM Group.** – Mr President, early this year there was a terrible car crash in my parish. Four young eastern European citizens died. They had tried to negotiate one of those dreadful Irish country roads in the dark and they were not used to the different driving conditions of Ireland. Unfortunately, this is not a lone incident. Similarly, an Irish neighbour died while working in Spain.

Europeans are on the move. I go to your country, you come to mine. It is a wonderful thing, yet when it comes to driving in safety it is a fact that some are used to driving on the right and others on the left, that drivers are used to varying acceptable levels of speed, different weather conditions and vastly differing roads and, critically, that drivers are trained, tested and licensed to different levels of competence. A learner's permit in one country may be equivalent to a full licence in another.

Because we are free to move around Europe, we are driving on each other's roads. The problem is that when such differences lead to death, these discrepancies can no longer be tolerated.

I agree with several things in the report. The principle of progressive access regarding two-wheeled vehicles would surely improve safety. It is also clearly not practical to have 110 different-looking driving licences, which can be displayed but not understood, so the idea of having a single format and code for categories is reasonable.

However, the traffic laws, roads, weather, etc. are so different that a national test and licence will remain essential for a driver. However, a European driver's licence should be available, like the old international licence, for those who drive in other countries of the Union for more than just a brief holiday.

Finally, although it is not in the report, if we are ultimately to have a European driver's licence, we should look at a different model from the one-test-for-a-lifetime model that we have in Europe. With such a model, the quality of the test can be very high, which makes it very difficult and very expensive for young people to get, and yet no one looks at the skills of a driver 20 years on. I would recommend the American model of repeat tests: a written test is taken every four years and a road test every eight years and skills must be kept up. The level of safety is high in the test, probably the level of technical knowledge, etc. would not be as great, but people continue to drive...

*(The President cut off the speaker)*

**Reinhard Rack (PPE-DE).** – *(DE)* Mr President, we really should congratulate ourselves this evening! If we have a European legal text that really does matter to the man and woman in the street, we hide it in the night sitting. That way no one can see or hear what we are actually doing for European concerns in European legislation.

A lot might be said about the European added value that could be obtained with the single European driving licence. We have to thank Mr Grosch for bringing this flea circus together. He has already mentioned a few things. We are simplifying, we are making one European driving licence out of 110 national driving licences – and with the new Member States it is already appreciably more than 110. We are making things safer. Progressive access has already been mentioned, and many more details might also be mentioned.

We are trying to prevent driving licence tourism, and I can only add my support to those who have called on the Commission to pin the nation states down on this as quickly as possible. We have also ensured that older drivers will not be discriminated against by permanent medical examinations. Older

drivers may indeed be dangerous in certain driving situations, but the real dangers on the roads are frequently caused by the younger ones.

I am glad – as Mr Grosch has also said – that the Austrian Council Presidency has contributed to today's success. It fits the picture that that government was then voted out of office by the citizens at home.

**Willi Piecyk (PSE).** – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, with tomorrow's vote the European driving licence will at last be cut and dried. It has taken a long time, it is a compromise, but with effective and significant steps forward. The most important advance is perhaps that it will put an end to the unspeakable driving licence tourism. If, for example, someone's licence is withdrawn for drunken driving in Germany today, they can easily, and quite cheaply, get a new one in a neighbouring country and then drive on Europe's roads again completely legally. This scandal will be put to an end. This trick has been played one last time; it will now be laid to rest, and a good job too.

Freedom of movement for drivers in Europe is a plus. With more than 110 different driving licences, however, controls are more than problematic. The so-called 'grey rag' in Germany, that was issued in the fifties or sixties with a nice, youthful photograph, and which has been in the washing machine at least four times, is certainly a fine piece of nostalgia, but it is no longer any use as identification at police checks. Personally – and many other honourable Members obviously agree with me – I think the 26 year deadline that has now been negotiated for exchanging licences is much too long; it is more of a biological solution than a real practical one. It has been pointed out that Member States can do it earlier. We shall see.

All the accident statistics clearly show that most road deaths occur among young men between the ages of 18 and 25 on motorcycles. Progressive access to a motorcycle licence is therefore sensible. It will save human lives and improve road safety.

On behalf of my Group, sincere thanks are due to Mr Grosch, the rapporteur, who has negotiated well, and so there will be no transitional periods, no exemptions and no restrictions in tomorrow's vote: we shall back you wholeheartedly and unanimously, together taking the matter to a successful conclusion. Thank you for your work!

**Michael Henry Nattrass (IND/DEM).** – Mr President, yesterday the President, faced with a directive about a paperless environment, whispered 'dream on'. The EU is behind the paper curtain or, in real English, the big EU paper wet blanket. Over-regulation closes businesses and the EU paper wet blanket is putting out the fire of enterprise and the ember of innovation. The single market, we were told, was about trade, not about paper regulations on how to ride a moped. Or are you resisting an invasion of British mopeds on the beach at Dunkirk? Dream on!

Certain EU states treat EU papers as joke sheets enforced by paper tigers with paper teeth, but they still sit on committees like nodding paper dogs generating more crazy paper regulations for the rest of us and filling in paper forms for expenses, while not enforcing simple rules about crash helmets. It is now only a matter of time until such a paper dictates that the British will drive on the right hand side!

In this report, the EU has ignored its own research paper, according to the British Motorcyclists Federation, which says that these proposals are inept and ill-conceived. The BMF has pointed to the motorcycle accidents in-depth study showing that most motorcycle accidents are the result of low-speed urban collisions, usually the fault of the car driver. It was funded by EU taxpayers at EUR 2.5 million and this directive will now be a EUR 2.5 million waste of paper.

The BMF says that motorcycling elements in the directive are diametrically opposed to the UK Government's own motorcycling strategy, do nothing to improve road safety, and lead to poor compliance with a possible negative effect on safety. BMF government relations executive Trevor Magnus said this is typical of the lack of democracy in the EU, treating citizens with contempt.

I conclude that the entire proposal should be placed in the waste paper basket and recycled, but not into another wet blanket, please.

**Stanisław Jęłowicki (PPE-DE).** – (PL) Mr President, I think that it is a very good thing that we are approaching the end of our work on this important report. Each step along towards improving safety on the roads is really a step that is worth taking and it most definitely includes introducing an international registration procedure for all cases where driving licenses have been revoked or suspended.



The point is clearly to eliminate driving licence tourism. It is, however, the Member States which bear the primary responsibility here. They are the ones who should, first of all, improve their system of registering people whose licences have been banned from driving temporarily or permanently. I hope that this Directive will force the Member States to sort out their own administrative procedures in the first place. This is, of course, a cause of satisfaction, but it is hard, at this juncture, not to express our regret that the single European driving licence will not come into force for another twenty-five years yet. Is it not rather paradoxical that incredibly complicated legislation such as REACH, or the Services Directive, will become binding almost immediately, but that an incredibly simple document, such as a driving licence, will only be fully introduced in 2033? By then things may have developed so far that a driving licence may not be at all necessary, and replaced by other mechanisms, such as electronic mechanisms. We may even have European citizenship by then, but not a European driving licence.

I understand that some Member States want to stick to tradition but, at least to me, this seems to have nothing to do with tradition. If anything it is an obsession rather than a tradition.

**Gary Titley (PSE).** – Mr President, my assistant recently discovered a website which advertises quite openly that if you have been banned for driving in one country they will find, for a fee, a driving licence somewhere else. That is clearly unacceptable in modern society, just as it is completely unacceptable that people who commit serious offences in one country can avoid being penalised in another country. This proposal will gradually end that situation, but I regret that it will take so long, and I hope the process can be speeded up.

This proposal brings simplicity and transparency and cuts red tape, although I notice that Mr Nattrass has not bothered to stay to hear that observation. It is, in fact, a key element in better regulation. The original proposal was much more bureaucratic, and we in Parliament have done a good job of making it much simpler. It will improve road safety and combat fraud.

I particularly welcome something nobody else has mentioned yet: the emphasis in the report on the competences of driving examiners. We need to raise the general level of driver training throughout the European Union.

I am not happy with the motorcycle proposals: they are unnecessarily complex and do not give enough emphasis to training at the very earliest stages and the requirement for compulsory testing. However, I recognise that there is no real support for this either in Parliament or the Council, so I must concede defeat. Contrary to some of the scare stories some of my colleagues have spread, there is very little in this proposal that differs from existing UK tradition and practice.

**Philip Bradbourn (PPE-DE).** – Mr President, firstly I would like to point out to the House that throughout the progress of this legislation I have been in favour of a common format – and I stress ‘format’ – for a driver’s licence across Europe. This would achieve the objective of easier recognition of licences by police and enforcement agencies in all Member States and lead to less fraud, which has been talked about already.

This can, however, be achieved without all the red tape included in these proposals and in my view it is key to the principle of subsidiarity and proportionality that Member States retain the power to determine how their citizens obtain and retain their licence. For example, the measures now proposed would completely change the burden of proof, requiring citizens to prove that they can drive safely rather than, as at present, the state having to prove that they cannot. Regular renewals, even so-called administrative renewals of licences, would just push up costs to licence holders without improving road safety in the slightest way.

I shall cite one example concerning motorcycles. These measures are ill-thought-out, over-prescriptive and will not lead to any improvements in road safety, simply to making it more difficult for motorcyclists to progress to more powerful bikes. This is not a road safety measure, it is nothing less than a cynical attempt to make life more difficult for those who use this mode of transport.

Unfortunately, time does not permit me to detail all the matters in this directive to which I object but, put simply, in my opinion there is no added value in these proposals. They are over-regulatory, over-bureaucratic and unnecessary. I urge colleagues most sincerely to support my amendments to reject the common position in its entirety.

**Bogusław Liberadzki (PSE).** – *(PL)* Mr President, in contrast to the previous speaker, I would like to stress that the document we are discussing on a single European driving licence is perhaps the first document on European identity. It is an important document, which will allow me, as a European, to feel safe. I would like to express my admiration for Mr Grosch. He has brought together three groups: the pragmatists, the traditionalists and the ultra-traditionalists. This has been the reason for the delay. I would personally tend more towards introducing the new licences within a shorter timeframe, but this is a compromise solution. Let us respect it.

One important fact I would like to point out is that the way in which licences are obtained, the training methods and the examination methods have become more harmonised. This is also likely to lead to the elimination of differences in behaviour on the road. There will be more travel between the Member States. This is a very important aspect of improving road safety. Another factor is the creation of a database. I see nothing wrong with obtaining a driving licence abroad. What is wrong is when people get them after breaking the law and losing their licence their own country.

Overall, I am very happy to vote in favour of this proposal.

**Luís Queiró (PPE-DE).** – *(PT)* We are confident that tomorrow's vote will confirm the timeframe involved in the legislative process of adopting a European drivers' licence. I should first like to congratulate Mr Grosch on his outstanding report. He was in charge of this long process, which was characterised by positive dialogue and effective action leading to a compromise that, reflecting the perspectives of the various Member States and Community institutions, succeeded in maintaining consistency on an issue that, as he has correctly pointed out, affects around two thirds of the adult population of Europe.

My main concern was that a good idea might be undermined by excessive regulation, and would thus fail to benefit road safety. The consensus achieved, however, built on the key axes of the directive, enables us to look ahead with optimism.

The text appears on the whole to have achieved the objectives it set out to achieve, whilst complying with the subsidiarity principle and with practices that are legitimately established by the Member States.

This is a positive development that will provide the citizens with clearer, standardised rules conducive to mobility and road safety. The rules will also prevent the fraudulent use of counterfeit licences and will lead to more effective measures to deal with offenders. The new directive will reach those it is intended for by means of what I hope will be a simple, easily understood message, with which hopefully the citizens will comply without much difficulty. It should be clear that our objective is to facilitate the citizens' lives and the lives of those operating in the sector, and to promote safer road transport.

To conclude, I wish to comment on the controversial issue of phased, gradual access to motorcycles, and the imposition of a minimum age of 24 for the most powerful motorcycles, in the absence of previous experience. Speaking as a biker – yes, I am an old biker! – I recognise that age is not the only indicator of maturity and a responsible attitude on the road, but along with experience it is the best indicator that the law has at its disposal. The point is that there are motorbikes on the market that can reach speeds close to those of Formula One. Such vehicles should not be within reach of young people barely 18 years of age. I for one would never let a child of mine of that age have access to one. I therefore endorse the solution reached aimed at the most vulnerable motorcyclists, who are the youngest members of our society.

**Inés Ayala Sender (PSE).** – *(ES)* Mr President, I believe that we must thank the rapporteur, Mr Grosch, in particular for this Christmas present from the European Union to 300 million European citizens. It is true that he has been accompanied in this role of an early Santa Claus by Commissioner Barrot and his services, as well as the shadow rapporteurs, with whom he has done an excellent job.

Thank you, Mr Grosch. Thank you for adding to the road safety aspects such important elements as the fight against fraud and licence tourism by improving control by means of an on-line database.

For a country of tourism such as mine, that was essential and urgent, and now more than ever since, with the application of the points system on licences, an utterly condemnable form of tourism is being created involving new licenses from over the border or via the Internet, as Mr Titley has just said.

With regard to motorcycles, a wisely educational procedure of gradual access has been introduced which will help our young people to grow up, although some of them believe that they can go quicker.

The provisions relating to trailers and motor caravans improve control without increasing burdens.

I am also grateful for the fact that this instrument adds greater visibility and enhances the free movement of persons. This instrument is also going to be very useful for professional drivers.

It is true that the timescales seem eternal, but I share the rapporteur's optimism that, in practice, the change will take place more quickly. The citizens are almost always ahead of their legislators.

Finally, and although the rapporteur advises us that the periodic and obligatory renewal of licences does not involve obligatory refresher, medical or sight tests for drivers, I believe that we have here an excellent basis for progressing towards a future practical consensus on this new aspect.

I am optimistic about this as well and I would therefore encourage Mr Grosch to work towards making a success of that new element.

**Corien Wortmann-Kool (PPE-DE).** – Mr President, I wish to begin by congratulating Mr Grosch on a good result. In the negotiations with the Council, he succeeded in getting many points of Parliament's position included in the final compromise. Thus, in addition to the euro – our European currency – we will get a European driving licence. This will finally end driving licence tourism: if your licence is taken away in one country, you will be unable to get a new one in another country. It is also very good that fraud will be reduced, as we have succeeded in getting a limited period of validity from the Member States. It is a pity for Mr Jarzembowski and other German colleagues, but it is good for road safety in Europe.

A compromise always means you win some and you lose some. It would have been fairer on the motorcyclists if they could get access to heavy motorcycles at the age of 21 instead of 24. You can drive a big SUV or a Ferrari when you are only 18 years old but, under this proposal, you have to wait another six years to get direct access to heavy motorcycles. That is disproportionate. If the Commissioner really wants to do something about the safety of motorcyclists, he should improve research in that area and take measures based on that research. It will become clear that, in addition to good driving education, we need to improve our infrastructure – with better crash-barriers, for example – in order to improve safety for motorcyclists.

Finally, I am pleased about the introduction of extra possibilities for drivers with a category 'B' licence to tow heavy trailers. Therefore, I strongly support this new directive for a European driving licence.

**Proinsias De Rossa (PSE).** – Mr President, I primarily want to thank Mr Grosch and all the other Members of this House who have worked on this important piece of European legislation. I would support almost anything that will improve the safety of our roads. I come from a Member State – Ireland – which has one of the worst fatality rates of all, which is causing considerable concern to all our citizens.

It is partly to do with the fact that we do not have adequate training of drivers, partly also that we have so many drivers on the road who are unqualified. Of the 2.5 million drivers on Irish roads, 410 000 do not have a driving qualification – they are on what are known as provisional licences. Some 30 000 of them are on their fifth provisional licence. Clearly they are a danger to other road users, so I appeal to those who have reservations about this piece of legislation to support it and support the preservation of life on our roads.

**Rodi Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou (PPE-DE).** – *(EL)* Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, I too should like to welcome the achievement of the policy and interinstitutional agreement on an issue which is so important to road safety and legal security in Europe, to freedom of movement, to transparency and to the functioning of the single market. I consider our unifying procedure to be an important success.

The some 110 models of driving licences crystallise the various traditions and various practices in the public administration of our countries and for us to manage to combine effective European harmonisation with respect for subsidiarity is a challenge and constant endeavour. Thus, I believe that the result on the basis of which we shall have a single type of driving licence in the form of a credit card and the provision for older driving licences to be replaced over a satisfactory period of time are very important, so that the public agencies can make financial and bureaucratic adjustments.

This endeavour is also complemented and derives added value from the need for uniform models for training and for controlling instructors and will of course acquire even greater added value if it is

complemented by suitable infrastructures, with road signs and every sort of infrastructure which facilitates safety, including the quality of roads.

We believe that the European driving licence brings Europe very close to the citizens and is a wager we must not lose.

**Dieter-Lebrecht Koch (PPE-DE).** – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, it has long been taken for granted that forms of personal identification such as passports and identity cards have to be renewed at particular intervals of time. That is not the case with driving licences. Even if a person's name has changed several times and the photograph is over 40 years old, many are still driving with their original licence. Is that not an invitation to lawbreaking and driving licence tourism? Is it not frequently a cause for unpleasantness during road checks? Even the registration numbers of vehicles licensed in the EU have a recognition value. They make a contribution, albeit very small, to the development of a European sense of identity. The 110 valid models of driving licence, on the other hand, show Europe as a patchwork quilt. Is that what the directive's critics want? It really is time for a standard European driving licence in credit-card format. The Council common position to all intents and purposes reflects the will of Parliament and promises great steps forward in road safety. We should vote for it tomorrow so it can be introduced as quickly as possible!

I still cannot understand, however, why we are allowing the Member States such long transitional periods. I call on my own country, Germany, to set a good example and respond more quickly of its own free will. If every country does that, the driving licence directive's positive developments could come into effect within the period of the third EU road safety action programme, that is to say, by 2010. Sadly, the Council's decisions are not always consistent with the Lisbon Strategy. Potential for growth and employment will be unnecessarily lost, for example, if workshop personnel are allowed to drive 40-tonne trucks for repair purposes, but not empty buses any more. And I do not understand the logic if a B licence is under certain circumstances to be enough to drive car and caravan combinations up to 4.25 tonnes, but not to drive a mobile home that is easier to manoeuvre. What a pity!

**Jacques Barrot, Vice-President of the Commission.** (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I should like to thank you for this rewarding debate, which has confirmed the very broad support from which the compromise negotiated between our three institutions now benefits. I should very much like to congratulate you all, and in particular Mr Grosch, your rapporteur, for this excellent outcome.

In response to the handful of negative remarks that have been made, I should like, honourable Members, to point out that we have a moral commitment to a major objective: that of halving the number of people killed on our roads between now and 2010. It is therefore up to each one of you to consider what share of responsibility you have in this connection.

Together with the Member States, we have adopted an across-the-board approach based in the first place on vehicle quality. In conjunction with my colleague, Mr Verheugen, we have drawn up a road map whereby motor manufacturers might progressively introduce all the systems that help make vehicles safer. The second key element in our approach is the Commission's adoption, on 5 October 2006, of a proposal for a Directive on road infrastructure safety management. Indeed, we want to see better account taken of safety, from design right through to infrastructure building, and this for the benefit of all road users, including motorcyclists.

The third key element is, of course, the personal behaviour of each driver – something to which the document that you will have before you for approval tomorrow makes a major contribution, in my opinion. In this connection, I should like once again, Mr President, to emphasise the extent to which Parliament has genuinely championed the European interest where this matter is concerned. By putting forward significant plans and having them accepted – for example, the progressive replacement of old driving licences and the implementation of conditions under which access is granted on a progressive basis to certain categories of vehicle – the European Parliament has vividly demonstrated something that really goes without saying: its concern to champion the interests of Europeans.

A few worries have emerged regarding motorcyclists, motorcycle safety being an issue of great concern to us. Despite the improvement in road safety in general, motorcyclists are the group most in danger on our roads, with one person in every five killed on European Union roads being a motorcyclist. It is in order to reverse this trend that, in this directive, we have emphasised access to the most powerful motorcycles on a progressive basis. More experience, targeted training or an appropriate examination would enable us to reduce the number of fatalities. This is not a matter of red tape. On the contrary,

matters are being simplified. It is only logical, however, for motorcyclists to be given some degree of training. It is essential that motorcyclists be trained. Annex 6 to the directive in question is devoted to such training, and it will be possible for this annex to be modified as needs change.

Mr President, honourable Members, the agreement that will be voted on tomorrow constitutes an important stage in our action plan on road safety. In view of the very nearly 40 000 people still killed each year on European Union roads, Parliament may be considered to be doing some very worthwhile work in undoubtedly saving a number of lives by means of these new provisions. I would therefore offer my sincere thanks to Parliament and the rapporteur for the sterling work they have done.

**President.** The debate is closed.

The vote will take place on Thursday at 11.00 a.m.

### **23. Double-hull or equivalent design requirements for single-hull oil tankers (debate)**

**President.** The next item is the report (A6-0417/2006) by Fernand Le Rachinel, on behalf of the Committee on Transport and Tourism, on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EC) No 417/2002 on the accelerated phasing-in of double-hull or equivalent design requirements for single-hull oil tankers and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 2978/94 [COM(2006)0111 C6-0104/2006 2006/0046(COD)].

**Jacques Barrot, Vice-President of the Commission.** (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I am delighted to present to you today the amendment to the regulation on double-hull oil tankers. This proposal is designed to bring the regulation into line with the political statement made at the International Maritime Organisation in December 2003 by the Presidency of the European Union on behalf of the Member States and of the European Commission. This statement was extremely clear. It was designed to indicate to all the parties signatory to the MARPOL Convention that no EU Member State would authorise oil tankers flying its flag to make use of one of the exemptions laid down by the Convention, namely that relating to the use of single-hull vessels to carry oil.

With regard to the ban on carrying heavy grades of oil in single-hull vessels, the current regulation only applies to vessels entering waters under Community jurisdiction. This means that a Member State may in theory, and contrary to the public commitment of 2003, authorise the carriage of heavy grades of oil in single-hull oil tankers flying its flag – that is to say, one of the European flags – as long as these vessels are operating outside Community waters.

This situation, honourable Members, is unacceptable. It is easy to imagine the consequences, in a third country, of an oil slick caused by an oil tanker flying a Community flag, and this at a time when Europe, for its part, protects itself against such eventualities. I would add that almost all the Member States have already formally informed the International Maritime Organisation that they would not make use of this option.

Our political commitments to our partners in the interests of maritime safety need to be given practical form and guaranteed legally. That is the purpose of this proposal. I should like to thank Mr Le Rachinel and the Committee on Transport and Tourism for having supported it.

**Fernand Le Rachinel (NI), rapporteur.** – (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, I should firstly like to thank, in particular, the secretariat of the Committee on Transport and Tourism for its excellent preparative work and its work in consulting the interested parties in the context of this important matter.

What we are mainly concerned with here is the protection of the environment against marine pollution. The report that I am submitting to you today is about the accelerated introduction of double-hull or equivalent design requirements for single-hull oil tankers.

In particular, it is a question of putting an end to the exemptions that have existed since 2002. Indeed, after the ‘Prestige’ oil tanker went down in 2002, the Commission had decided, in accordance with the December 2002 regulation, to speed up the withdrawal of single-hull oil tankers. It was also a question of banning, with immediate effect, the carriage of heavy grades of oil in single-hull oil tankers bound for or leaving ports in a Member State of the European Union. At present, international maritime

legislation specifies that a vessel flying the flag of a Member State may take advantage of the exemptions from this ban, insofar as - and this goes without saying - it is operating outside European ports.

As Mr Barrot has just mentioned, it was at a meeting of the International Maritime Organisation that the Italian Presidency of the EU stated, on behalf of the 15 Member States, that the latter would not authorise their tankers to make use of this exemption from Regulation 13H. According to the Commission, it was therefore appropriate to amend the 2002 regulation by doing away with the last exemption to Regulation 13H and, therefore, to ban the carriage of heavy grades of oil in single-hull oil tankers flying the flag of a Member State, whatever the jurisdiction applicable to the ports, offshore terminals or maritime area in which these tankers operate.

Only one European country – Greece – had refused to accept this political position adopted by the Italian Presidency, believing that this statement was not binding on it. It wished, it seems, to continue to authorise its single-hull tankers to operate outside European ports with, of course, heavy grades of oil on board.

Finally, this objection was not renewed during the work done by the Committee on Transport and Tourism. The 25 Member States of the European Union have now agreed that not a single oil tanker carrying heavy grades of oil will any longer be authorised to fly the flag of a Member State if it is a single-hull vessel. In reality, this only confirms what is already complied with and applied by the vast majority of Member States. The absolute demand for compliance with the objective of maximum maritime safety has again prevailed in this matter, in the same way as the demand for a reduction in the risks of pollution by hydrocarbons.

There are many pollution risks, which may vary in nature. Barely five days ago, in my region, toxic barrels were drifting between the Cotentin and the Atlantic. In the course of last Friday evening, these barrels had been lifted by a storm from the deck of a Swiss container on its way from Antwerp to Portugal. Admittedly, the new double-hull legislation constitutes a notable advance in the field of preventing marine pollution, but there is a need to continue issuing standards enabling tankers and merchant ships to offer the maximum number of safeguards. The motorways of the sea are a way of relieving congestion, but vessel safety must not be neglected under any circumstances. What is at stake here is the future of the whole planet.

Mr President, Commissioner, I should like to emphasise that I am tabling a technical amendment, which also has the support of the European Commission, that prevents our having to change a series of cross-references. Being of a linguistic nature, this amendment only concerns the English version. It does not alter the substance of the text, and the Finnish Presidency has confirmed to us that it does not present any problem to the Council.

**Georg Jarzembowski, on behalf of the PPE-DE Group.** – (DE) Mr President, Mr Vice-President, ladies and gentlemen, the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats thanks the rapporteur for producing his report promptly, quickly, clearly and precisely, and we are able to support it. I also hope that the Council will, as promised, accept our amendment, so that we can bring this dossier to a conclusion at first reading.

Mr Vice-President, you are absolutely right. We must abolish the exemption that still exists regarding the non-use of double-hull tankers. I find the last sentence, which we are taking over from the rapporteur as an amendment, quite classic; it says quite plainly that oil tankers carrying heavy grades of oil, irrespective of their flags – not only Member State flags – will not be allowed to enter ports or offshore terminals or to anchor in areas under the jurisdiction of a Member State unless they are double-hull tankers. That is important; we have already had some very difficult situations in the Baltic, and I hope that what we said in 2003 – namely that heavy-grade oils may only be carried in double-hull tankers – will now at last be enforced.

If we are indeed concluding the Commission proposal with the amendment quickly at first reading, then we should remind the Council that next year we have to deal with seven separate proposals in the Erika 3 package. I hope the Council will work with us on them just as quickly so as to improve flag state controls, port state control and liability. I am eager to see whether the Council will pluck up the same courage as the Commission and Parliament next year to take active measures to prevent environmental pollution at sea.

**Willi Piecyk, on behalf of the PSE Group.** – (DE) Mr President, if we want to know about the consequences and repercussions of bad and old single-hull tankers, we must go to the Breton or Galician

coast and talk to the people who live there. The names *Erika* and *Prestige* bring back terrible memories for them.

The Commission's *Erika* packages were a sensible response to those disasters. They include Regulation 417/2002 with the more rapid introduction of double-hull tankers and the ban on carrying heavy-grade oil to and from European ports in single-hull tankers. The Commission's proposal that tankers carrying heavy-grade oil under European flags must now be double-hull tankers is consistent and brings a little more safety for shipping and the sea. You see, Commissioner, Parliament is able to accept and commend proposals from yourself without more ado. Now, as Christmas approaches, the Commission should again be complimented for such good proposals, to which no one can object!

Parliament need not be perturbed if the International Association of Independent Tanker Owners, Intertanko, is not exactly pleased at the Commission's proposal. Mr Le Rachinel, the rapporteur, was well advised to give priority to maritime safety and not to Intertanko, and at this point I want to say a sincere thank you to him on behalf of my Group. I therefore expect that we shall have a good vote in Parliament tomorrow over all, thereby making our seas a little safer.

**Danutė Budreikaitė**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (LT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, after several catastrophes involving single-hull tanker ships on the shores of France and Spain, experts have come to the conclusion that single hulls do not sufficiently protect ships, that inappropriate methods for testing ships are used, and furthermore, that it is essential to more effectively tackle the issue of 'flags of convenience' – flags of those countries that do not conform to EU safety requirements.

In 2002, the EU adopted a Regulation specifying a double-hull or equivalent design requirements for single-hull tanker ships, and specifying that single-hull tankers should be gradually phased out of EU waters. Not later than by 2015 they should be replaced by much safer double-hull ships.

The Regulation stipulates that one year after the completion date of constructing the ship, single-hull oil tankers are forbidden to sail under the flag of an EU Member State. The Regulation also stipulates that after this date no oil tanker, regardless of what country's flag it sails under, will be allowed to sail into any port under the jurisdiction of any EU country, except for double-hull oil tankers.

In October 2003, a Regulation came into force partially replacing the 2002 Regulation, forbidding the transportation of petroleum in single-hull tanker ships into and out of ports under the jurisdiction of EU Member States.

More changes are being recommended in the proposed 2006 EP and Council Regulation. It is recommended to increase the requirements on the transportation of crude petroleum products by ships sailing under the flag of an EU Member State and the areas of application, prohibiting the transport of crude petroleum products by all single-hull ships sailing under the flag of an EU Member State, regardless of the jurisdiction of the ports, the sea terminals or sea zone in which they ply their trade. It is recommended to impose a total ban at the EU level, and to let third countries decide for themselves whether or not to accept entry of single-hull tankers into their ports.

I would like to highlight the issue of 'flags of convenience', in other words, the possibility of registering ships in countries where it is cheap and where no technical safety and environmental standards are enforced. In the event of an oil spill it is very hard to determine who the vessel's proprietor is, and who the polluter is. An example of this could be the toxic pollution in Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast). I believe the issue of such registration should be discussed separately in Parliament.

Another important matter – the qualifications of ship employees. On ships registered in EU countries, one-third of the crew are citizens of third countries, and, according to expert opinion, most accidents on board happen because of the crew's lack of qualifications.

My country, Lithuania, imports petroleum using a terminal in the Baltic Sea; therefore, we are concerned about both the safety of ships and the environment.

**Erik Meijer**, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (NL) Mr President, 10 years ago, the idea of tough measures to put an end to single-hulled oil tankers was not yet a realistic one. The problems were underestimated and it was the costs involved in changing them that received most attention. We first needed the disasters involving oil tankers and the extensive destruction of marine and coastal environment before the realisation kicked in that Europe should not lead the way rather than lag behind. Single-hulled tankers for the transport of heavy oil types are dangerous and should be phased out as soon as possible.

Not until an American ban and the threat that all old tankers from America would head for Europe did we see a majority in favour of such a phase-out policy.

Unfortunately, the 2002 Regulation does not appear to be sufficiently clear. Single-hulled tankers under European flag, in particular 20 old Greek tankers, can still cause disasters in other parts of the world. We need to close this loophole as a matter of urgency. Europe may not want single-hulled tankers from others in its ports, but we should not send single-hulled tankers to ports of other countries either. The freedom for existing single-hulled tankers to continue to transport heavy types of oil until 2015 could well cause major problems. Whilst this problem is not being solved, it is positive that we are tackling the other problem now.

Objections raised by Intertanko, the International Association of Independent Tanker Owners, and by Greece, should be secondary to the protection of our marine, coastal and port environment. The Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left will be supporting this proposal at second reading too.

**Rodi Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou (PPE-DE).** – *(EL)* Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, I should like to thank the rapporteur for his decisive attempt to secure conditions for preventing accidents at sea which have terrible repercussions on maritime pollution. It is a moral and political duty both for the European Union and its Member States and for international organisations.

For my country, Greece, given that two Members referred to it, environmental protection is a particular objective, given that it is a country with a coast, islands, a large tourist economy and aspirations to become a transit centre in the Eastern Mediterranean, which means increased shipping traffic and increased dangers of pollution and accidents. This strategy is expressed both in the policy of its government and in the huge investments by Greek shipowners in modern ships. At the same time, however, due to our huge merchant fleet, we are also a country which faces huge problems in adapting to a new regulation which differs from international conventions and unavoidably results in rapid changes with economic repercussions. The business capacity and jobs which risk being lost are parameters which no country faces as seriously as Greece. That is why we would hope that the regulation will take account, as far as the timetable is concerned, of commercial activities under way and the contractual obligations of tankers. Furthermore, we all know that no isolated measure suffices. Shipping registers also have a huge responsibility. Staff training, agreement and coordination between Member States and the availability of ports of refuge play a huge part. We shall endeavour, through the general objectives of the European Union, to combine in the very best way environmental protection, the competitiveness of our European fleet and our economy.

**Jacques Barrot, Vice-President of the Commission.** *(FR)* Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I should once again like to thank Mr Le Rachinel and the Committee on Transport and Tourism for their excellent work, which should enable the proposal to be adopted at first reading. I would also thank all the MEPs who have spoken in order to emphasise the extent to which this obligation was an integral part of our efforts in the interests of maritime safety.

The amendment that you have proposed, Mr Le Rachinel, and that was voted unanimously in favour of by the Committee on Transport and Tourism is no less important for being technical, as it helps make the text still clearer. I am therefore able to accept it.

Mr President, honourable Members, I would thank Parliament for again becoming involved in this maritime safety policy which – as one of the speakers emphasised – is all the more necessary in that the development of motorways of the sea and of maritime traffic will demand ever greater vigilance in the area of safety.

**President.** The debate is closed.

The vote will take place on Thursday at 11.00 a.m.

## **24. Development of the second-generation Schengen Information System (regulation) – Development of the second-generation Schengen Information System (decision) (debate)**

**President.** The next item is the joint debate on



- the report (A6-0410/2006) by Carlos Coelho, on behalf of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, on the proposal for a Council regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 2424/2001 on the development of the second generation Schengen Information System (SIS II)

[COM(2006)0383 C6-0296/2006 2006/0125(CNS)], and

- the report (A6-0413/2006) by Carlos Coelho, on behalf of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, on the proposal for a Council decision amending Decision 2001/886/JHA on the development of the second generation Schengen information System (SIS II)

[COM(2006)0383 C6-0297/2006 2006/0126(CNS)].

**Franco Frattini**, *Vice-President of the Commission*. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, first of all, I consider it my duty to thank the rapporteur, Mr Coelho, for the excellent work he has done on these proposals and also for the speed with which we have received the reports and have come to have this plenary debate this evening.

Many Members will know that the Council of Home Affairs Ministers adopted some important conclusions last week. These conclusions once again confirmed that the Schengen II Information System is the European Union's main priority, and therefore it is clear that extending the Commission's mandate on SIS II is essential in order to ensure that it can continue to develop the system in close cooperation with the Member States.

You will also be aware that the Council has accepted a proposal from the Portuguese Government – which I myself endorse on behalf of the Commission – for a temporary solution, which we have called SIS One For All. That is to say, it is a mechanism designed to ensure that the internal borders of the new Member States can be removed during the phase of transition to SIS II, while keeping the original deadline set for the end of 2007.

That does not make us lose sight of the main objective, which is SIS II, which will guarantee greater security in border controls. It will confirm the outcome that we want to achieve by the end of 2007, which is to remove controls on the internal borders of the new Member States that have asked to join the enlarged Schengen agreement.

Therefore, if these countries meet the necessary security criteria at their land and sea borders and at their airports, as I hope they will, they will be able to crown the political completion of their accession by forming a European domestic area without border controls, extending from Portugal across to Lithuania. That will be an enormous political success for Europe.

SIS II will in any case continue to be our main objective: it will guarantee a higher level of security, be of greater help to the police authorities in charge of control and security, and provide better protection of personal data, which will be included in the system on the basis of greater transparency and accountability.

For all these reasons, SIS II remains the objective for our European area of security and freedom of movement, and that is why, in line with the rapporteur's position, we are asking for an extension to the Commission's mandate so that we can continue to develop SIS II.

The Council of Ministers' acceptance of the Portuguese proposal will entail a delay in implementing SIS II. It will not be an enormous delay, and I can tell the rapporteur and Parliament already that in February 2007 the Commission will submit a definite proposal for the final date for developing SIS II. The delay will be no more than six to eight months following the date originally set. All in all, that is acceptable, if you consider that in the meantime the new Member States will have achieved the political success of joining a European area without internal borders.

#### IN THE CHAIR: MR COCILOVO

*Vice-President*

**Carlos Coelho (PPE-DE)**. – (PT) Mr President, Mr Frattini, ladies and gentlemen, we are all aware of the importance of the second generation Schengen Information System (SIS II), and Mr Frattini has just reminded us of this. The advent of free movement within the Community area and the absence of internal

borders means we must strengthen the security of the Union's external borders and this can only be done if information is shared between all members of the Schengen area.

Mr Frattini also said – and this is a view I share – that SIS II is not only a new generation of the Schengen Information System; it can also be said that this is a new Schengen Information System, with new functions, new uses and new imported data. Apart from the technical issues involved in building a new system, there is also a political issue, relating to the legitimate ambition of the new Member States to join the Schengen area at the earliest opportunity. This is a crucial issue for the new Member States; it is about whether or not they can offer their citizens the chance of free movement in the Community area.

In order for them to be in the Schengen area they have to join SIS. As we know, SIS is not in itself sufficient, in other words, merely joining SIS is not enough in order to be in the Schengen area. There is a series of other prerequisites that must be fulfilled. It is a necessary requirement, however; one cannot be in the Schengen area without being in the Schengen Information System. Consequently, the creation of SIS II has to be a priority for us, and this is why we worked so hard to achieve the adoption of the legal basis of SIS II at first reading – and, having worked closely with Parliament on this objective throughout the process, Mr Frattini is an eyewitness to this. The adoption of the legal basis will prevent us suffering worse delays in implementing the SIS II, and I should like to thank him once again for his decisive help in achieving this objective.

The mandate granted by the Council to the Commission to develop SIS II finishes in a few days, on 31 December. The Commission is proposing that this date be extended to 2007, and admits that the system will not be operational before 2008. The proposal to extend the deadline to December 2007 is the optimistic version. I was very pleased to hear Mr Frattini say that in February 2007 he will set out a definitive timetable and that he is only expecting a delay of six to eight months. I must say that this prediction is considerably more positive than the worrying information that had been circulating. It is still a delay but it is much less serious than we feared. I hope he is right, as there are those who believe that we may face bigger delays. In any event, Mr Frattini will know that Parliament always fulfils its monitoring obligations. We want to monitor the implementation of this process, and if there are delays, we want to know why they have taken place.

I should like to thank the shadow rapporteurs from other political groups, in particular Mrs Mastenbroek and Mr Lax, and I should like to thank publicly those MEPs on my side of the Chamber who have kept a close eye on this issue, who have always encouraged me and who have constantly showed their great concern over the pace at which SIS II was being implemented, in particular Mrs Bauer from Slovakia, Mr Brejc from Slovenia, Mrs Gál from Hungary, Mr Demetriou from Cyprus and of course Mrs Kudrycka from Poland, who will speak on behalf of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats in this debate.

**Barbara Kudrycka, on behalf of the PPE-DE Group.** – (PL) Mr President, I would very much like to thank Mr Coelho for such an excellent report and I would like to say that the extension of the Commission's mandate has raised no reservations. SIS II is, and should remain, a priority. The European Parliament has done everything within its ability to ensure this is the case. We still wish to support the Commission so that SIS II can be implemented as fast as possible. The original aims of the new system were to upgrade SIS I and to expand it to incorporate the new Schengen states.

The first of these aims has yet to be fulfilled. The second required a political decision and the creation of an alternative '*SIS I for all*' system. It is unfortunate that it had to come to that, but the European Union must keep its credibility and fulfil its political obligations towards the new Member States.

However, I am hoping for a clear definition of how, in terms of organisation, time and funding are concerned, the '*SIS I for all*' project will influence the implementation of the second generation SIS system. We still need close cooperation and Parliament needs to be kept up to date regarding both projects. We also expect the Commission to adopt a more assertive and demanding attitude towards the Member States, to avoid recriminations later on.

SIS II is a Community project funded from the European Union's budget. This means that the Commission and the Member States bear the responsibility to a greater extent than was previously the case with the international SIS 1+ system. The Commission can count on the European Parliament's political support. However, lessons need to be learned from the mistakes and failures that have occurred so far. I also

hope that, in the end, the work of the Commission will result in all Member States feeling that they all own the SIS II project together, with no divisions between the new and old Schengen Member States.

**Adam Jerzy Bielan, on behalf of the UEN Group.** – (PL) Mr President, the Schengen Information System, or SIS, as it is known, is a database which allows the appropriate authorities in the Member States to cooperate and to exchange information for the purpose of creating an area without internal border controls. This system makes it significantly easier for the citizens of the European Union to travel and gives the forces of law and order better conditions under which to fight crime.

However, SIS has been up and running since 1995. This is a very long time in an age of extremely rapid progress in the field of information technology. That is why, as early as in December of 2001, exactly five years ago, the Council assigned the Commission with setting up a second generation SIS II system. It is vital for the expansion of the Schengen area to include the new Member States. It is hardly surprising that public opinion in these countries is concerned whenever it hears about delays in implementing this system.

Although European Union home affairs ministers have recently decided that eight out of the ten new Member States will join the Schengen area in late 2007 and early 2008, which means being in the SIS I system for a while, this is a stopgap solution, which will be costly and far from perfect.

I hope that the Commission will learn some lessons from the delay in implementing the SIS II system and that, in the future, it will work more efficiently on projects that are important to the European Union as a whole.

**Andrzej Jan Szejna, on behalf of the PSE Group.** – (PL) Mr President, a properly functioning information system is the basis for a successful exchange of data between the Member States. This applies as much to police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters as it does to border controls and the issuing of visas and residence permits. Moreover, a system of this kind should lead to greater security by providing a tool which is sound and at the same time flexible, and can be used to meet changing requirements.

In view of the fact that the efficiency of the current system allows it to serve a maximum of eighteen Member States, it is very important to implement the new generation Schengen Information System as soon as possible. So far the implementation of this ambitious project has run into numerous problems resulting in serious delays to its implementation. That is why, in the future we must do everything in our power to prevent similar situations.

The delays in the implementation of the SIS II system are very dangerous in the view of the new Member States. They mean a delay to their full integration into the European Union and restrict their ability to take full advantage of the achievements of the Schengen system and the removal of border controls on their own internal borders with other Schengen countries.

I would also like to draw your attention to the Eastern Dimension of the European Union's foreign policy and the changes which have to be taken into account as consequences of the expansion of the Schengen area. Today Poland, which does not belong to this area, collects either no visa fees from its Eastern neighbours or fees which are very low. From the moment that the Schengen area is extended, Poland's eastern border will become the only eastern border of the European Union. This will mean higher visa fees running into tens of US dollars, which would also hit the citizens of Belarus or Ukraine.

This situation might be difficult for our eastern neighbours to accept, considering the fact that both Poland and the European Union have certain political plans with respect to deepening cooperation with these countries, and which may result in the creation of something similar to a new Berlin Wall. This is something the European Union cannot afford to do.

**Leopold Józef Rutowicz (UEN).** – (PL) Mr President, the implementation of the SIS II system reflects the organisational powerlessness of the organisational department to which this task was given. Every day tens of thousands of drivers queue up like refugees at the borders of the European Union, in abysmal conditions. Companies are losing thousands of euros. People wonder about the nature of a European Union which scores own goals like that. In Strasbourg, beautiful administrative buildings stand unused for 80% of the time. The cost of maintaining them is more than 200 million euros per year. At the same time we are told that there will be delays because no buildings are available to house the system. The citizens simply cannot comprehend the ineffectiveness of those in charge.

I think that the European Union would benefit if the people responsible for this situation were made to spend the night in an HGV. Soon the nights will be brilliant with snow, while a bit of fresh air does no one any harm and actually increases alertness. I propose that we finally move to clarify this matter which is so important to our citizens.

**President.** The debate is closed.

The vote will take place on Thursday at 11.00 a.m.

## 25. Violent video games (debate)

**President.** The next item is the Commission statement on violent videogames.

**Franco Frattini, Vice-President of the Commission.** – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I am particularly grateful to the few, perhaps less than ten, Members present in this Chamber to debate a subject that affects many tens of millions of young and very young people – our children – in the European Union.

The protection of the law and of the fundamental rights of young people and children must remain a major priority for the EU. It is a priority for the European Commission, and I have to say quite frankly that the acts of violence and sadism that appear in some particularly bloody videogames are a cause of great concern to us.

New technologies that have enabled young and very young people to use the Internet and technological games have changed the relationship between adults and children. Young people, our children, are often much more familiar with these technologies than adults are. What is essential, therefore, is primarily greater responsibility and consciousness on the part of adults and parents, as well as focus and education to make parents, above all, fully aware of the risks and able to make informed decisions.

There is a classification system with labelling for the content of films, and also for games and videogames, that may be of use. This must, of course, be combined with a mechanism providing for more effective education. These components are necessary if we want a solution that works.

The European Union already has instruments for fighting these worrying problems within the policy areas of justice and security, and also the information society and internal market rules.

I must say quite sincerely, ladies and gentlemen, that I have also been highly impressed by certain child protection monitoring and enhancement initiatives that I was informed about by some Home Affairs Ministers before and after the Council of Ministers, and which have been taken up by some national political parties in certain Member States. I refer in particular to increased control over the sale of particularly violent games and videogames to minors.

In my view, it is equally important to hold videogame producers responsible. In 2003, a European self-regulation system, known as Pan-European Game Information, was adopted in order to help parents choose when buying videogames intended for minors. This self-regulation system is supported by a large majority of producers. It was developed after consultation with the industry, parents' associations and consumer associations. It covers 27 countries and includes an indication of the minimum age for access to a particular game and a mandatory description of the content of a game or videogame that is placed on the market. This system, ladies and gentlemen, helps parents to choose – assuming that it is the parents who decide what videogames their children buy – but it does not concern and it contains no reference to the content of the videogame. Such self-regulation was established on the one hand to protect minors, but also, on the other hand, to comply with another fundamental principle: freedom of expression.

I intend to meet very soon with producers and the associations representing them in order to evaluate to what extent the indicators used in the self-regulation scheme are relevant or, I would say, up to date. I think the time has come to assess whether those indicators have perhaps not been working as we would have liked them to.

With regard to the content of games or videogames that can be found on the Internet, in contrast, there are systems out there, but they are applied and implemented at the initiative of certain respected consortia. The first is one known as the Platform for Internet Content Selection, and the second is the Recreational

Software Advisory Council, both based primarily in the United States. I must point out, however, that neither the United Nations study on violence against children nor the World Health Organization's world report on violence and health analyses this problem; it gets just a passing reference as if there were absolutely no need to examine it in greater depth.

In 2005, the Commission conducted an enquiry financed under the Daphne programme. This enquiry, based on a series of studies of the violent videogame sector, revealed the need for a multidisciplinary approach, which currently does not exist. One result of this study was that violent images have an undeniable influence on young people. This influence may, however, show itself in different ways, depending on various factors. These, for example, include affluence; the young people's situation; where they live; whether they have an active parental figure close to them, or whether they have no parents close to them; control over the youngsters' access to the media and the Internet, in other words whether or not their parents exercise any control over whether they can have absolutely free access to the Internet; the level of education given; and the family's socio-economic level. All these factors affect the way in which violence can influence the minds and mentalities of young and very young people.

There are other important elements to consider. Firstly, this is not just a technical issue but rather an issue of education, which involves control for preventive purposes. When I say control over the sale of violent videogames, I mean effective control, because today there are no mandatory instruments that make it possible to check whether or not a person under the age of 16 can buy videogames that incite or glorify acts of violence or even actual criminal acts.

I believe this House will at least want to consider this problem, in view of the fact, as well, that the schemes that Daphne has financed to combat violence against children are based precisely on this idea of how to protect young and very young people.

To conclude, following on from the child protection strategy that we launched in July, I intend to refer this problem to the European Forum for the Rights of the Child. As you know, this forum has been set up to commence work at the beginning of 2007. At its first working meeting I intend to start a public, transparent debate involving all stakeholders: non-governmental organisations, the Member States, parents' associations, young people, minors and also the national mediators responsible for children's rights.

The four keywords on this subject are: parents, communication and education professionals, producers – because we cannot tackle this problem at its roots if we cannot prevent the production of these violent games – and lastly politics. It is a case of examining how politics can draw up a strategy to actually protect children without resorting to censorship. These are the pillars on which we must address the problem that I have put to you this evening.

In the spring I will submit a communication on cybercrime to you. In my view, criminals, law-breakers and Internet offenders see the young and very young as particularly vulnerable victims. It is our political, institutional and moral duty to react firmly, with a European strategy against incitement to violence, against the exaltation of violence and against the glorification of violence.

**President.** Thank you, Mr Frattini. I agree with your tactful opening remark, which confirms the need to bring some reflection and a few changes to the organisation of our parliamentary work, especially with regard to our plenary debates.

**Mary Honeyball, on behalf of the PSE Group.** – Mr President, I should like to thank Mr Frattini for his very helpful and very commendable introduction to this important subject. We probably have not given enough consideration to this issue in this Parliament. I am glad that we are now having this debate because there is considerable evidence to show that violence in videos has an effect on minors who watch them – very detrimental effects, which we need to get to grips with.

I think it is becoming clear that the self-regulation that Mr Frattini talked about is probably no longer enough. We need to look at this further, to ensure that young people have controlled access and that the videos themselves are not gratuitously violent. We see this kind of violence around us on our television screens and we are becoming more and more accepting of levels of violence in a way that we should not be and in a way that is not acceptable. So, this is a good initiative and one which I hope that we will be able to take forward.

I am very pleased that the Commission undertook the survey and that it was done under the Daphne programme because not only do we see gratuitous violence on videos but also a representation of women that is unacceptable. So, not only do young people see violence as such, they also see violence towards women and a portrayal of women that is not what we would wish. There are two things that need to be dealt with: the protection of children and young people and making sure that women are not portrayed in unacceptable ways in these video productions.

We need to be clear about not being seen as a 'nanny state'. This has to be introduced in a reasonable way, in a way which is acceptable to everybody. We also need to give special attention to the Internet. The Commissioner mentioned this. It is difficult because regulation of the Internet is very much in its early days, but we must not shy away from it. We need to find ways in which we can sensibly regulate the Internet in everyone's interests.

**Roberta Angelilli, on behalf of the UEN Group.** – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I should like to thank Mr Frattini very much for the highly practical proposals that he has put forward this evening.

There is no doubt that Europe is seeing a worrying and exponential growth in cases of violence, bullying and violence among children, and television and the Internet are undeniably affecting the way our children behave, as is the spread of violent videogames, which are becoming increasingly common and increasingly brutal. I shall just give you one example: there is a very recent videogame called *Rule of Rose*, which is a really serious problem in that the main characters in the game are children, and many of the images are on the borderline of sexual perversion and sadism.

We therefore warmly welcome the current debate, even though – as the President has mentioned – it has been tucked away in an evening slot and has very few participants. That is a real shame. Even so, we expect some sort of action to be taken in this matter, and certainly not through censorship, as Commissioner Reding has already said. We support your initiative, Mr Frattini, of sending a letter to the EU Home Affairs Ministers asking them to carry out a careful check on the controls that exist regarding videogame violence. After what Mrs Reding said, we hope that the PEGI (Pan-European Game Information) system will really become a body able to exercise more effective control.

To conclude, we strongly call for practical measures to be developed to control and prohibit the distribution of violent videogames and to set up a kind of European monitoring centre for childhood and young people, not least so as to carry out preventive monitoring of game and videogame content and, if possible, to draw up a single code for the marketing and distribution of videogames for children.

**President.** The debate is closed.

## 26. Amendment of the Rules of Procedure (committees, quaestors) (debate)

**President.** The next item is the report (A6-0464/2006) by Jo Leinen, on behalf of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, on amendment of Rules 15 and 182(1) of Parliament's Rules of Procedure – Election of Quaestors and committee bureaux [2006/2287(REG)].

**Richard Corbett (PSE), deputising for the rapporteur.** – Mr President, I should like to begin by giving the apologies of the rapporteur, Mr Leinen, who could not be here tonight because he has to represent Parliament in a far-away part of the world. He is on his way there as I speak.

I rise to propose, on behalf of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, an amendment to our Rules of Procedure, which would see a fourth vice-chairman elected in each parliamentary committee, a bureau of four instead of three, and a College of Quaestors comprising six members instead of five.

Why has such a proposal come forward at this stage? It arises from an amendment to our Rules tabled by just two Members of the European Parliament – Mr Schulz and Mr Poettering – who considered that this would facilitate the participation of Members of Parliament from across 27 Member States – as we will be in January – in positions of responsibility in Parliament. It would be a measure that would be inclusive, that would enable more Members to hold positions of responsibility, and that would make it easier to distribute such posts politically across Parliament.

We took cognisance of that proposal in the Committee on Constitutional Affairs. It is a very important consideration. We also heard that there were strong arguments against creating what many considered to be an inflation of Parliamentary posts. There is, after all, no functional necessity to have a larger

bureau of each parliamentary committee. Perhaps – although that is more debatable – there is no functional necessity to have a larger College of Quaestors. It was pointed out by many colleagues that we have enough positions of responsibility across this Parliament for most Members who wish to exercise such positions to have one. It was felt that perhaps this was a rather hasty change to the Rules being put forward, for reasons that were not convincing for all of our Members.

That is why we came up with a compromise in committee. The rapporteur – the chairman of our committee – asked me to deputise for him tonight because I was the one that proposed that compromise, which is that we have a fourth vice-chairman of each parliamentary committee and a sixth Quaestor for the remainder of this Parliament, until 2009, but that we do not make it a permanent change. In 2009 we should revert to the current situation of three vice-chairmen of each parliamentary committee and five Quaestors.

Indeed, the size of Parliament, which is about to increase with Romania and Bulgaria joining, will actually decline in 2009, back to 732 Members. I am sure Mr Duff will correct me if I got the figure slightly wrong.

It is logical to take this step now, for inclusive reasons, but not make it a permanent change; to revert to the present numbers in 2009.

That is the position of the committee, which I put forward. I must also say that it is the position adopted by a majority in my political group as well. I know that there are other views in Parliament, but I submit it to Parliament for consideration.

**Ingo Friedrich, on behalf of the PPE-DE Group.** – (DE) Mr President, we are therefore looking at these two amendments. What are the reasons for the change in the number of Quaestors? When Parliament had 500 Members, we had five Quaestors, in other words, virtually one for every 100 MEPs. If we stuck with that ratio with the proposed 780 Members, we would have a very high number. If, as the Committee has suggested, we increase the number of Quaestors to six, that would be one Quaestor for every 130 Members of the House, still a larger number than was for many years the case.

I believe that the complexity of developments and of the problems that will arise in the House with 25 languages – I am now including Catalan and Irish, for example – that this complexity affecting the conduct of business and decisions justifies increasing that number from five to six for a time.

The same applies to the increase in the number of committee vice-chairmen. It is an indisputable fact that, so far as anyone can judge, we will now from January 2007 to the middle of 2009 have the largest number of Members this Parliament is ever planned to have. This unusually large number of MEPs suggests that, or is the reason why, a larger number of elected representatives will be appointed to the committees for the same period.

It is of course not only to do with the conduct of business but also with the fact that people are already in these posts and the new Bulgarian and Romanian Members are now coming, who are of course also entitled to such positions. We would have to take them away from existing Members and give them to new ones. From a formal, legal point of view that is of course possible, but it would not be conducive to, let us say, committed internal parliamentary work. There would be frustrations and disappointments, which can be avoided by taking this approach.

I grant that one thing has perhaps not gone as well as it might. We could and perhaps should have recognised this six months earlier. That would have made it easier to talk these things through quietly with all the parliamentary groups. The fact that this idea unfortunately occurred to those responsible only very late in the day made it look as though a sitting had to be held on Monday and a vote taken on it on Thursday. I ask for your forbearance. It can happen in political life that you hit upon a good idea later than events really require. I ask for your understanding for that and readily admit that many honourable Members found this fact rather hard to understand. There was no ill intent behind it, no funny business; only when the new situation became clear did we suddenly find there was a new problem we had not seen before.

To sum up, I believe this compromise of creating an extra post in two areas for a limited period while making clear that we will return to normal at the end of that period is a reasonable proposal that will be good for the conduct of parliamentary business and I ask for your agreement and understanding.

**Andrew Duff**, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – Mr President, I do not expect that I will take up six and a half minutes on this matter, but I would like to thank Mr Corbett for nobly standing in to prosecute a cause for which I think he personally lacks a certain degree of enthusiasm, and to thank Mr Friedrich who, with his customary courtesy, is declining to upset current postholders by ousting them from the positions that they enjoy in Parliament. But the fact is that for 53 more Members of Parliament we are creating a further 23 posts. Some of these posts are described as jobs, as if there was employment attached. That is not the case for the majority of vice-chairmen of the committees.

For the Quaestors, there is perhaps a solid argument for an increase to six. Perhaps there really is work for six Quaestors, but for the vice-chairmen of the committees I fear it is inflation of posts for its own sake. That cannot present an especially attractive side of our parliamentary life and I am anxious about the reaction of public opinion. I also think it is not conducive to increased efficiency or effectiveness. There is no functional necessity for these posts, rather the reverse. There is a risk that the bureaux will become top-heavy superstructures.

I also disagree that we are facing extraordinary circumstances. When Parliament expanded to accept these MEPs from 10 new accession states in 2004, we did not increase the size of the bureaux of the committees. We all agree with and are grateful for the proposal to include a sunset clause. I fear that when we come to 2009, a sort of bureaucratic paralysis will fall upon Parliament and we will all decide it is safer and quieter to stick with this inflated size of committee vice-chairmanships.

May the sun set upon this manoeuvre as soon as possible, and my own group will oppose the change of rules tomorrow.

**Johannes Voggenhuber**, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, if, like me, you learned the political ropes through many years of experience from the perspective of a minority and in opposition, you will be familiar with the arrogance and nonchalance with which those in power allow themselves to be identified with the institutions in which they have a majority. Then there are the moments of suffocation in which you feel like a fish in an aquarium. You open your mouth nice and wide, but nobody can hear you. The sun went down long ago, but this debate is taking place before the European public. Parliament, which screams for transparency and presses the Council and the Commission to take citizens and their cares seriously, is discussing its own affairs late at night, and then after long squabbles and only when forced to do so by the small parties. These are not, in fact, Parliament's affairs but manifestations of the psychological, group-dynamic greed of the big groups in this House, nationalistic balancing acts – a vanity fair – that are all to the cost of this House.

There is no rational justification for this measure. Yes, there are two new Member States. That much is true. Yet a short while ago we gained 10 new Member States and there was no expansion of the offices. There are more MEPs, but not more committees. The Quaestors do not have any extra work any more than the committees do. This motion does not serve to meet Parliament's needs and improve the way it works, but rather to satisfy the greed of the political groups and to pacify their fights about distributing spoils, and all of this at the cost of this House's reputation for dignity and its ability to do its work. So, as a silenced fish in an aquarium where the lights are about to be switched off, I say to you that this is a shameless, unnecessary and politically indefensible act, and we will be voting against it. It is a shame that two MEPs are defending this proposal, but the whole of this House will adopt this motion with a large majority tomorrow lunchtime. That is very sad.

**Richard Corbett (PSE)**, *deputising for the rapporteur*. – Mr President, I just wish to say that, while I understand fully the arguments against this proposal, it is unfair to characterise it, as Mr Voggenhuber did, as a conspiracy between the two big groups. After all, the extra positions created would also benefit the small groups. Indeed, the D'Hondt system that we customarily apply is one which, when there is a small number of posts to be distributed, arguably favours the big groups, but, when there is a larger number of posts to be distributed, it favours the small groups. Therefore, I do not think the conspiracy theory is a correct analysis.

Certainly, on top of that, it was contested in my group: there was a lively debate on whether this was a good or bad thing for Parliament. Opinions were divided, which was why we were so happy with the compromise that has been adopted with this 'sunset clause'.

**President.** On this point I do not think there are any rules to be formally adhered to, and therefore Mr Voggenhuber may take the floor briefly, although the debate itself cannot be reopened.



**Johannes Voggenhuber (Verts/ALE).** – (DE) Mr President, Mr Corbett is right, and he has the honour of being one of the two Members given the task of defending this proposal. I was not attacking him, specifically. If the small groups were to take part in this shamelessness and keep their mouths shut, a crumb might fall from the cake for them too, here or there: of that, we are well aware.

**President.** The debate is closed.

The vote will take place on Thursday at 11.00 a.m.

**27. Agenda for next sitting: see Minutes**

**28. Closure of sitting**

*(The sitting was closed at 11.25 p.m.)*