

WEDNESDAY, 5 MAY 2010

IN THE CHAIR: MR LAMBRINIDIS

Vice-President

1. Resumption of the session

President. – I declare resumed the session of the European Parliament adjourned on 22 April 2010.

The Minutes of 22 April 2010 have been distributed.

Are there any comments?

(The Minutes of the previous sitting were approved)

2. Approval of the minutes of the previous sitting: see Minutes

3. Announcement by the President: see Minutes

President. – I should like to inform Members that a number of extra recording engineers using special equipment will be present in plenary during the course of this part-session. These engineers will record the debates and votes in order to produce a 360° panorama of Parliament's work.

This film will be shown as part of the permanent exhibition on Parliament's work in an interactive model of the Chamber in the new Visitors Centre in Brussels. I have been given clear assurances that the engineers will be extremely discreet and will not cause any disruption to our work. Thank you for your understanding.

4. Composition of committees: see Minutes

5. Documents received: see Minutes

6. Oral questions and written declarations (submission): see Minutes

7. Texts of agreements forwarded by the Council: see Minutes

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

9. Order of business

President. – The final version of the draft agenda, as drawn up by the Conference of Presidents at its last meeting pursuant to Rules 140 and 155 of the Rules of Procedure, has been distributed. In agreement with the political groups, I propose the following amendments to the agenda for this week's plenary:

Wednesday, 5 May 2010:

Firstly, the joint debate on the two reports by Íñigo Méndez de Vigo on the composition of Parliament will be the first item.

Secondly, a new item entitled 'Council and Commission statements on preparation of the Summit of Heads of State or Government of the euro area (7 May 2010)', with no vote, has been added to the agenda. This item will be the second item and there will be just one round of speakers from the political groups and no 'catch-the-eye' procedure.

Thirdly, the title 'Council and Commission statements on the standardisation of electric cars' has been amended to 'Council and Commission statements on electric cars'.

Fourthly, the report by Vittorio Prodi, a brief presentation of which was scheduled for today, has been moved to Question Time on Thursday, 6 May 2010, for an immediate vote.

Thursday, 6 May 2010:

Firstly, the vote on the report by Vital Moreira on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council providing macro-economic financial assistance to Ukraine has been postponed to the second part-session in May.

Secondly, the vote on the motion for a resolution on the draft Commission regulation on guidelines for setting up a compensatory mechanism between transmission system managers and on a common approach to the electricity transmission prices has been withdrawn from the agenda.

Are there any comments?

(Parliament approved the amendments)

(The order of business was adopted thus amended)

10. SWIFT (motions for resolutions tabled): see Minutes

11. Passenger Name Record (PNR) (motions for resolutions tabled): see Minutes

12. Ban on use of cyanide mining technologies (motions for resolutions tabled): see Minutes

13. Voting time

President. – The next item is the vote.

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

I have received a proposal for a change to today's vote: following yesterday's meeting between President Buzek and Prime Minister Zapatero, it was agreed that a dialogue should be started immediately at the highest institutional level on certain procedural aspects concerning discharge of the Council. As such, the Presidency proposes that the vote on this issue be postponed until the next part-session.

Martin Schulz, *on behalf of the S&D Group.* – (DE) Mr President, I, too, heard about the meeting between President Buzek and Mr Zapatero. I suppose that on this issue of the discharge of the Council, the points of controversy between us and the Council are of such a sensitive nature that it makes sense to hold further talks. What we would be deciding today, namely to postpone the discharge of the Council, has serious implications. For that reason, we discussed this once again this morning in our group and it was said that, if there is an opportunity for the open questions to be answered to Parliament's satisfaction, we ought to take that opportunity. It would perhaps also be a move towards the Council to create trust: trust not only with regard to the discharge, but in other areas, too, and therefore we are able to agree to this proposal.

Bart Staes, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group.* – (NL) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I have heard Mr Schulz out. I am Vice-Chair of the Committee on Budgetary Control, and I was among the MEPs who attended the informal negotiations with the Council. The report to which the postponement relates obtained a 27-vote majority in the Committee on Budgetary Control, with 0 votes against and 0 abstentions, which means it was adopted unanimously. We have twice held informal negotiations with the Council to come to an agreement. The Council has consistently refused to enter into such an agreement. The only reason for possibly postponing the vote would be if the Council were to state its readiness right now to produce all the documents we require from it.

The second problem is of a legislative nature. In accordance with our Rules of Procedure and the Financial Regulation, discharge must be granted before 15 May of year $n + 2$. We are talking about the 2008 budget, and so $n + 2 = 15$ May 2010. The next plenary sitting apart from tomorrow's is not until 17 May, so if we do not vote now we shall be in contravention of our own Financial Regulation, which I think would be a sign of extremely poor management.

Ryszard Czarnecki, *rapporteur*. – (PL) Mr President, I am now in my sixth year in the European Parliament, and although I do not want to lecture anyone, good manners dictate that on this key matter it is necessary to seek the opinion of the rapporteur. I would like to remind everybody that our Parliament has already granted discharge to the Council in this parliamentary term, only in November of last year – for the year 2007. We can say, therefore, that once again the Council has not presented the right documents.

Personally, I am bewildered that, when looking at implementation of the budget for 2008, we received documents for 2007, and so absolutely not in accordance with our expectations and requirements. However, I am known as a man of compromise, and I would like to give the Council a certain chance, and, really, it might be the last chance for the Council to prepare all the right documents and abandon the unfortunate gentlemen's agreement of 1970, which *de facto* does not allow us, according to the Council, to supervise that institution.

I am, therefore, in favour of making an exception and postponing the vote to give the Council a few more weeks – two or six – and then, in accordance with what Mr Staes has said, I will be in favour of an immediate vote, in June at the latest.

President. – The next item is the vote.

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

13.1. Administrative cooperation and combating fraud in the field of value added tax (recast) (A7-0061/2010, José Manuel García-Margallo y Marfil)

13.2. Common system of value added tax as regards the rules on invoicing (A7-0065/2010, David Casa)

13.3. Request for waiver of the parliamentary immunity of Mr Miloslav Ransdorf (A7-0107/2010, Francesco Enrico Speroni)

13.4. 2008 discharge: EU general budget, Court of Justice

13.5. 2008 discharge: EU general budget, Court of Auditors

13.6. 2008 discharge: EU general budget, European Ombudsman

13.7. 2008 discharge: EU general budget, European Data Protection Supervisor

13.8. 2008 discharge: Translation Centre for the Bodies of the European Union

13.9. 2008 discharge: European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

13.10. 2008 discharge: Community Fisheries Control Agency

13.11. 2008 discharge: European Agency for Reconstruction

13.12. 2008 discharge: European Aviation Safety Agency

13.13. 2008 discharge: European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control

13.14. 2008 discharge: European Chemicals Agency

13.15. 2008 discharge: European Environment Agency

- 13.16. 2008 discharge: European Environment Agency**
- 13.17. 2008 discharge: European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction**
- 13.18. 2008 discharge: European Medicines Agency**
- 13.19. 2008 discharge: European Maritime Safety Agency**
- 13.20. 2008 discharge: European Network Information Security Agency**
- 13.21. 2008 discharge: European Railway Agency**
- 13.22. 2008 discharge: European Training Foundation**
- 13.23. 2008 discharge: European Agency for Safety and Health at Work**
- 13.24. 2008 discharge: Euratom Supply Agency**
- 13.25. 2008 discharge: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions**
- 13.26. 2008 discharge: Eurojust**
- 13.27. 2008 discharge: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights**
- 13.28. 2008 discharge: FRONTEX**
- 13.29. 2008 discharge: European GNSS Supervisory Authority**
- 13.30. 2008 discharge: European Joint Undertaking for ITER and the Development of Fusion Energy**
- 13.31. 2008 discharge: SESAR joint undertaking (SJU)**
- 13.32. Transportable pressure equipment (A7-0101/2010, Brian Simpson)**
- 13.33. Aviation security charges (A7-0035/2010, Jörg Leichtfried)**
- 13.34. Community guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network (recast) (A7-0030/2010, Brian Simpson)**
- 13.35. General provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund as regards simplification of certain requirements and as regards certain provisions relating to financial management (A7-0055/2010, Evgeni Kirilov)**

13.36. Consequences of the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon for ongoing interinstitutional decision-making procedures (B7-0221/2010)

Takis Hatzigeorgiou (GUE/NGL). – (EL) Just a couple of seconds to explain the withdrawal of our amendment: we have withdrawn our amendment in the absolute and firm conviction that the Conference of Presidents, which is to examine the issue, will take very serious account of the spirit and letter of our amendment.

I would remind the House that we call in our amendment for the Commission to examine the change to the regulation on direct trade between the European Union and areas of Cyprus which are not under the control of the Republic of Cyprus.

13.37. Power of legislative delegation (A7-0110/2010, József Szájer)

13.38. Strategic goals and recommendations for the EU's maritime transport policy until 2018 (A7-0114/2010, Peter van Dalen)

13.39. Europeana - the next steps (A7-0028/2010, Helga Trüpel)

13.40. Evaluation and assessment of the Animal Welfare Action Plan 2006-2010 (A7-0053/2010, Marit Paulsen)

13.41. EU agriculture and climate change (A7-0060/2010, Stéphane Le Foll)

13.42. Agriculture in areas with natural handicaps: A special health check (A7-0056/2010, Herbert Dorfmann)

13.43. A new Digital Agenda for Europe: 2015.eu (A7-0066/2010, Pilar del Castillo Vera)

13.44. 2008 discharge: EU general budget - Section III - Commission

- Before the vote:

Ingeborg Gräßle (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, I should like to ask for a technical correction to be made. In paragraph 248, the words 'Kozloduy blocks 1 to 4' should be added after 'at the Kozloduy nuclear power station'.

President. – All these comments will be checked for accuracy.

Bogusław Liberadzki, rapporteur. – Mr President, I was unable to reach Strasbourg and so I thank you very much on behalf of my colleagues who contributed to the debate. I was pleased that the Council was represented, as the discharge process is one which concerns not only the EU institutions, but also the Member States, which the Council represents.

The real meat of my report is the number of proposals that aim to reduce error rates, to pinpoint problems and to improve the matching of information from the Commission and from the Court of Auditors, allowing us all in future to identify and tackle the real problem areas in our expenditure. With the Lisbon Treaty in place, it is time for a review of the discharge process itself.

My report calls for a higher-level debate involving the EU institutions and, of course, the Member States, which are responsible for managing around 80% of expenditure. Although my report is about the 2008 discharge, it contains many issues that are highly topical today. We all want to make sure that Greece can overcome the problems from the past. The section on Turkey has attracted attention and, whilst we must ensure pre-accession funds are used more effectively, let me stress that we are not about to change the nature of the EU's relationship with that country.

All the improvements I have highlighted are essential. The current financial difficulties mean that every euro must be used wisely and bring benefits to the people across our various countries – including the euros in the Structural and Cohesion Funds.

I look forward to working with the Commission and the Court of Auditors over the coming weeks to bring the calls for action in my report to fruition, and I look forward to reporting back to you on their implementation in the coming months.

13.45. 2008 discharge: seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth European Development Funds (EDF)

13.46. 2008 discharge: EU general budget, European Parliament

Edit Herczog, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – Mr President, we wish to move an oral amendment to the first part of this amendment.

The text would read as follows: 'Is of the opinion that, within an efficient and effective corporate governance system, due attention must be paid to the role of management; takes the view that Directors-General, Directors and Heads of Unit should be selected on the basis of merit taking into account equal opportunities and geographical balance...'

So the oral amendment is to insert 'taking into account equal opportunities and geographical balance' after the word 'merit'.

(Parliament agreed to accept the oral amendment)

Alexander Graf Lambsdorff (ALDE). – (DE) Mr President, for the purposes of clarification, can I ask whether we have just voted on Amendment 6 with or without the oral amendment?

(Parliament agreed to accept the oral amendment)

13.47. 2008 discharge: EU general budget, Economic and Social Committee

13.48. 2008 discharge: EU general budget, Committee of the Regions

13.49. 2008 discharge: performance, financial management and control of agencies

13.50. 2008 discharge: European Police College

13.51. The EU strategy for relations with Latin America (A7-0111/2010, José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra)

Inés Ayala Sender (S&D). – (ES) Mr President, it seems to me that we have not voted on discharge for the Economic and Social Committee. I may be wrong, but I think we have gone directly on to the Committee of the Regions.

13.52. EU - Canada summit (B7-0233/2010)

13.53. SWIFT (B7-0243/2010)

Jan Philipp Albrecht, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – Mr President, I would just like to inform you that the amendment to paragraph 8 by the GUE/NGL Group and the Verts/ALE Group has the same wording as in the resolution of September 2009. I would just like to inform you that it is just the same position, and I do not think that there is a need to change this position before the negotiations on SWIFT.

Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, *author*. – Mr President, I would just like to inform colleagues that we did not change our position: it has always been incorporated throughout the text in this resolution, so the proposed amendment is superfluous.

Rui Tavares (GUE/NGL). – Mr President, I just think that it is important to...

(Interjection from the floor)

I would like not to be disturbed by colleagues on the extreme right, please. I think that they would also like to be informed on this issue – the issue is whether or not to transfer bulk data to the United States; that is the issue in Amendment 8. We have been discussing whether we are against or for the position, but it is good to know.

(Parliament agreed to accept the oral amendment)

13.54. Passenger Name Record (PNR) (B7-0244/2010)

13.55. Ban on use of cyanide mining technologies

14. Explanations of vote

Explanations of vote

Report: José Manuel García-Margallo y Marfil (A7-0061/2010)

Elena Oana Antonescu (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) I support the stance adopted by the rapporteur from the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) on this dossier, along with the Commission's proposal on combating tax fraud in the European Union. I believe that this proposal can improve administrative cooperation on intra-Community transactions, when it comes to calculating value added tax and monitoring the correct application of this tax.

It remains to be seen whether the Commission's proposal to extend the Eurocanet network and establish a new structure, Eurofisc, which would operate on a voluntary basis without having any legal capacity, will increase the success rate of the battle against tax fraud at EU level.

Sophie Auconie (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) Governed by Council Regulation (EC) No 1798/2003, European administrative cooperation on VAT needs to be improved, particularly in terms of combating tax evasion. The report drafted by Mr García-Margallo y Marfil supports this approach by backing the proposals of the European Commission that focus on facilitating the exchange of data between Member States. I voted in favour of the report because it also adds some substantial improvements to the European Commission's text, particularly concerning the data protection of individuals.

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) Under the consultation procedure of the European Parliament, I voted for the report by my excellent Spanish colleague Mr García-Margallo y Marfil on the proposal for a Council Regulation concerning administrative cooperation and combating fraud in the field of value added tax. VAT fraud is often organised on a cross-border basis, which is why the European Union and its Member States need to be better coordinated to combat VAT fraud, in particular, and fiscal fraud, in general. I am pleased that the Commission's proposal lays down the principle of a legal basis for establishing a joint structure, Eurofisc, which will make possible multilateral, swift and targeted exchange of information so that Member States can respond adequately and in a coordinated fashion to combat any new kinds of fraud that emerge, drawing on jointly organised risk analysis. I share the rapporteur's concerns about the protection of personal data, which must be respected. This type of data must be used only with the goal of preventing and combating tax offences.

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D), *in writing*. – (LT) I supported this report since I believe that it is necessary to strengthen the provisions in the area of the fight against fraud. Fraud with the aim of evading taxes has serious consequences for national budgets, violates the principle of fair taxation and may distort competition and have an impact on the functioning of the internal market. Current regulations do not effectively ensure cooperation between Member States, although fraud in the field of value added tax is often organised across several countries, and therefore Member States must cooperate to prevent it. It is encouraging that the new version of the Regulation will strengthen the Community's database of VAT payers and their operations,

which will provide Member States with access to information, improve administrative cooperation and allow us to combat VAT fraud more effectively.

George Sabin Cutaş (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) I voted for a European strategy for combating tax fraud and evasion relating to VAT. I believe that a mechanism must be created at European level for combating fraud because the extent of this phenomenon highlights that the measures aimed at tackling this problem can no longer be managed exclusively at national level.

The International VAT Association quotes estimates of VAT losses ranging from EUR 60 billion to EUR 100 billion per year across the European Union. This is why I am urging close cooperation between administrative authorities in Member States and the European Commission in order to avoid the detrimental consequences which tax fraud can have for national budgets, as well as for competition.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Administrative cooperation between Member States in the fight against fraud and financial crime is extremely important for reasons of fairness and justice and because of the huge impact such crime has on a country's economic situation. Countless cases of fraud occur in the field of value added tax, so it is essential to have a legal framework with strong measures so as to bring about a substantial reduction in the number of such cases.

Greater cooperation among central governments is desirable, through the sharing of information, so long as the privacy of the individual is respected, as well as complete databases and officials properly trained in detecting and processing such cases. The Member States need to implement the measures put forward by the European Union as quickly as possible, so as to create a more transparent system that can effectively combat fiscal fraud.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Distortions caused by value added tax (VAT) fraud affect the overall balance of the own resource system, which must be fair and transparent in order to guarantee the smooth operation of the Union. Since the public authorities have an obligation to compensate for the loss of revenue involved, an increase in fraud translates into greater fiscal pressure on companies which abide by tax rules. Although investigations into the magnitude of VAT evasion and fraud have not been carried out in all Member States, the International VAT Association estimates that VAT losses range from EUR 60 billion to EUR 100 billion per year across the European Union. Greater cooperation between central administrations is desirable, by sharing information with respect for individual privacy. The Member States need to implement the measures put forward by the European Union as quickly as possible, so as to create a more transparent system that can effectively combat fiscal fraud.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The fight against tax fraud must be a priority for the EU, specifically in the area of value added tax. It is from this perspective that a cross-sectoral policy to fight fraud in all Member States is being advocated, notably including information exchanges. It is particularly significant that fraud is one of the main causes of injustice within the EU, since it leads to unfair competition and an unbalanced market.

Siiri Oviir (ALDE), *in writing*. – (ET) I voted for the Council's draft regulation on administrative cooperation and combating tax evasion in the field of value added tax, because this legal act will make it possible for the Member States to fight jointly and more efficiently against cross-border tax evasion. Tax evasion has serious consequences for the budgets of the Member States; it violates principles of equality in taxation and brings about distortions of competition. Although the measures to combat tax evasion are largely only within the competence of the Member States, I think that taking measures against tax evasion in today's global world needs to be a priority for the EU as well.

Alfredo Pallone (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) The Commission's proposal offers Member States the means to combat cross-border VAT fraud effectively by supplementing and amending the current regulation, and creating a legal basis for targeted cooperation in order to combat fraud: Eurofisc. Tax fraud has serious consequences for national budgets, leads to violations of the principle of fair taxation and is liable to bring about distortions of competition. Neither should we forget that public authorities have an obligation to compensate for the loss of revenue involved by putting greater fiscal pressure on companies which abide by tax rules. The fight against tax fraud across the EU must complement the action of the Member States. The draft regulation aims not only to allow VAT to be calculated correctly, but also to monitor its correct application, particularly with regard to intra-Community transactions, and combat VAT fraud. In general terms, several improvements are introduced relating to the exchange of information, namely, an improved

definition of the cases in which Member States may carry out an administrative investigation, including measures to remedy the failure to carry out an investigation.

Aldo Patriciello (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) I am pleased that the financial impact of irregularities, as far as they have been identified, fell from EUR 1 024 million in 2007 to EUR 783.2 million in 2008, with reductions being recorded in all spending areas except direct expenditure and pre-accession funds. I fully support the work done by the Commission, and I would point out that the fight against fraud and corruption is an important duty of the European institutions and all Member States.

In view of the particular economic situation afflicting all of Europe, I agree that it is necessary to protect the Union's financial interests and to fight organised crime, which, according to national indicators, is increasing its capacity for collusion within institutions, particularly by means of fraud against the Community budget.

I therefore think it essential to enact effective legislation to improve administrative cooperation in tackling harmful tax practices and ensure the smooth functioning of the internal market. In this connection, I support the proposal for a Council directive on administrative cooperation in the field of taxation, while stressing the importance of making Member States more accountable, starting with the quality of the information entered into the databases.

Report: David Casa (A7-0065/2010)

Elena Oana Antonescu (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) The Commission's proposal to simplify, modernise and harmonise the rules on VAT invoices offers improvements, particularly concerning the provisions enabling small and medium-sized enterprises to use simplified invoices, as well as the guarantee of acceptance by the tax authorities of electronic invoices under the same conditions as conventional ones. In this respect, the rapporteur's proposal to grant tax authorities the option to prescribe additional requirements, such as sequential numbers for simplified invoices, provides a simple security measure which preserves the improvements made by the Commission.

In this area concerning the common VAT system and the rules on invoicing, the Commission must support Member States which require technical assistance to modernise their *e*-administration, whether via the Community programme Fiscalis 2013 or through the use of the Structural Funds. I believe that the rapporteur has made amendments which improve the Commission's proposal; hence the reason I voted to adopt this report.

Sophie Auconie (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of Mr Casa's report concerning the rules for VAT invoicing. On this subject, a Council directive of 2001 had laid down common rules at European Union level as a means of simplifying, modernising and harmonising VAT invoicing rules. There are disparities, however, with the rules in the different Member States, particularly as far as *e*-invoicing is concerned. Such disparities, nonetheless, are an impediment to the mainstreaming of this kind of invoicing, despite it being a source of simplification. The greater harmonisation of the rules proposed by the European Commission and supported by the rapporteur is therefore good news for all European businesses, as *e*-invoicing will be more accessible to them and, in turn, their administrative burden will be reduced.

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) Under the consultation procedure of the European Parliament, I voted for the report by my excellent Maltese colleague Mr Casa on the proposal for a Council directive amending Directive 2006/112/EC on the common system of value added tax as regards the rules on invoicing. It was becoming essential to do away with the administrative set-up linked to invoicing. Historically, the opportunities afforded to Member States in this area have involved disparate rules, in particular in the field of *e*-invoicing. Such rules are an obstacle to the smooth functioning of enterprises – especially those using new dematerialisation technologies – on the internal market at a time when unnecessary administrative burdens in Europe are curbing economic growth. I support all the simplification measures proposed in the report, especially those intended for SMEs and in particular: to delete the requirement to hold an invoice that complies with formalities of all the Member States; to confirm that paper and electronic invoices are equally valid; and to delete the possibility for Member States in which the tax is due to require particular invoices to be translated into their official languages.

Sebastian Valentin Bodu (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) I welcome the adoption of this report in numerous respects. However, particularly as a rapporteur and author of some key amendments, I would only like to refer to the most important aspects, both of which specifically result in reducing the administrative burdens on businesses.

The first of these is the obligation on Member States to implement the accounting system based on receipts and payments (cash accounting) for SMEs (which are defined at EU level as firms with a turnover of less than EUR 2 million), which will be a welcome incentive for the business sector. This is being introduced at a time when businesses are currently in the situation where they pay VAT on an invoice as soon as it is issued, but the relevant invoice payment (and associated VAT) may only be paid months later, if ever. However, in every case, the fundamental principle remains that the deductibility of VAT is inextricably linked to its payment.

The second aspect is that electronic invoices are granted the same legal status as paper invoices so that invoices sent via email will probably replace the current paper invoices, thereby facilitating the tasks of not only issuing and sending invoices, but of managing and storing them as well.

Vito Bonsignore (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) I would like to congratulate the rapporteur, Mr Casa, on the important work he has carried out so far. My parliamentary group has always been committed to supporting small and medium-sized enterprises, which are the real driving force of Europe's economy and which we as politicians have the duty to boost.

In particular, I endorse the possibility, proposed by the Commission, to allow the supplier to pay VAT only when he receives payment for a supply. I also agree with the principle regarding the possibility of giving equal validity to electronic invoices and paper invoices. This, then, is a series of measures which, in my view, fall within a broader process to cut red tape which is helpful for European enterprises, especially at such a critical economic juncture.

I therefore hope that these measures will be adopted as soon as possible within a broader support framework for small and medium-sized enterprises, which need to operate in an easier economic and fiscal environment.

David Casa (PPE), *in writing*. – This was my own report on the VAT rules on invoicing. We were successful in asking that the cash accounting scheme be introduced on a mandatory basis in all Member States, thereby giving SMEs the option of whether or not to use such a scheme. The report has also been successful in reducing unnecessary burdens on business that were found within the Commission's proposal. To this end the report was successful in achieving its aims and I have voted in favour.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Greater internal market integration and the cutting of unjustifiable costs to companies through a process of simplification and of bringing down administrative barriers are objectives that must be borne in mind in the preparation of Union legislation.

This directive, which aims at establishing a common system of invoicing with regard to value added tax, is therefore essential for achieving those aims. In particular, I believe the traditional invoicing method should be replaced with electronic invoicing, which is quicker and less costly for companies and individuals, provided that the principle of transparency is respected.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The directive under discussion aims to establish a common system of invoicing for value added tax through an exercise of simplification and reduction of the administrative burden; this is essential to achieving greater integration of the internal market and reducing unjustified costs for companies. I believe that this directive constitutes a positive step towards bringing clarity and legal certainty both for taxable persons and for the administrations, whilst providing additional means to fight against value added tax fraud.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) A common system of value added tax (VAT) as regards the rules on invoicing is essential to the simplification, modernisation and harmonisation of the rules on VAT invoicing. This new system also brings companies a significant saving, which is of the utmost importance in this context of crisis. The adoption of this report is also another step in the fight against fraud and tax evasion.

Siiri Oviir (ALDE), *in writing*. – (ET) As a liberal, I voted for the directive changing the rules on invoicing, because I think that the method used today, whereby this chapter was incorporated into the VAT Directive, has not completely attained its objective, which was to simplify, modernise and harmonise the submission of VAT invoices. I think that the new rules will reduce the burden of bureaucracy on the entrepreneur, and also ensure that the same rules for drawing up and issuing invoices will start to apply in all Member States. Given the open market and the movement of services, nothing else would be reasonable.

Report: Ryszard Czarnecki (A7-0079/2010)

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) On the basis of the recommendation made to us in the report by my Polish fellow Member, Mr Czarnecki, I voted in favour of granting the Court of Justice's Registrar discharge

in respect of the implementation of its budget for the financial year 2008. I endorse the request by the Court of Auditors that enhanced procurement procedures be established by the European Court of Justice. I am pleased with the smooth functioning of the ECJ. Nevertheless, I cannot understand the reluctance of the ECJ to publish its members' declarations of financial interests, and I support the request made by Parliament to implement this practice without delay.

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I believe it is essential for civil servants to be accountable to the general public. Therefore, they must objectively and rigorously account for how the public funds made available to them have been used. This report provides an exhaustive analysis of the budgetary situation of the European Court of Justice (ECJ). It points out a number of important issues that should be urgently reviewed, such as the need to enhance procurement procedures, in order to help authorising services organise tendering procedures and control adherence to regulatory obligations. I welcome the fact that the ECJ has adopted the practice of including in its activity report a chapter outlining the follow-up during the year to Parliament's previous discharge decisions and to reports of the Court of Auditors.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) All the European institutions that depend on the European Union budget have to be thoroughly audited by the Court of Auditors and by all entities with that function. It is necessary to check whether Union funds are being well used, whether these institutions are meeting the objectives outlined for them, and whether any resources are being wasted. Generally – with only a few exceptions, to judge by the audits that we have already seen – we can say that the institutions at issue are using the funds made available to them properly and meeting the objectives proposed for them. That is why I voted for the report on the Court of Justice.

Report: Ryszard Czarnecki (A7-0097/2010)

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE), in writing. – (FR) On the basis of the recommendation made in the report by my Polish fellow Member, Mr Czarnecki, I voted in favour of granting the Secretary-General of the European Court of Auditors discharge in respect of the implementation of its budget for the financial year 2008. Like many of my fellow MEPs, I am delighted with the proper functioning of the Court and its sound financial management. I regret that the declarations of financial interests of the Members of the Court that the latter submit to the President of the Court in accordance with its Code of Conduct are not made public or, at the very least, communicated to members of the Committee on Budgetary Control.

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I believe it is essential for civil servants to be accountable to the general public. Therefore, they must objectively and rigorously account for how the public funds made available to them have been used. I am glad to see that an external firm, PricewaterhouseCoopers, has audited the accounts of the Court of Auditors and concluded that 'nothing has come to our attention that causes us to believe that, in all material respects and based on (identified) criteria, (a) the resources assigned to the Court have not been used for their intended purposes, and (b) the control procedures in place do not provide the necessary guarantees to ensure the compliance of financial operations with the applicable rules and regulations'. I also welcome the fact that the Court of Auditors has included a chapter giving an account of the follow-up during the year to Parliament's previous discharge decisions.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) As the body largely responsible for auditing European institutions, the Court of Auditors also has its turn to be audited. It is clear that the audit carried out by an outside entity – PricewaterhouseCoopers – has shown itself to be very positive. The internal auditor's report was also positive, with the majority of its recommendations having been accepted and applied in advance under several action plans.

Report: Ryszard Czarnecki (A7-0070/2010)

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE), in writing. – (FR) On the basis of the recommendation made in the report by my Polish fellow Member, Mr Czarnecki, I voted in favour of granting the European Ombudsman discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget for the financial year 2008. I welcome the decision by the Ombudsman, Mr Diamandouros, to publish his annual declaration of interests and to put it on his website.

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I believe it is essential for civil servants to be accountable to the general public. Therefore, they must objectively and rigorously account for how the public funds made available to them have been used. The Court of Auditors indicated in its annual report that the audit did not give rise to any significant observations as regards the Ombudsman. It noted, however, that certain aspects of the public procurement process could be improved. I join the rapporteur in warmly welcoming the Ombudsman's

decision to publish his annual declaration of interests and to make it available on the Internet. I agree with the rapporteur in urging the Ombudsman to include in his next activity report (for the 2009 financial year) a chapter giving a detailed account of the follow-up during the year to Parliament's earlier discharge decisions.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) All the European institutions that depend on the European Union budget have to be thoroughly audited by the Court of Auditors and by all entities with that function. It is necessary to check whether Union funds are being well used, whether these institutions are meeting the objectives outlined for them, and whether any resources are being wasted. Generally – with only a few exceptions, to judge by the audits that we have already seen – we can say that the institutions at issue are using the funds made available to them properly and meeting the objectives proposed for them. That is why I voted for the report on the European Ombudsman.

Report: Ryszard Czarnecki (A7-0098/2010)

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE), in writing. – (FR) On the basis of the recommendation made to the European Parliament in the report by my Polish fellow Member, Mr Czarnecki, I voted in favour of granting the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS) discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget for the financial year 2008. I welcome the annual publication of declarations of financial interests of the elected members of that institution (European Data Protection Supervisor and Assistant Supervisor).

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I believe it is essential for civil servants to be accountable to the general public. Therefore, they must objectively and rigorously account for how public funds have been used. I join the rapporteur in the positive assessment he made of the efforts to consolidate the management of financial and human resources, as well as the improvement in functionality and efficiency of internal control functions achieved in 2008. I also welcome the annual publication of declarations of financial interests of the elected members of the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS), containing relevant information on remunerated posts or activities and declarable professional activities. That is essential for building people's trust in public office holders. I agree with the rapporteur in urging the EDPS to include in its next activity report (for the 2009 financial year) a chapter giving a detailed account of the follow-up during the year to Parliament's earlier discharge decisions.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) All the European institutions that depend on the European Union budget have to be thoroughly audited by the Court of Auditors and by all entities with that function. It is necessary to check whether Union funds are being well used, whether these institutions are meeting the objectives outlined for them, and whether any resources are being wasted. Generally – with only a few exceptions, to judge by the audits that we have already seen – we can say that the institutions at issue are using the funds made available to them properly and meeting the objectives proposed for them. That is why I voted for the report on the European Data Protection Supervisor.

Report: Véronique Mathieu (A7-0071/2010)

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE), in writing. – (FR) On the basis of the recommendation made to the European Parliament in the report by my excellent colleague and friend, Mrs Mathieu, I voted in favour of granting the Director of the Translation Centre for the Bodies of the European Union discharge in respect of the implementation of its budget for the financial year 2008. I cannot understand why this body is accumulating seemingly unnecessary surpluses, for example a surplus of nearly EUR 27 million in 2008 and accumulated funds on 31 December 2008 of nearly EUR 50 million. I am surprised that the pensions dispute has not been resolved.

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I believe it is essential for civil servants to be accountable to the general public. Therefore, they must objectively and rigorously account for how the public funds made available to them have been used. The Court of Auditors states that it has obtained reasonable assurance that the annual accounts of the Translation Centre for the Bodies of the European Union are reliable and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular. In respect of the Centre's activities, the Court of Auditors found that there was a certain lack of precision in the forecasts for translation requests received, which led the Centre to have an accumulated budget surplus contrary to Regulation (EC) No 2965/94. This situation must, therefore, be remedied. I, like the rapporteur, find it regrettable that the conflict between the Centre and the Commission as to the employer's share of pension contributions for staff has still not been settled.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) All the European institutions that depend on the European Union budget have to be thoroughly audited by the Court of Auditors and by all entities with that function. It is necessary

to check whether Union funds are being well used, whether these institutions are meeting the objectives outlined for them, and whether any resources are being wasted. Generally – with only a few exceptions, to judge by the audits that we have already seen – we can say that the institutions at issue are using the funds made available to them properly and meeting the objectives proposed for them. That is why I voted for the report on the Translation Centre for the Bodies of the European Union.

Report: Véronique Mathieu (A7-0091/2010)

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I believe it is essential for civil servants to be accountable to the general public. Therefore, they must objectively and rigorously account for how the public funds made available to them have been used. The Court of Auditors states in its report that the annual accounts of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training for the financial year 2008 are reliable and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular. That means that the Centre has made enormous progress with regard to the inventory procedure for identifying, recording and capitalising assets, to documentation on internal control processes and to procurement procedures. There has, however, been a standstill in the area of staff management, given that the objectives for staff and the performance indicators were neither measurable nor focused on results. Nevertheless, like the rapporteur, I welcome the Centre's intention to introduce a pilot system in 2010 for recording the time spent working by each staff member.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) All the European institutions that depend on the European Union budget have to be thoroughly audited by the Court of Auditors and by all entities with that function. It is necessary to check whether Union funds are being well used, whether these institutions are meeting the objectives outlined for them, and whether any resources are being wasted. Generally – with only a few exceptions, to judge by the audits that we have already seen – we can say that the institutions at issue are using the funds made available to them properly and meeting the objectives proposed for them. That is why I voted for the report on the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training.

Report: Véronique Mathieu (A7-0105/2010)

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I believe it is essential for civil servants to be accountable to the general public. Therefore, they must objectively and rigorously account for how the public funds made available to them have been used. The Court of Auditors states in its report that the annual accounts of the Community Fisheries Control Agency for the financial year 2008 are reliable and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular. I am concerned by the observation made by the Court of Auditors that the Agency does not draw up a multiannual work programme, which is essential for effective financial management and clear target setting. The Administrative Board should therefore be congratulated on its decision to begin to develop this kind of programme. Such a programme will be essential for improving the Agency's budgetary and financial management. Although the Court approved this management, it still has some shortcomings that need to be addressed. Like the rapporteur, I believe an important tool to introduce will be an effective means of managing staff members' working time, by strictly setting the number of recommended hours for each project.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) All the European institutions that depend on the European Union budget have to be thoroughly audited by the Court of Auditors and by all entities with that function. It is necessary to check whether Union funds are being well used, whether these institutions are meeting the objectives outlined for them, and whether any resources are being wasted. Generally – with only a few exceptions, to judge by the audits that we have already seen – we can say that the institutions at issue are using the funds made available to them properly and meeting the objectives proposed for them. That is why I voted for the report on the Community Fisheries Control Agency.

Report: Véronique Mathieu (A7-0072/2010)

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE), in writing. – (FR) On the basis of the recommendation made to the European Parliament in the report by my excellent colleague and friend, Mrs Mathieu, I voted in favour of granting the Director of the European Agency for Reconstruction discharge in respect of the implementation of its budget for 2008. I believe that it would be useful for the Commission, following the memorandum of understanding of December 2008 between the Commission and the Agency providing for certain closing transactions and in particular for the Agency's residual assets to become the property of the Commission after 31 December 2008, to produce a detailed closure report on the closing transactions for both the social and the financial aspects. I support the calls for clarification on the funding allocated to Kosovo, since the credibility of the Union and of this young nation, which one day intends to become an EU Member State, is at stake.

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I believe it is essential for civil servants to be accountable to the general public. Therefore, they must objectively and rigorously account for how the public funds made available to them have been used. I must highlight the fact that the Court of Auditors found that none of the formal conditions required for the award of a direct grant of EUR 1 399 132 (0.31% of the available operational budget) to an international organisation had been fulfilled. Like the rapporteur, I deplore the fact that the efficiently functioning European Agency for Reconstruction has been wound up and the management of the funding has been transferred to the delegations; I demand that the Commission submit a report detailing how many staff the delegations have taken on to cope with the Agency's tasks; and I call on the Commission to supply comprehensive and complete information on whether budget support has been provided from the funds transferred from the Agency to the delegations.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) All the European institutions that depend on the European Union budget have to be thoroughly audited by the Court of Auditors and by all entities with that function. It is necessary to check whether Union funds are being well used, whether these institutions are meeting the objectives outlined for them, and whether any resources are being wasted. Generally – with only a few exceptions, to judge by the audits that we have already seen – we can say that the institutions at issue are using the funds made available to them properly and meeting the objectives proposed for them. That is why I voted for the report on the European Agency for Reconstruction.

Report: Véronique Mathieu (A7-0068/2010)

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I argue that it is essential for civil servants to be accountable to the general public. Therefore, they must objectively and rigorously account for how the public funds made available to them have been used. The Court of Auditors stated in its report that the annual accounts of the European Aviation Safety Agency for the financial year 2008 are reliable and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular. There had been marked progress over the previous years, and an effort had been made to implement measures suggested in the past by both the Court of Auditors and the Internal Audit Service. As the rapporteur points out, however, the mechanisms for setting the Agency's objectives need to be strengthened in order to make it easier to evaluate their attainment, and a new methodology for staff management, from recruitment to performance evaluation, should be introduced.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) All the European institutions that depend on the European Union budget have to be thoroughly audited by the Court of Auditors and by all entities with that function. It is necessary to check whether Union funds are being well used, whether these institutions are meeting the objectives outlined for them, and whether any resources are being wasted. Generally – with only a few exceptions, to judge by the audits that we have already seen – we can say that the institutions at issue are using the funds made available to them properly and meeting the objectives proposed for them. That is why I voted for the report on the European Aviation Safety Agency.

Report: Véronique Mathieu (A7-0104/2010)

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I believe it is essential for civil servants to be accountable to the general public. Therefore, they must objectively and rigorously account for how the public funds made available to them have been used. The Court of Auditors states that it has obtained reasonable assurance that the annual accounts of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control are reliable and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular. It should be highlighted that the Centre has consolidated its public health functions, enhanced the capacities of its disease-specific programmes, further developed partnerships and improved its managerial structures. I deplore the fact, however, that the Centre has not comprehensively fulfilled its obligation to send to the authority responsible for discharge a report drawn up by its Director summarising the number of internal audits conducted by the internal auditor.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) All the European institutions that depend on the European Union budget have to be thoroughly audited by the Court of Auditors and by all entities with that function. It is necessary to check whether Union funds are being well used, whether these institutions are meeting the objectives outlined for them, and whether any resources are being wasted. Generally – with only a few exceptions, to judge by the audits that we have already seen – we can say that the institutions at issue are using the funds made available to them properly and meeting the objectives proposed for them. That is why I voted for the report on the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.

Report: Véronique Mathieu (A7-0089/2010)

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I believe it is essential for civil servants to be accountable to the general public. Therefore, they must objectively and rigorously account for how the public funds made available to them have been used. The Court of Auditors states that it has obtained reasonable assurance that the annual accounts of the European Chemicals Agency are reliable and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular. The Agency is performing a role that the Commission is not in a position to take on; it is fully aligned with the Union's strategic priorities and its activities are complementary to those of other agencies. It should be noted that the Court of Auditors highlights delays in the operational activities caused by difficulties in implementing the IT system and by a lack of qualified staff.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) All the European institutions that depend on the European Union budget have to be thoroughly audited by the Court of Auditors and by all entities with that function. It is necessary to check whether Union funds are being well used, whether these institutions are meeting the objectives outlined for them, and whether any resources are being wasted. Generally – with only a few exceptions, to judge by the audits that we have already seen – we can say that the institutions at issue are using the funds made available to them properly and meeting the objectives proposed for them. That is why I voted for the report on the European Chemicals Agency.

Report: Véronique Mathieu (A7-0092/2010)

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I believe it is essential for civil servants to be accountable to the general public. Therefore, they must objectively and rigorously account for how the public funds made available to them have been used. The Court of Auditors believes in its report that the annual accounts of the European Environment Agency for the financial year 2008 are reliable and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular. I congratulate the Agency on the external evaluation of the EU decentralised agencies commissioned by the Commission in 2009, the main findings of which were very positive. In particular, I congratulate it on having built up a well-developed activity-based management system, a multiannual work programme, a balanced scorecard with indicators, and an integrated management control system, all of which contribute to efficient management.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) All the European institutions that depend on the European Union budget have to be thoroughly audited by the Court of Auditors and by all entities with that function. It is necessary to check whether Union funds are being well used, whether these institutions are meeting the objectives outlined for them, and whether any resources are being wasted. Generally – with only a few exceptions, to judge by the audits that we have already seen – we can say that the institutions at issue are using the funds made available to them properly and meeting the objectives proposed for them. That is why I voted for the report on the European Environment Agency.

Report: Véronique Mathieu (A7-0086/2010)

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I believe it is essential for civil servants to be accountable to the general public. Therefore, they must objectively and rigorously account for how the public funds made available to them have been used. The Court of Auditors in its report describes the annual accounts of the European Food Safety Authority for the financial year 2008 as reliable and the underlying transactions as legal and regular. The Authority reached a high level of budget execution for both commitment and payment credits (97% and 95% respectively). Nonetheless, it should be noted that some inadequacies that had been identified previously by the Court of Auditors remain and are becoming recurrent, namely carry-overs of appropriations to the following year and cancellation of commitments for operational activities carried over from the previous year. This situation is at odds with the principle of annuality and shows weaknesses in programming and budgeting, which must be remedied. It is a highly positive development, however, that the Authority has succeeded in substantially and consistently improving its performance indicators in recent years.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) All the European institutions that depend on the European Union budget have to be thoroughly audited by the Court of Auditors and by all entities with that function. It is necessary to check whether Union funds are being well used, whether these institutions are meeting the objectives outlined for them, and whether any resources are being wasted. Generally – with only a few exceptions, to judge by the audits that we have already seen – we can say that the institutions at issue are using the funds made available to them properly and meeting the objectives proposed for them. That is why I voted for the report on the European Food Safety Authority.

Report: Véronique Mathieu (A7-0067/2010)

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I believe that it is essential for civil servants to be accountable to the general public. Therefore, they must objectively and rigorously account for how the public funds made available to them have been used. The Court of Auditors states in its report that the annual accounts of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction for the financial year 2008 are reliable and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular. Like the rapporteur, I advocate that the Centre should explicitly set the proposed objectives in its annual work programme, to make the annual evaluation of its performance easier. It should also include human resources management procedures to make such management more effective, for example by introducing objectives of working hours for its agents into its programming and setting the average time they should devote to each project.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) All the European institutions that depend on the European Union budget have to be thoroughly audited by the Court of Auditors and by all entities with that function. It is necessary to check whether Union funds are being well used, whether these institutions are meeting the objectives outlined for them, and whether any resources are being wasted. Generally – with only a few exceptions, to judge by the audits that we have already seen – we can say that the institutions at issue are using the funds made available to them properly and meeting the objectives proposed for them. That is why I voted for the report on the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction.

Report: Véronique Mathieu (A7-0078/2010)

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I believe it is essential for civil servants to be accountable to the general public. Therefore, they must objectively and rigorously account for how the public funds made available to them have been used. The Court of Auditors states that it has obtained reasonable assurance that the annual accounts of the European Medicines Agency are reliable and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular. I join the rapporteur in congratulating the Agency on having put in place sophisticated activity-based budgeting and user-satisfaction monitoring. The Agency must, however, improve the quality of its procurement procedures so as to put an end to the shortcomings identified by the Court of Auditors (for instance, as regards the application of evaluation methods for the price criteria and as regards the essential need for justifications for the choice of procedures).

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) All the European institutions that depend on the European Union budget have to be thoroughly audited by the Court of Auditors and by all entities with that function. It is necessary to check whether Union funds are being well used, whether these institutions are meeting the objectives outlined for them, and whether any resources are being wasted. Generally – with only a few exceptions, to judge by the audits that we have already seen – we can say that the institutions at issue are using the funds made available to them properly and meeting the objectives proposed for them. That is why I voted for the report on the European Medicines Agency.

Report: Véronique Mathieu (A7-0081/2010)

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I believe it is essential for civil servants to be accountable to the general public. Therefore, they must objectively and rigorously account for how the public funds made available to them have been used. The Court of Auditors has expressed its opinion that there is evidence that the annual accounts of the European Maritime Safety Agency are reliable and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular. However, the Agency failed to prepare a multiannual work programme, and its annual work programme was not related to its commitment budget. The Agency is, however, finalising a five-year strategy and developing Key Performance Indicators, which will have to be submitted to Parliament for scrutiny. The report also points out that the procedures for establishing the budget were not rigorous enough, leading to a high number of budgetary transfers and a high level of cancellation of payment appropriations, indicating weaknesses in planning and monitoring. This may have been a one-off event, however, due to the move to the Agency's long-term office building.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) All the European institutions that depend on the European Union budget have to be thoroughly audited by the Court of Auditors and by all entities with that function. It is necessary to check whether Union funds are being well used, whether these institutions are meeting the objectives outlined for them, and whether any resources are being wasted. Generally – with only a few exceptions, to judge by the audits that we have already seen – we can say that the institutions at issue are using the funds made available to them properly and meeting the objectives proposed for them. That is why I voted for the report on the European Maritime Safety Agency.

Report: Véronique Mathieu (A7-0087/2010)

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I believe that it is essential for civil servants to be accountable to the general public. Therefore, they must objectively and rigorously account for how the public funds made available to them have been used. The Court of Auditors states in its report that the annual accounts of the European Network and Information Security Agency for the financial year 2008 are reliable and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular. However, it highlights failings in procurement procedures, particularly with regard to the under-estimation of the budgets of framework contracts, which ultimately constitutes an obstacle to fair competition. These deficiencies must therefore be overcome. Given the importance of electronic communication networks, the Agency should be congratulated on the improvement in the resilience of European electronic communication networks, and on the development and maintenance of cooperation with Member States.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) All the European institutions that depend on the European Union budget have to be thoroughly audited by the Court of Auditors and by all entities with that function. It is necessary to check whether Union funds are being well used, whether these institutions are meeting the objectives outlined for them, and whether any resources are being wasted. Generally – with only a few exceptions, to judge by the audits that we have already seen – we can say that the institutions at issue are using the funds made available to them properly and meeting the objectives proposed for them. That is why I voted for the report on the European Network and Information Security Agency.

Report: Véronique Mathieu (A7-0084/2010)

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I believe it is essential for civil servants to be accountable to the general public. Therefore, they must objectively and rigorously account for how public funds have been used. The Court of Auditors states in its report that the annual accounts of the European Railway Agency for the financial year 2008 are reliable and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular. However, the Court of Auditors points out that the Agency has weaknesses in the setting of objectives and performance measures, as well as problems in procurement procedures. Given the greater scrutiny of the activities of public bodies, the Agency needs to adopt appropriate measures to overcome these problems. Finally, I congratulate the Agency on having implemented 32 of the 36 recommendations made by the Internal Audit Service since 2006. Amongst the four recommendations which are still in progress, however, one is critical and three are very important, and I urge the Agency, therefore, to implement certain internal control standards relating to bank signatures, segregation of duties, sensitive posts and maintenance of delegation powers, as mentioned in those recommendations.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) All the European institutions that depend on the European Union budget have to be thoroughly audited by the Court of Auditors and by all entities with that function. It is necessary to check whether Union funds are being well used, whether these institutions are meeting the objectives outlined for them, and whether any resources are being wasted. Generally – with only a few exceptions, to judge by the audits that we have already seen – we can say that the institutions at issue are using the funds made available to them properly and meeting the objectives proposed for them. That is why I voted for the report on the European Railway Agency.

Report: Véronique Mathieu (A7-0083/2010)

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I believe it is essential for civil servants to be accountable to the general public. Therefore, they must objectively and rigorously account for how the public funds made available to them have been used. The Court of Auditors states in its report that the annual accounts of the European Training Foundation for the financial year 2008 are reliable and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular. However, it warns that there are irregularities and a lack of transparency in recruitment procedures, and the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) has even opened an inquiry into the Foundation. It should be noted, however, that the Foundation says that it has undertaken a thorough review of its recruitment procedures in response to the Court of Auditors' findings, although we have not yet been informed about it. Lastly, it is important to highlight that the Foundation's work in supporting the Commission in 2008 obtained a 97% satisfaction rate from the Commission.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) All the European institutions that depend on the European Union budget have to be thoroughly audited by the Court of Auditors and by all entities with that function. It is necessary to check whether Union funds are being well used, whether these institutions are meeting the objectives outlined for them, and whether any resources are being wasted. Generally – with only a few exceptions, to

judge by the audits that we have already seen – we can say that the institutions at issue are using the funds made available to them properly and meeting the objectives proposed for them. That is why I voted for the report on the European Training Foundation.

Report: Véronique Mathieu (A7-0069/2010)

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I believe it is essential for civil servants to be accountable to the general public. Therefore, they must objectively and rigorously account for how the public funds made available to them have been used. The Court of Auditors states that it has obtained reasonable assurance that the annual accounts of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work are reliable and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular. The Agency has significantly improved its financial management over the last three years, which is very welcome, and it should continue to strive for the highest standards in budgetary planning, implementation and control. However, there remain a few irregularities, particularly in relation to procurement procedures, which need to be resolved.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) All the European institutions that depend on the European Union budget have to be thoroughly audited by the Court of Auditors and by all entities with that function. It is necessary to check whether Union funds are being well used, whether these institutions are meeting the objectives outlined for them, and whether any resources are being wasted. Generally – with only a few exceptions, to judge by the audits that we have already seen – we can say that the institutions at issue are using the funds made available to them properly and meeting the objectives proposed for them. That is why I voted for the report on the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work.

Report: Véronique Mathieu (A7-0076/2010)

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I believe it is essential for civil servants to be accountable to the general public. Therefore, they must objectively and rigorously account for how the public funds made available to them have been used. The Court of Auditors states that it has obtained reasonable assurance that the annual accounts of the Euratom Supply Agency are reliable and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular. It should be noted that in 2008 the Agency did not receive any subsidy to cover its operations and the Commission bore all expenses incurred by the Agency for the implementation of the 2008 budget. It should also be noted that the commitments carried over from the financial year 2007 were paid with the unused part of the 2007 subsidy. To all effects, therefore, in the absence of an autonomous budget, the Agency is *de facto* integrated in the Commission. That may raise questions regarding its structure and autonomy, which can be examined in the future.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) All the European institutions that depend on the European Union budget have to be thoroughly audited by the Court of Auditors and by all entities with that function. It is necessary to check whether Union funds are being well used, whether these institutions are meeting the objectives outlined for them, and whether any resources are being wasted. Generally – with only a few exceptions, to judge by the audits that we have already seen – we can say that the institutions at issue are using the funds made available to them properly and meeting the objectives proposed for them. That is why I voted for the report on the Euratom Supply Agency.

Report: Véronique Mathieu (A7-0088/2010)

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I believe it is essential for civil servants to be accountable to the general public. Therefore, they must objectively and rigorously account for how the public funds made available to them have been used. After weaknesses were detected in recruitment and procurement procedures in the previous year, the Court of Auditors states in its report that the annual accounts of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions for the financial year 2008 are reliable and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular. That represents an improvement in the management of the Foundation's accounts and internal audit systems, which is very welcome. Given the importance of this agency, I hope it will continue its efforts at budgetary discipline, improve its human resources management procedures and enter staff numbers, including contract staff, in the activity report in a transparent manner.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) All the European institutions that depend on the European Union budget have to be thoroughly audited by the Court of Auditors and by all entities with that function. It is necessary to check whether Union funds are being well used, whether these institutions are meeting the objectives outlined for them, and whether any resources are being wasted. Generally – with only a few exceptions, to judge by the audits that we have already seen – we can say that the institutions at issue are using the funds

made available to them properly and meeting the objectives proposed for them. That is why I voted for the report on the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions.

Report: Véronique Mathieu (A7-0093/2010)

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I believe it is essential for civil servants to be accountable to the general public. Therefore, they must objectively and rigorously account for how the public funds made available to them have been used. Despite the Court of Auditors' opinion that the accounts of the European Judicial Cooperation Unit (Eurojust) are reliable and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular, I am concerned at the rapporteur's evaluation that 'the lack of indicators, the deficits in measurement of user satisfaction and the lack of coordination between the budget and the work programme make it difficult to evaluate Eurojust's performance'. I also note the Court of Auditors' finding that in 2008 Eurojust had a problem as regards carrying forward appropriations, although the amount was lower than in the previous year, and action is needed to prevent this situation from recurring in future. Lastly, I share the rapporteur's concern that none of the 26 recommendations made by the Internal Audit Service have been fully implemented by Eurojust.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) All the European institutions that depend on the European Union budget have to be thoroughly audited by the Court of Auditors and by all entities with that function. It is necessary to check whether Union funds are being well used, whether these institutions are meeting the objectives outlined for them, and whether any resources are being wasted. Generally – with only a few exceptions, to judge by the audits that we have already seen – we can say that the institutions at issue are using the funds made available to them properly and meeting the objectives proposed for them. That is why I voted for the report on Eurojust.

Report: Véronique Mathieu (A7-0090/2010)

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I believe it is essential for civil servants to be accountable to the general public. Therefore, they must objectively and rigorously account for how the public funds made available to them have been used. I congratulate the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights on the effort it has made to remedy the weaknesses previously identified both by the Court of Auditors and by the Internal Audit Service. I would especially highlight the introduction of measures to improve performance assessment. Such actions need to be developed further.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) All the European institutions that depend on the European Union budget have to be thoroughly audited by the Court of Auditors and by all entities with that function. It is necessary to check whether Union funds are being well used, whether these institutions are meeting the objectives outlined for them, and whether any resources are being wasted. Generally – with only a few exceptions, to judge by the audits that we have already seen – we can say that the institutions at issue are using the funds made available to them properly and meeting the objectives proposed for them. That is why I voted for the report on the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights.

Report: Véronique Mathieu (A7-0085/2010)

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I believe it is essential for civil servants to be accountable to the general public. Therefore, they must objectively and rigorously account for how the public funds made available to them have been used. The Court of Auditors states in its report that the annual accounts of the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (FRONTEX) for the financial year 2008 are reliable and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular. We note that the Agency's budget has increased substantially in the last three years, and grew by 69% in 2008. The Court of Auditors, however, has consistently found several weaknesses, in particular: (i) a high level of carry-overs and cancellations (with 49%, nearly 69% and 55% of the appropriations available in 2008, 2007 and 2006 respectively not spent); (ii) legal commitments entered into before the corresponding budgetary commitments; and (iii) recruitment procedures that depart from the rules, in particular as regards the transparency and non-discriminatory nature of the procedures in question.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) All the European institutions that depend on the European Union budget have to be thoroughly audited by the Court of Auditors and by all entities with that function. It is necessary to check whether Union funds are being well used, whether these institutions are meeting the objectives outlined for them, and whether any resources are being wasted. Generally – with only a few exceptions, to judge by the audits that we have already seen – we can say that the institutions at issue are using the funds

made available to them properly and meeting the objectives proposed for them. That is why I voted for the report on the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union.

Report: Véronique Mathieu (A7-0073/2010)

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I believe it is essential for civil servants to be accountable to the general public. Therefore, they must objectively and rigorously account for how the public funds made available to them have been used. I am concerned to see that, in the rapporteur's words, the European Global Navigation Satellite Systems Supervisory Authority has decided to present the results of its activities without taking into account the fact that the Authority's management of the Galileo and European Geostationary Navigation Overlay Service programmes would be discontinued after the finalisation of the transfer of assets and funds to the Commission scheduled for the end of the first quarter of 2008. I also regret that the Court of Auditors qualified its statement of assurance on the reliability of the annual accounts for the financial year 2008 and on the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) All the European institutions that depend on the European Union budget have to be thoroughly audited by the Court of Auditors and by all entities with that function. It is necessary to check whether Union funds are being well used, whether these institutions are meeting the objectives outlined for them, and whether any resources are being wasted. Generally – with only a few exceptions, to judge by the audits that we have already seen – we can say that the institutions at issue are using the funds made available to them properly and meeting the objectives proposed for them. That is why I voted for the report on the European GNSS Supervisory Authority.

Report: Véronique Mathieu (A7-0094/2010)

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I believe it is essential for civil servants to be accountable to the general public. Therefore, they must objectively and rigorously account for how the public funds made available to them have been used. The Court of Auditors in its report describes the annual accounts of the European Joint Undertaking for ITER and the Development of Fusion Energy for the financial year 2008 as reliable and the underlying transactions as legal and regular. It should be noted that the Court of Auditors identified a surplus of EUR 57 600 000 in the budget outturn account, which represents 38% of the accrued revenue, and part of that surplus was carried over to the 2009 financial year. That may have stemmed from the fact that the Joint Undertaking was in a start-up phase and had not fully set up its internal control and financial information systems during the 2008 financial year.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) All the European institutions that depend on the European Union budget have to be thoroughly audited by the Court of Auditors and by all entities with that function. It is necessary to check whether Union funds are being well used, whether these institutions are meeting the objectives outlined for them, and whether any resources are being wasted. Generally – with only a few exceptions, to judge by the audits that we have already seen – we can say that the institutions at issue are using the funds made available to them properly and meeting the objectives proposed for them. That is why I voted for the report on the European Joint Undertaking for ITER and the Development of Fusion Energy.

Report: Véronique Mathieu (A7-0077/2010)

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I believe it is essential for civil servants to be accountable to the general public. Therefore, they must objectively and rigorously account for how the public funds made available to them have been used. The Court of Auditors states that it has obtained reasonable assurance that the annual accounts of the Single European Sky ATM Research (SESAR) Joint Undertaking are reliable and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular. Like the rapporteur, however, I cannot fail to point out that the final budget adopted by the Administrative Board in April 2008 proved to be highly unrealistic, as is illustrated by commitment and payment appropriations take-up rates of 1% and 17% respectively. I would also highlight the fact that there were weaknesses in transaction controls and no adequate internal controls for contracts and procurement. I consider it essential for SESAR to take appropriate action to resolve the problems identified now during the next financial year.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) All the European institutions that depend on the European Union budget have to be thoroughly audited by the Court of Auditors and by all entities with that function. It is necessary to check whether Union funds are being well used, whether these institutions are meeting the objectives outlined for them, and whether any resources are being wasted. Generally – with only a few exceptions, to

judge by the audits that we have already seen – we can say that the institutions at issue are using the funds made available to them properly and meeting the objectives proposed for them. That is why I voted for the report on the SESAR Joint Undertaking.

Report: Brian Simpson (A7-0101/2010)

Edite Estrela (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of the report on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on transportable pressure equipment, which would repeal the existing directive and a number of other related directives. Since some technical provisions of the existing directive conflict with international rules on the transport of dangerous goods, it is essential to remove the inconsistencies and to bring the technical requirements into line with international rules.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The transport of pressure equipment, such as tanks, receptacles and cylinders, is presently governed by Directive 1999/36/EC, which lays down safety requirements for transport by road and by rail. Furthermore, the directive establishes common norms for the design, construction and subsequent checks of this kind of equipment.

These rules, however, are in breach of international rules on the transport of dangerous goods, which is why the Commission has put forward a proposal for a revised directive. The proposal does not entail any substantial changes to the existing regulatory framework as regards the scope and the main provisions. It merely aims at removing the above-mentioned inconsistencies by bringing technical requirements on the transport of dangerous goods into line with the international rules in force.

I therefore share the rapporteur's opinion that, in the absence of a horizontal solution between the institutions regarding the wording of the new comitology provisions, the dossier must be concluded as quickly as possible with an agreement at first reading.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The transport of pressure equipment, such as tanks, receptacles and cylinders, is presently governed by Directive 1999/36/EC. The directive ensures the free movement of such equipment within the Union, including its placing on the market, by establishing common norms for the design, construction and subsequent checks. However, some technical provisions of the existing directive conflict with international rules on the transport of dangerous goods. The Commission has therefore put forward a proposal for a revised directive, which would repeal the existing directive on transportable pressure equipment and a number of other related directives. For the above reasons, I voted for this resolution, in which the committee is invited to adopt the report without additional amendments and mandate the rapporteur to enter into negotiations with the Council on this basis.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The growing concern with issues relating to the environment and its protection leads us to take extra care with the safety rules relating to the transport of pressure equipment. The purpose of this directive is to reinforce safety and ensure the free movement of such equipment within the Union, by setting out clear, transparent and mandatory rules for safely transporting pressure equipment in all the Member States, standardising the procedures throughout the EU.

Rovana Plumb (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) The key objective of this directive is to remove the existing inconsistencies in previous legislation by bringing the technical requirements into line with international regulations on the transport of dangerous goods. Furthermore, the proposal aims to simplify and streamline certain provisions, in particular those relating to conformity assessment procedures. The proposal also incorporates provisions concerning equipment for transport operations in the internal market, thereby creating a general framework for marketing products on the single European market.

I voted for this report as I believe that the proposal will, once it has been adopted, ensure a high level of safety for transportable pressure equipment and its users. Its proper implementation at Member State level will also provide increased protection for the environment and citizens' health.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – I voted in favour of the Simpson report on transportable pressure equipment, even though our amendment was not adopted.

Report: Jörg Leichtfried (A7-0035/2010)

Mara Bizzotto (EFD), *in writing*. – (IT) Airport security and the transparency of consumer charges, in order to raise their standards and levels: these are the themes dealt with by the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on aviation security charges.

Current systems for covering costs relating to aviation security, regulated at a national level, are not always clear for end users, who are often not even consulted before charges are calculated or changes are made to a charging system that affects them. Amongst other proposals, the report suggests including passenger and consumer protection associations in consultations between the security management body and the airlines, in order to ensure that the costs of security measures are correctly determined, and to check them against the price of the air ticket paid by the end user.

I welcome another point of the report: the call for the directive to be implemented only by airports in Member States that effectively impose charges for security measures, and not those where this kind of measure has not been introduced. For these reasons, I voted in favour of the report.

Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D), in writing. – (LT) Events in recent weeks have shown that airport security is a very important task for Member States and that we must take all essential precautionary measures. Each individual Member State decides on the methods for financing and applying aviation security. It is very important that the Directive sets out basic principles and procedures applicable to the body responsible for security and the airlines. Although legal requirements for airport regulation strongly differ in various Member States, a reasonable amount of information must nevertheless be provided by the operator to the air carriers so as to make the consultation process between airports and air carriers meaningful. To this end, the Directive establishes which information should be provided on a regular basis by the airport managing body. Air carriers should, in turn, give information as to their traffic forecasts, their intended fleet use and their present and future specific requirements at the airport, so as to allow the airport managing body to employ its capital and dedicate its capacity in an optimal manner.

Ole Christensen, Dan Jørgensen, Christel Schaldemose and Britta Thomsen (S&D), in writing. – (DA) The Danish Social Democrats in the European Parliament have abstained from the vote on this proposal, as they believe, firstly, that this is unnecessary legislation because the requisite legislation is already in place in this area. Secondly, we believe that it is not the EU's job to order Member States to pay any additional costs for airport security. The issue of financing security charges should be entrusted to the individual Member States.

Edite Estrela (S&D), in writing. – (PT) I voted in favour of the report on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on aviation security charges. This proposal is highly important in upholding and protecting consumer and passenger rights, since it establishes a number of basic principles to be respected by airport operators when determining their security charges. These are: non-discrimination, consultation and remedy, transparency and cost-relatedness of security charges, and establishment of a supervisory authority.

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) The European Commission has submitted a proposal establishing basic principles to be respected by airport operators when determining their security charges: (i) non-discrimination; (ii) consultation and remedy; (iii) transparency and cost-relatedness of security charges; and (iv) establishment of a supervisory authority.

The main question arising in this respect is that of the financing of the stricter security measures that should be implemented. Parliament has more than once called for regulation of the financing of security charges, but without success. The rapporteur argues very well that the financing of these stricter measures should not be borne solely by the passengers (through externalisation of the costs), but should be financed by the Member States, which ultimately bear responsibility for the safety of their airports. Lastly, I would point out that one can never invest too much in airport and passenger security, as was clearly shown by the latest attempted terrorist attacks against civil aviation, which were luckily foiled.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), in writing. – (PT) The European Parliament has demanded – several times and in vain – the regulation of security-charge financing to achieve greater transparency, as well as for security taxes and charges to be related to their real purposes. Parliament believes that the Member States should foot the bill for implementing stricter measures. The terrorist incident a few weeks ago has again shown that airport security is the responsibility of the Member States and that the purpose of existing and newly envisaged security measures is to prevent acts of terrorism. However, one point that has not so far been raised in the debate on the matter is the fact that it is ultimately passengers who foot the bill for such measures. I agree with the amendments introduced by this resolution, which will make it possible to prevent unnecessary parallel proceedings and administrative costs in this area.

Louis Grech (S&D), *in writing*. – We must ensure that airport security charges are transparent, objective and based on clear criteria that reflect real costs. Any new costs to air travel should acknowledge the importance airports have for the development of regions, especially those which depend heavily on tourism, as well as those that suffer geographical and natural handicaps, such as the outermost regions and islands. Airport users, as well as local authorities, should be able to obtain in a timely manner information on how and on what basis the charges are calculated. There should be also a compulsory procedure for consultations between the airport authorities and interested parties or local authorities, whenever there is a need for a revision of the charges. Also, any independent supervisory authority should have precise, clearly defined terms of reference, including in particular any powers they may have to take punitive action.

Sylvie Guillaume (S&D), *in writing*. – (FR) I consider it unacceptable that the Member States are not guaranteeing funding for airport security measures that are not provided for in European legislation, and that moreover they are passing the costs on to the airlines, which then make passengers pay. I think it was necessary to go further than the regulation of 2008 and to adopt legislation to ensure that passengers do not bear these additional costs, which may at times prove to be completely unrelated to security charges. That is why I supported the report by my Austrian colleague, Mr Leichtfried, which guarantees greater transparency for citizens as well as airlines, and forces Member States to provide public funding for security measures that go beyond European requirements, since that falls under the national security of each Member State. In the event that the Commission presents a proposal to include body scanners on the list of European methods in order to stop the Member States from funding them, I will again support my colleague and will vote against this proposal, if necessary.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The ever greater care taken over security in our airports has brought progressively more costs, for which passengers have been footing the bill. The additional costs of stricter security measures must be borne by the Member States, as they exist to prevent terrorist acts; however, they are being borne by passengers. We voted for this report because of our opposition to this situation.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) The costs of a task that is to be undertaken by the state, namely the maintenance of public safety, cannot simply be passed on like this. We need to decide what costs passengers can reasonably be expected to pay in respect of the ever more restrictive anti-terror security regulations. Only if countries themselves have to take financial responsibility for the strict security measures which have been prescribed, and are also able to make their own decisions with regard to these measures, can we prevent the possibility of an unrestrained increase in body scanners and other similar measures. The only people to profit from the hysteria surrounding terrorism and the uncontrolled competition to become better equipped will be innovative US companies. For these reasons, this proposal is to be welcomed.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – I voted YES to the report. The important thing for us, however, has been that our two aims of 'linking costs for security screening and scanning with liberalised groundhandling services' and 'intermodal fair treatment of financing security measures' were both rejected by the EPP and ALDE (RCV).

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Parliament had repeatedly called for the Commission to regulate the financing of security charges in the aviation sector. Its position has always been to call for greater transparency and for security taxes and charges to be related to their real purposes, believing that the Member States should foot the bill for implementing stricter measures.

The Commission proposal does not address this issue. It only seeks a new economic impact assessment with a view to restricting costs, based on the principles of non-discrimination, consultation and remedy, and transparency of the charges. The present document, however, proposes that, where stricter measures result in additional costs, they should be financed by the Member State. I stress the importance of security measures at airports, and I am voting in favour of this initiative by Parliament.

The proposal, to be implemented in all commercial airports in the European Union, is intrinsically linked to concerns over the right to information, to passenger non-discrimination and to consumer protection. I believe that the objectives of greater transparency and avoidance of unnecessary costs can only be achieved through the harmonisation of legislations and the clarification of responsibility between airlines and Member States in the adoption of security measures.

Artur Zasada (PPE), *in writing*. – (PL) I was pleased to hear the results of today's vote. I think that during work on this document we managed to develop an unequivocal and ambitious position, especially in relation to financing. I would like to stress again: terrorist attacks are not directed against airlines, they are directed

against states. It is the state which is the guarantor of its citizens' security, and it must meet this obligation. The outcome of today's vote – 613 votes to 7 – is a very clear signal to the Council. This testifies to the great determination of the European Parliament on the question of the obligations of all Member States to bear at least part of the costs of air traffic security.

Report: Brian Simpson (A7-0030/2010)

Elena Oana Antonescu (PPE), in writing. – (RO) I voted for the report on Community guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network because its aim is to construct and modernise railway infrastructures, ports, waterways and airports. The priority projects envisaged also include the Curtici-Braşov railway line. I welcome the setting up of a committee to support the Commission in implementing this decision and drafting the guidelines stipulated by it.

Sophie Auconie (PPE), in writing. – (FR) I voted resolutely in favour of this text. Although it contributes only technical modifications, it reminds us of the importance of a European transport network in order to bring EU citizens closer together and to encourage mobility. Such mobility is essential since we cannot have a proper Europe without getting to know our neighbours, their countries and their culture. The trans-European transport network also contributes to the plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by introducing better management of modes of transport and promoting their interoperability.

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) The text in question is a Commission proposal that is no more than a codification of earlier acts and regulations. It also introduces some minor modifications. Therefore, in line with the rapporteur's proposal and having noted the legal and political safeguards, I support adoption of the text, including the minor modifications and corrections proposed by the Council, as well as the conclusion of the file through an agreement at first reading.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), in writing. – (PT) In technical terms, this proposal is one to codify the legal text. However, the Commission was obliged to recast it, since the annex has been slightly amended. I voted for the adoption of these amendments.

Elie Hoarau (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (FR) I condemn the fact that the outermost regions do not always play an integral part in the global trans-European transport network, despite the fundamental importance for economic, social and territorial cohesion. It is inconceivable that the ORs are not involved in the planning of the network and do not appear on several trans-European transport network maps. The global network, the motorways of the sea and priority projects should be extended to all ORs without discrimination. The TEN-T policy should also incorporate network industries and services of general economic interest; it should not be limited merely to major streams of cargo traffic and passengers. The request for equal treatment for the outermost regions must be heard. How can we contemplate being left out of trans-European networks when European transport policy is vital to opening up our regions and for the freedom of movement within the internal market? While the European Union sells off our sugar, banana and rum production to other countries by means of trade treaties with one hand, it simultaneously keeps us out of intra-European commercial routes with the other. These hands have a stranglehold on us, which we deplore.

Petru Constantin Luhan (PPE), in writing. – (RO) During the plenary session I voted for the report on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on Community guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network. It was a technical proposal, as preparations are being made to carry out the proper revision of the guidelines. It is estimated that they will be finalised by the end of next year. I think that this offers an absolutely crucial opportunity to reaffirm the important role played by transport policy at European level in the current context with the debate on the Europe 2020 objectives going on. Member States in general and Romania in particular, a country which is still in need of investment in its transport infrastructure, must be aware that this transport policy is being redrafted to meet the new challenges. An ageing population and the specific mobility requirements of the elderly, social migration and climate change are only some of the factors which impose the need to devise a suitable transport policy. At the same time, the drafting during this period of the EU's Danube Strategy provides the perfect framework for ensuring that maximum use is made of river transport on the EU's inland waterways.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) Amendments to and redefinitions of the development of the trans-European transport network have been going on for years. An effective trans-European transport network is essential to the existence of a healthy internal market, and contributes to the reinforcement of economic and social cohesion. The phenomenon of the Icelandic volcano showed us unequivocally that a trans-European transport network is needed; one that is effective and can give a coordinated response to the

problems that emerge in these situations. This decision is important because it gives guidelines on the objectives, the priorities and the major actions to be taken in the area of the trans-European transport network.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) The EU has confirmed the importance of the Baltic-Adriatic Corridor by giving priority status to the northern arm from Gdańsk to the Czech Republic and declaring its commitment to the Brenner Base Tunnel project. It is even more important to develop the southern part of the corridor via the Austrian Southern Railway to Italy. In this network in particular, which carries approximately half of all goods and passengers, we need to neutralise a dangerous eye-of-the-needle situation. Support from the EU for the Koralm project is essential on account of the existing bottlenecks in this region on the rail routes for freight transport; which, after all, the EU is always championing. With the Koralm Tunnel, the EU has a unique opportunity to shift traffic to the railways on a scale that we have been striving for for decades. As the development of the trans-European network may be crucial for Europe's competitiveness and the amendments tabled are merely technical adjustments, I have voted in favour of the report.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – I voted in favour of this report even though our amendment was not adopted.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) In relation to national priorities in the context of the trans-European transport network (TEN-T), I consider it important to invest not only in railways but, above all, in motorways of the sea and the interoperability and cooperability of the various kinds of transport.

Only a genuine combined transport network, supported by effective management, will be able to ensure the competitiveness of the maritime alternative. Maritime transport is essential to my country, which enjoys privileged access to navigable waterways, and truly crucial to outermost and island regions, as in the case of Madeira. In addition, it is an essential tool for continuing the consolidation of the internal market and for territorial cohesion.

This report is broadly supported not only in Parliament but also in the Commission and Council. It is also markedly technical. Its adoption in this Chamber follows its practically unanimous recommendation by the Committee on Transport and Tourism.

In short, this proposal, which I personally supported, does not amend the content of the TEN-T text but just adds maps of the 12 Member States that joined the Union in 2004 and 2007. A revision of the Union guidelines for the development of the TEN-T is in preparation and will be ready only towards the end of 2010.

Viktor Uspaskich (ALDE), *in writing*. – (LT) The EU has 5 million kilometres of roads (62 thousand kilometres of motorways), 215 thousand kilometres of railways and 41 thousand kilometres of internal waterways. It is hoped that intercommunication among Member States will double by 2020. A united Europe is impossible without a coordinated and effective Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T). On the basis of a respective EU treaty, investment in the TEN-T will reach around EUR 500 billion. It is therefore important to ensure European cooperation and carefully select priority projects. The TEN-T is intended to link land, sea and air transport networks throughout Europe by 2020. The main objective is to ensure fast and easy movement of people and goods among Member States. A motorway of a European standard connects Lithuania's largest port Klaipėda with Vilnius, and a railway line connects the latter with Moscow and the East. If we want the port to remain competitive we need to modernise its current infrastructure and remove red tape. Railways and internal waterways should in particular be used for long distance transport and roads for short distances. More effort should be devoted to cargo transit and internal waterway transport, which is more cost-effective and energy efficient, non-polluting and safe. The most important thing is passenger safety and protection. The financial crisis has had an impact on transport policy. However, the TEN-T may be used to create jobs and observe social and economic cohesion. The Europe 2020 strategy recognises the importance of transport policy for Europe's economy. Free movement of people and goods is what defines the EU. This is only possible with a good TEN-T.

Report: Evgeni Kirilov (A7-0055/2010)

Luís Paulo Alves (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of this report because I believe that, in order to address the current crisis, we need to find ways to speed up the implementation of aid programmes, so that Union funding aimed in particular at supporting citizens, and more specifically the unemployed, can be used more fully. This proposal aims at making a number of regulatory changes in order to simplify the implementation rules for cohesion policy and to increase the pre-financing (advance payments) to European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and European Social Fund (ESF) programmes. Economic forecasts

predict a major reduction in EU growth of 1.1% in 2010. In this context, this report represents a reaction to the financial crisis and its socioeconomic repercussions. Hence I consider it extremely important for achieving greater transparency and simplification of the rules governing cohesion policy. This contribution will have a positive impact on the pace of programme implementation, particularly by providing national, regional and local authorities with clearer and less bureaucratic rules that will allow more flexibility in adapting the programmes to the new challenges.

Elena Oana Antonescu (PPE), in writing. – (RO) Last year the Commission presented a proposal amending the Regulation on Structural Funds (1083/2006) in order to provide financial incentives to Member States hit hard by the economic crisis. One of the measures put forward in the Commission's proposal was a derogation from the principle of cofinancing by introducing a temporary option for Member States suffering from cash-flow problems to request a 100% reimbursement for financing measures eligible under the European Social Fund.

The Council rejected this proposal, but agreed to the extension of the deadline for calculating the automatic decommitment of the annual budget commitments relating to the 2007 total annual contribution to improve the absorption of funds committed to certain operational programmes.

I believe that the rapporteur's proposed temporary measure of reconstituting the appropriations for the 2007 financial year for the assistance funds as part of the European Social Fund, as a result of decommitments made, is justified, in view of the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, which would prevent the application of Article 93(1) of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 in its current form.

Alfredo Antonozzi (PPE), in writing. – (IT) The European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund have proved to be effective and extremely useful instruments for territorial development and for tackling the consequences of the economic crisis which has afflicted Europe and the world for some time now. In this regard, I welcome the proposals to simplify the procedures for the decommitment of the funds and to facilitate payments to the beneficiaries of the various programmes implemented using the aforesaid funds. Furthermore, I am in favour of providing an additional pre-financing instalment for 2010 for the Member States worst hit by the crisis.

Sophie Auconie (PPE), in writing. – (FR) As referent on this report for the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), I called on my colleagues to vote in favour of this text. As far as the simplifications contained in this report are concerned, I am convinced that they are a very good thing. This is a real leap forward: there is less information to provide, greater flexibility with regard to revenue-generating projects, fewer checks by the Commission for environmental projects worth EUR 25 to 50 million, and so on.

As for the financial aspect, I called for the initial proposal to be refocused. Indeed, it would not have been a good idea to call into question the principle of cofinancing expenditure and to implement projects wholly funded by the European Social Fund (ESF), as the Commission proposed. In order to balance expenditure in the long term, some Member States would have been faced with severe financial difficulties. Parliament has found a compromise allowing us to help the countries worst affected by the crisis and to avoid decommitment for 2007.

Through this vote we are giving great support to the beneficiaries of EU funds as well as to the initiating departments. Let us not forget, however, that there is still a great deal to do in terms of simplification.

Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D), in writing. – (LT) It is important to stress that the pressure on national financial resources continues to rise and necessitates taking further steps to alleviate this pressure through a better use of EU funding, and mobilisation and acceleration of all available Funds to tackle the crisis, in particular using the European Social Fund (ESF) for rapid recovery packages, as outlined in the Communication mentioned. It is particularly important that there should be more effort to facilitate the management of EU funding in order to speed up the flow of funding to beneficiaries that are most affected by the economic downturn. It is important to achieve the overall objective of streamlining cofinanced investments in Member States and regions and of increasing the impact of funding on the whole economy, in particular, on small and medium-sized enterprises and on employment. Small and medium-sized enterprises are the motor of the European economy and the main producers of sustainable growth, creating numerous quality jobs. Further simplification and clarification of rules governing cohesion policy will undeniably have a positive impact on the pace of programme implementation, particularly by providing national, regional and local authorities with clearer and less bureaucratic rules that will allow more flexibility in order to adapt the programmes to the new challenges.

David Casa (PPE), in writing. – The report concerns the financial management of some of the most important funds within the European Union. These are inclusive of the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund. After a careful analysis of the proposal for regulation (COM(2009)0384) as well as Article 161 of the EC Treaty in addition to other documents, I was inclined to support the position of the rapporteur and have therefore voted in favour of the report.

Vasîlica Viorica Dăncilă (S&D), in writing. – (RO) The amendment of the regulation on implementing the Structural and Cohesion Funds is a measure aimed at supporting EU Member States during the current crisis. Above all, it meets their demands for simplifying the management of the funds.

I believe that the new provisions will help, at the same time, to reduce the risk of funds being lost due to not being used quickly enough, as a longer time frame is being offered for projects which have not been approved or implemented yet during the specified period.

I also hope that these simplified rules will come into force as soon as possible so that Member States and, in particular, the regions intended to be able to benefit from this option of EU funding, as well as the public authorities in these regions, will continue to invest in European projects in spite of budgetary constraints.

Marielle De Sarnez (ALDE), in writing. – (FR) The Democratic Movement delegation welcomes the adoption of a report allowing the simplification of some provisions of the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund. Relaxing the deadlines for the use of the funds is a major step forward. The current rules stipulate that aid must be used within two years of it being obtained, or else it has to be returned. The new rules will mean that regions and Member States do not lose funds committed in 2007 for projects whose implementation has been delayed. Henceforth, environmental projects totalling less than EUR 50 million will no longer need to be the subject of a specific application by Member States for approval by the European Commission. Additional financial advances for 2010 will be authorised for those Member States worst affected by the economic and financial crisis. The simplification of some provisions will also make it easier to review the Operational Programmes under way and will allow us to respond better to crisis situations. For example, the regions affected by storm Xynthia will be able to use this new flexibility to help the victims of that disaster.

Robert Dušek (S&D), in writing. – (CS) The Commission has submitted a proposed amendment to the regulation on the Structural Funds, the aim of which is to provide Member States seriously affected by the financial crisis with the necessary economic stimulus. The amendment should lead to the application of so-called support thresholds. A threshold of EUR 50 million should apply, instead of the current EUR 25 million. Large projects should also be protected from automatic decommitment. Some states should also be allowed to apply for the reimbursement of 100% of the costs of measures in the labour market from the European Social Fund. If it is possible from a budgetary perspective to commence financing without the need for joint participation, which I doubt very much, then the only correct and possible way is to compare the rules and regulations for everything by the same yardstick. It is totally unacceptable for some Member States to be identified as ‘more affected by the crisis’ and for them to be exempted from the rules for these reasons. If there must be exemptions, let them be applied to everyone in the same way! The EU is not such an enormous entity that we can deduce different consequences of the financial crisis for Member States. Economies are interconnected and the consequences of economic management cut both ways. It would also be wrong for us to disallow exemptions in order to penalise Member States that are trying to stimulate their own economies and not expecting assistance from the EU. Even in times of crisis let us fight for equal conditions in equivalent situations! The report takes account of this and I therefore support its adoption.

Ioan Enciu (S&D), in writing. – (RO) I welcome the adoption of the Kirilov report, which I supported with my vote. I believe that the adoption of this report so soon after the Commission’s Communication will be beneficial as the measures set out in it will speed up the funding process, helping boost the economic recovery in the regions, which is an absolute necessity during the current crisis. The report is part of the guidelines drawn up by the Council on the amendments relating to the rules on the financial management of programmes cofinanced by the ESP, as well as to those concerning the implementation of programmes intended to facilitate, simplify and clarify the regulations governing cohesion policy. In Romania’s case, this means increasing the volume of advance payments for the European Social Fund and Cohesion Fund, and more time for using European funds by ‘decommitting’ them so that Member States can reuse the funds as part of the programme. Other amendments include simplifying and clarifying the measures required to implement the Structural Funds, both during the phase of submitting the funding applications and when drafting the annual report on the programme’s implementation. There is also the agreement on a single EUR 50 million

threshold, which defines a major project that will be able to qualify for funding from several European programmes.

Edite Estrela (S&D), in writing. – (PT) I voted in favour of the report on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund as regards simplification of certain requirements and as regards provisions relating to financial management. The severe and unprecedented impact of the current economic and financial crisis on the Member States' budgets means that the management of cohesion policy must be simplified and advance payments increased. Despite the difficult situation, these measures will make it possible to maintain a regular cash flow to ensure payments can be made to beneficiaries as these programmes are implemented.

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) In my view, EU cohesion policy is a central factor in the development and implementation of the principle of solidarity among Member States that the European Union advocates. As such, and particularly in times of crisis – when these funds can help specifically to mitigate the impact felt in the most deprived regions – it is essential to improve the current structure of cohesion policy, so that the funds can be allocated more efficiently and can produce more effective results in good time.

Moreover, the instruments need to be made more flexible, because rigid instruments that cannot adapt to unforeseen circumstances, such as a crisis, are damaging to the European Union's economic development. It is also important to ensure that the funds made available under cohesion policy are being duly utilised by the Member States and that the available resources are spent efficiently. I therefore consider it vital to rethink not only the structure of Union cohesion policy but also the control mechanisms available, as well as the methods of coercion that can be used in the event of non-compliance by Member States.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), in writing. – (PT) The purpose of this proposal is to provide additional economic stimulus to certain Member States, which had seriously suffered from the economic crises. It followed the European Economic Recovery Plan, in the context of which the implementing provisions of the aforementioned basic regulation had already been modified in 2009 to allow more flexibility with advance payments. The main element of the Commission proposal aimed to address the consequences of the financial crisis. The solution proposed was to introduce a temporary option for Member States suffering from severe cash-flow difficulties to request a 100% reimbursement for financing labour market measures under the European Social Fund, that is to say, derogation from the principle of cofinancing. The entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon has entailed a change in the legislative procedure. Instead of the assent procedure, where Parliament was only able to say 'yes' or 'no', Parliament acquired a full say in the content of the text under the ordinary legislative procedure. That is why I voted for this proposal, and it is to be hoped that the Commission will make a corresponding proposal for an amending budget for examination and adoption by the budgetary authority.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) The Commission proposal involves the introduction of a temporary option, to which Member States with severe cash-flow difficulties could turn in order to finance necessary growth and employment promotion measures designed to combat the crisis and eligible under the European Social Fund. That would allow Member States to ask the Commission for 100% reimbursements for 2009 and 2010, so that national cofinancing would not be needed during this period.

This is a measure that we have been advocating, so as to make the full utilisation of EU funds possible at a time when they are most needed. The Council's position is different, however, and merely points out that 'an additional pre-financing instalment [...] is needed for the Member States worst hit by the crisis'.

The document on which Parliament is voting takes the side of the Council position, which we believe is more ambiguous and less favourable to the Member States worst hit by the crisis. We believe, however, that 'to extend the deadline for the calculation of the automatic decommitment of the annual budget commitment relating to the 2007 total annual contribution to improve the absorption of funds committed for certain operational programmes' is a positive point.

Petru Constantin Luhan (PPE), in writing. – (RO) The major challenges which the European Union has been confronted with due to the economic and financial crisis have resulted in the launch of certain priority actions which will help national economies adapt to the situation that has been created. I voted for the report as I am strongly in favour of granting additional financial incentives to Member States which have been hit hard by the economic crisis, as well as of simplifying the aspects relating to financial management. All countries could benefit from postponing decommitments, while countries in the direst situation would benefit from additional advance payments. These countries are Estonia, Hungary, Romania, Latvia and Lithuania. Further

clarification of the regulations on cohesion policy and simplification of the procedures will have a positive influence on the programmes' implementation rate. This step is especially important as cohesion policy is the most powerful instrument in terms of granting aid to the real economy.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Simplifying access to the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, and the Cohesion Fund is an essential part of supporting the Member States most affected by the economic crisis that we are experiencing. As we find out the extent of the damage caused to the real economy and the labour market by the financial crisis, we must take measures to improve access to the Union's financing instruments. There must be a regular flow of funds that allows payments to be made to beneficiaries as programmes are implemented.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) In times of crisis, the EU is once again showing its true colours. When the eastern EU Member States had to freeze during the Russian gas dispute there was little sign of solidarity. Now, when it concerns the economic chestnut of the euro – the flagship of the EU – suddenly something is possible. EU subsidies have even been adjusted accordingly. Although the possible 100% reimbursement for 2009 and 2010 for financing labour market policy measures did not promote further education and high-quality apprenticeships to the extent that we would have liked, it is certainly essential in the current situation. All Member States would benefit from the decommitment of the budget commitment and those countries with the most problems would receive additional advance payments. Putting money into a bottomless pit at will without accompanying measures can be dangerous. I have therefore rejected the proposal.

Rovana Plumb (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) In view of the economic and financial crisis, optimum use must be made of measures which will simplify certain procedures specific to accessing European funds. These include:

- granting an additional funding advance for 2010 to Member States affected by the crisis, thereby ensuring a steady cash flow and facilitating payments to beneficiaries during the programmes' implementation phase;
- extending the deadline for calculating the automatic decommitment of the annual budget commitment relating to the 2007 total annual contribution, which will improve the absorption of funds committed to certain operational programmes and ensure adequate support for the initiatives in favour of maintaining and creating jobs;
- Member States which received support in 2009, in accordance with the legislation which establishes a facility providing medium-term financial assistance for Member States' balances of payments, can benefit in 2010, under certain conditions, from 2% of the contribution from the Cohesion Fund and 4% from the contribution of the ESF to the operational programme.

These measures will contribute to the development of a flexible, inclusive labour market and to a significant improvement in the positive impact generated by EU funding on the economy as a whole, but particularly on small and medium-sized businesses and on the labour market.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – I voted against this report because we, the Verts/ALE Group, tabled six amendments and all were rejected.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of this proposal since I believe it is a matter of great importance for Portugal, and particularly for its outermost regions, which are more vulnerable to the crisis we are experiencing, since they feel its effects more intensely and take longer to emerge from it.

Although I generally agree with its content, I must highlight the difficulties faced by regional and local authorities in securing the release of funds that would enable them to provide their part of the financing of projects subsidised by EU funding. I was disappointed to see that the Council blocked the possibility of increasing the proportion of EU cofinancing to 100%, even temporarily and in the form of an advance payment that would be offset in the later years of the programmes.

The compromise solution, albeit not perfect, means that EU funds for 2007 that have not been absorbed by programmes that have been slow to start up will, exceptionally, benefit from an extended deadline before being decommitted.

We are all aware of the difficult choices that families and companies are having to make these days, and of how important measures like those now being planned can be for the economic recovery, which we hope will be rapid and sustained.

Viktor Uspaskich (ALDE), *in writing*. – (LT) The global financial crisis has affected all of the EU Member States. I feel that the Baltic States have suffered the most painful blow. Severe measures were taken because of the financial hurricane and jobs were lost. However, we have a unique opportunity to turn the crisis into an opportunity. We would like to give young Lithuanians a very promising future in Lithuania and avoid the increasing 'brain drain'. This task is impossible without the EU Structural and Cohesion Funds, in particular, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The Structural Funds constitute a large portion of EU funding: – EUR 277 billion were allocated for the 2007-2013 budget. The ERDF stimulates economic development and recovery in less prosperous parts of the EU. It helps to fund measures like the regeneration of industrial areas affected by the reduction of towns and villages. It includes important regional programmes, such as the Baltic Sea Region Programme, in order to strengthen regional identity and recognition. The Cohesion Fund plays an important role in reducing differences between EU Member States, particularly in terms of environment and trans-European transport networks. Today (2007-2013), the European Social Fund also has a vital role to play by helping business and workers adapt to the new market conditions and supporting workplace innovations, lifelong learning and increased mobility. Lithuania's ESF programme is solving the manpower shortage by mobilising human resources and improving skills and raising qualification levels. Since joining the EU, Lithuania has experienced a massive 'brain drain'. The best way of combating this is investing the EU Structural Funds in young professionals.

Motion for a resolution: (B7-0221/2010)

Elena Oana Antonescu (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) I voted for this resolution submitted by the Conference of Committee Chairs, which requests the Commission to submit new proposals for those dossiers which were pending in Parliament at the time of the Treaty of Lisbon's entry into force and the procedure for which has lapsed.

As rapporteur for the opinion of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety for the 'Proposal for a Council Recommendation on measures to combat neurodegenerative diseases, in particular Alzheimer's, through joint programming of research activities', I support the invitation presented by the Conference of Committee Chairs to the European Commission to submit a new proposal on these dossiers so that Parliament is consulted in a manner appropriate to its institutional role also assigned by the provisions of the new Treaty.

Sophie Auconie (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) With this resolution, the European Parliament gets straight down to all the most important policies of the European Union. It provides the legal modifications needed for it to play a full role on the institutional stage and the international stage alike. The European Parliament can at last fully guarantee that the interests of EU citizens are defended, and that is why I voted for this resolution.

Carlos Coelho (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The Treaty of Lisbon clearly grants Parliament new responsibilities and new powers. With its entry into force on 1 December 2009, many proposals that had been tabled by the Commission on the basis of the Treaties, but which were still pending on that date (at different stages in the legislative or non-legislative process) will be subject to changes. In some cases there will be differences at the level of the decision-making procedure, either because the scope of the ordinary legislative procedure has been significantly extended, or because a new approval procedure applies in respect of the conclusion of international agreements. In other cases, there is just a change in legal basis. The Commission is seeking to change them formally by means of its 'omnibus' proposal. There are, however, some proposals (which came under the former third pillar) where the legal framework has changed substantially and they have therefore lapsed and must be replaced with new ones. As the rapporteur of the initiative to set up an assessment mechanism to monitor the implementation of the Schengen *acquis*, I call on the Commission to submit the new proposals as quickly as possible. I therefore support this House's motion for a resolution.

Edite Estrela (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of the resolution on the consequences of the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon for ongoing interinstitutional decision-making procedures. The entry into force of the new Treaty means that the legal bases of various pending files must be redefined. The Commission and the Council must urgently make the necessary changes in light of the new legislative framework.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon has not only imposed a new institutional arrangement and a new hierarchy of legislation, but also requires special precautions with regard to decision-making procedures that were still ongoing on that date. In these cases the legal bases have changed, as have the procedures relating to them, fully justifying their re-examination.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), in writing. – (PT) The Treaty of Lisbon grants Parliament new responsibilities and new powers. With its entry into force on 1 December 2009, many proposals that had been tabled by the Commission on the basis of the Treaties but which were still pending on that date will be subject to changes. In some cases there will be differences at the level of the decision-making procedure, either because the scope of the ordinary legislative procedure has been significantly extended, or because a new approval procedure applies in respect of the conclusion of international agreements. In other cases, there is just a change in legal basis. The Commission is seeking to change them formally by means of its ‘omnibus’ proposal. There are, however, some proposals (which came under the former third pillar) where the legal framework has changed substantially and they have therefore lapsed and must be replaced with new ones. I am therefore voting in favour of this resolution of the European Parliament.

Eleni Theocharous (PPE), in writing. – I vote against the Motion for Resolution on the consequences of the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon for ongoing interinstitutional decision-making procedures as it includes the regulation about the so called “direct trade” between the EU and the occupied part of the Republic of Cyprus.

The legal basis of the regulation is absolutely wrong, as the European Commission chose Article 133 of the Treaty – now Article 207(2) after the Lisbon Treaty – which addresses issues with Third Countries. Using such a legal basis would be against Protocol 10 on Cyprus that clearly provides that the Republic of Cyprus entered the EU as complete territory with the suspension of the Union *acquis* in the northern part of the island due to the Turkish occupation. The existing legal basis of the regulation insults the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of a member state of the EU, the Republic of Cyprus, and it is against the principles and the values upon which the EU is founded and the European Parliament should respect and promote as the beacon of the European democracy.

Report: József Szájer (A7-0110/2010)

Alfredo Antoniozzi (PPE), in writing. – (IT) I voted in favour of the report by Mr Szájer, whom I would like to thank for his excellent analysis carried out in the light of the changes introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon.

Given the wide-ranging and diverse implications that ‘delegated acts’ will have for legislative procedure, I believe that Parliament’s wish to apply specific and clear conditions to these delegated acts, in order to ensure that this House has real democratic control over them, is particularly commendable. I think that we will also need, in particular, to test in practice how this new system will work, in order to make any necessary changes to it.

Carlos Coelho (PPE), in writing. – (PT) The Treaty of Lisbon addresses the democratic deficit by strengthening the powers of both the European Parliament and the national parliaments. That is the framework for this new instrument, which allows the legislator to delegate part of its powers to the Commission (Article 290 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union), provided that it is an act of general application that is used to supplement or amend parts of a legislative act that are not considered essential. It will thus make it quicker and simpler to fill gaps or to regulate or update more detailed aspects in a legislative act, avoiding excessively complicated and prolonged legislative procedures, which used to have negative consequences for the public. Two aspects that have been safeguarded are the fact that the delegation may be withdrawn at any time and the fact that Parliament’s (and the Council’s) prior assent is needed before the entry into force of acts approved by the Commission under a delegation. I support this innovation, which should take the place of the notorious ‘comitology’ system, but we now urgently need to set out how these delegations can be made, their scope, their objective, the working methods to be used and the terms on which the legislator can exercise control.

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) The entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon requires clarification of some of its norms, particularly those with legal and procedural content, such as those addressing the legislative procedure, the hierarchy of norms and the powers of the institutions. Article 290(1) of the Treaty states that a legislative act may delegate to the Commission the power to adopt non-legislative acts of general application to supplement or amend certain non-essential elements of the legislative act. It does so with special reservations and severely restricts the scope of such acts. Nevertheless, this detailing of the law set out in the Treaty is important to prevent excessively disparate interpretations that would jeopardise the consistency of EU law. Although such acts are common in the Member States, that cannot be said of the acts in question. The legitimacy of the Commission and of the Member States’ governments is not the same, and therefore the delegation of legislation to the former requires greater care and attention, and it must be used sparingly. I

agree that the use of legislative delegation should make it possible to adopt simple and accessible legislation, thus contributing to legal certainty, the efficacy of the delegate and control by the delegator.

Franz Obermayr (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) According to Article 290 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, the legislator can delegate a certain amount of power to the Commission, in which connection the Commission may only supplement or amend a legislative act. The ‘delegated acts’ adopted accordingly by the Commission are non-legislative acts of general application. The rapporteur is advocating the stricter monitoring of the Commission in its exercising of its delegated legislative powers. For this reason, I voted in favour of the adoption of the report.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – I voted in favour of the Szájer report on power of legislative delegation and Speroni report on Ransdorf’s immunity. It was adopted by a large majority.

Eva-Britt Svensson (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (SV) I voted in favour of the report on the power of legislative delegation. Article 290 of the Treaty of Lisbon allows Parliament to raise objections to or revoke the Commission’s amendments and supplements to legislative acts. However, this requires an absolute majority, in other words a majority of the number of elected MEPs. In view of the absence of Members, this normally means 60% of those voting. Previously, only the Council was able to do this, provided a qualified majority of votes was obtained. The Commission’s expert groups, which are hand-picked from the Member States, have a great deal of influence in legislative delegation. One example of this is provided by the fact that, via an expert group, the Commission permitted a new type of genetically modified maize, despite the fact that Parliament and the Council were opposed to this. Another example is the original Services Directive, where the Council and Parliament deleted a paragraph that stated that it was to be prohibited to demand a permanent representative in the case of the posting of workers, in other words a trade union counterpart. The Commission went against this, however, and drew up guidelines establishing that it was not necessary to have a permanent representative. The Commission wants to safeguard its independence and continue to use its expert groups (COM(2009)0673). The rapporteur, Mr Szájer, rejects both national expert groups and the involvement of national authorities. I do not agree with the latter point.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The Treaty of Lisbon has changed the former system of comitology by reference to new legal instruments, such as delegated acts and implementing acts. With the new Treaty, Parliament takes on the role of co-legislator, together with the Council.

Enshrining in the Treaty the ability to delegate to the Commission the power to adopt non-legislative acts to supplement legislative acts is a step forwards in that it places the two institutions on an equal footing. This report seeks to clarify the terms on which the delegation of powers by Parliament and the Council to the Commission, pursuant to Article 290 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, can take place. The document stresses the importance of the principle of the freedom of the legislator to delegate its powers to the Commission as a tool for better law-making.

The report upholds the need to avoid imposing on the legislator additional obligations over and above those already contained in the Treaty. The legislator must allow the Commission to exercise the delegated power effectively and must duly monitor the use made of it. For the reasons mentioned above, and considering that the main priority must be to adapt the *acquis* in areas that were not subject to the codecision procedure prior to the Treaty of Lisbon, I voted in favour of the document.

Report: Peter van Dalen (A7-0114/2010)

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D), *in writing*. – (LT) The competitiveness of European maritime transport should remain one of the strategic objectives of European Union maritime transport policy. In order to achieve this goal we must ensure the necessary support for innovations, scientific research and their development, which would accelerate the modernisation of sea port infrastructure and ensure the application of the latest technologies in the shipbuilding industry. A reduction of the administrative burden and red tape would lead to an increase in private and public sector investments in the sea port and shipping sectors. Development of the trans-European transport network, provision for motorways of the sea and development of the intermodality of means of transport would lead to the creation of a European maritime transport system that is competitive and receptive to innovations. We also need to address the issue of the alignment of taxation applied to crews sailing under the European Union flag.

Mara Bizzotto (EFD), *in writing*. – (IT) The European Union’s marine territory is the most extensive in the world. The maritime economy provides work for five million people, whilst 5% of the EU’s GDP comes from industries and services with a direct connection to this sector. Data and facts show categorically that the sea

constitutes a crucial resource for employment and growth in Member States, especially taking into consideration its international dimension, and hence the amount of pressure it has to endure in terms of global competition.

On this point, the report offers many positive points with regard to the demand for incentives for the maritime sector at national level, and for greater regulatory coordination at EU level. This could begin to cut red tape, which would help to increase the competitiveness of the entire sector. I agree with the approach of the report, and this is why I shall be voting in favour of it.

Marielle De Sarnez (ALDE), in writing. – (FR) The Democratic Movement delegation welcomes the adoption of strategic goals for the EU's maritime transport until 2018. The resolution adopted calls in particular for the enhancement of maritime professionals through the strengthening of professional qualifications and the harmonisation of European training. Indeed, it is essential to provide lifelong learning and retraining for seafarers at all levels, on shore and on board. With this in mind, the Member States must urgently ratify the International Labour Organisation's 2006 Maritime Labour Convention. For maritime transport to remain one of the least polluting means of transport, progress still needs to be made in reducing emissions of sulphur oxide, nitrogen oxide, particulates (PM10) and CO₂. That is why the Democratic Movement MEPs regret the Commission's refusal to include the maritime sector in the EU emissions trading systems. We must continue to make progress in this direction and, to do so, the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) will have to set reduction targets, applicable to all the Member States, which will allow us to avoid distortions of competition with third-country fleets.

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) The Commission has put forward a communication on strategic goals and recommendations for the EU's maritime transport policy until 2018. The Commission's proposal covers a wide range of topics relating to EU maritime transport policy, allowing maritime transport stakeholders ample scope and initiative to realise the strategic objectives and recommendations that are set out in it.

The main issues addressed by the Commission's proposal are: (i) the value and competitive position of European maritime shipping in a global market; (ii) employment opportunities in the maritime sector; (iii) the quality of European shipping; (iv) international cooperation; (v) European maritime transport as part of the European economy and as a driving force behind economic integration; and (vi) Europe as a world leader in maritime research and innovation.

In view of Portugal's geographical position and the strategic importance of the sea, this subject is of fundamental relevance to our country, and every effort to develop an 'economy of the sea' deserves our support and commitment.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), in writing. – (PT) Europe's maritime sector makes a clear and vital contribution both to the Union's internal economy and to its transport system. The interests of the European maritime transport sector must therefore be assigned high priority in establishing general European transport policy. It must be realised that the European maritime sector mainly operates and competes in a global market. The maritime transport sector faces major challenges with regard to the environment. The primary task is to improve the environmental performance of seagoing ships substantially, and emissions of SO_x, NO_x, particulates and CO₂ must be reduced. In this regard, I would stress the need to reach agreements on the subject at global level in order to combat the risk of reflagging to non-participating countries. As far as security is concerned, I would highlight the fact that Member States are called upon to implement the package quickly and correctly, particularly as regards the Paris Memorandum of Understanding (referring to risk-based inspections). This will prevent unnecessary inspections, increase the effectiveness of monitoring and reduce the red tape for those subject to inspections.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (FR) The call to reduce the carbon footprint of vessels and port infrastructures, improving facilities for seafarers, the call to reduce emissions of sulphur oxides, nitrogen oxides, particulates (PM10) and CO₂ or even the creation of maritime emission control areas are many measures that may have a positive outcome depending on how they are applied. The permanent pre-eminence of free and undistorted competition, however, and the subordination of seafarers' rights to competitiveness mean that this report goes against seafarers' interests and the general interest. That is why I am voting against this text.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) With the adoption of this report, the objectives necessary for the existence of a Union maritime transport policy are being defined. This mode of transport has been moving towards centre stage, because it is one that is environmentally friendly and has the potential to become even more

so. The maritime transport sector is essential to the European economy, not only in terms of transporting passengers, primary materials, commodities and energy products, but also because it is central to a broad range of maritime activities, such as the naval industry, logistics, research, tourism, fishing and aquaculture, to name but a few examples.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – I voted in favour of the Van Dalen report on maritime transport strategy up to 2018, although our amendment on including maritime transport in the ETS was rejected by large majority (roll-call vote).

Vilja Savisaar (ALDE), *in writing*. – (ET) The future of the European maritime transport sector plays a very large role in the European Union from an economic and social, as well as environmental, point of view. The vote which took place today puts in place a strategy for European maritime transport policy until 2018, and maybe this will have a direct effect on the 41% of fleets which belong to Europe, and indirectly to the maritime transport sector of the whole world. The Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe supported this report, as it mostly meets our expectations, and our proposals for improvement received support. In our opinion, the following keywords must play a leading role in the maritime transport sector in the future: efficiency, environmental friendliness and equal market conditions. Therefore, it is important that the report being adopted today calls on all Member States to ratify the convention of the International Maritime Organisation, in order to ensure better conditions for seafarers and ship owners, as well as for the environment. Finally, I thank the rapporteur for his high level of cooperation and openness during the drafting of the report.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Maritime transport is, without a shadow of a doubt, a competitive advantage for Europe, but much remains to be done to promote intermodality and co-modality, which also involves the repositioning of maritime transport as a truly competitive alternative.

The maritime industry is facing a number of challenges, which can turn into genuine opportunities if we know how to make use of them by investing in the training of young technicians to make up for the shortage of professionals in the sector. Technological development and cutting out unnecessary red tape to attract investment into the port sector are also priorities.

Safer and cleaner shipping must also be sought, by reducing greenhouse-gas emissions and offering an effective response to acts of piracy. The pressures threatening the position of Europe's maritime fleet, which stem mainly from the state aid given to the sector in third countries, must be managed within a framework to be developed in the World Trade Organisation.

Europe's infrastructure and port capacity deserve to continue being developed, as do the motorways of the sea, which are very important to southern and peripheral countries like Portugal and to outermost regions such as Madeira.

The report we have adopted today covers these guidelines in general terms, and has therefore won my support.

Viktor Uspaskich (ALDE), *in writing*. – (LT) More than 80% of world trade takes place at sea, and maritime transport remains the backbone of international trade. The EU is the most significant global exporter and the second biggest importer. Therefore, shipping and similar services are essential if we want European companies to compete on a global scale. Coastal shipping is an important part of the European transport chain, carrying 40% of cargo within Europe. Every year more than 400 million passengers use European ports, and therefore maritime transport directly affects the quality of European citizens' lives. The European Parliament is one of the defenders of maritime policy in the EU. The EU's maritime transport policy also supports other policies, in particular an integrated maritime policy. The global financial crisis has also affected the maritime transport sector. Therefore, now we really must release the economic potential of European seafaring to stimulate economic growth and social and environmental stability. The long-term competitiveness of European shipping is the cornerstone of EU maritime policy. This strategy fosters safe, clean and effective shipping and the creation of jobs in the European maritime policy industry. A strategic vision, taking into account the development of shipping, ports and similar sectors, is important for the simplification of EU maritime policy so that it can face future challenges, for example, combating piracy and reducing the environmental impact of shipping. An integrated, intersectoral approach, including policies on fishing, transport, the environment, energy, industry and scientific research is essential. The days of European neighbours competing are over. This applies both to Lithuania and to the rest of Europe.

Dominique Vlasto (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) I welcome the adoption of this report, which integrates some of my proposals for the future of maritime transport policy and its related sectors, whether in terms of shipbuilding, tourism or fisheries. To me it was important to reaffirm the necessity of security as a prerequisite for maritime transport and to stress, in spite of the difficult economic context, the need to respect high standards of protection of the marine and coastal environment. The expected increase in the volume of goods and passengers, the strictest environmental standards and the need to promote intermodality and modal shifts make the modernisation of port infrastructures necessary. These structural measures require significant investment combined with transparent and fair financing rules in order to support innovation and increase the competitiveness of European ports. Finally, I welcome the fact that the social dimension features in our strategy and that it stresses, in particular, employment, training, the enhancement of maritime professionals and the improvement of seafarers' working conditions on shore and on board.

Report: Helga Trüpel (A7-0028/2010)

Elena Oana Antonescu (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) 'Europeana', the European digital library, is a single, direct, multilingual portal designed for Europe's cultural heritage. It will, in the future, provide a large number of readers with access to rare or old documents from Europe's heritage, which are difficult to access because of the way they are stored.

In the motion for a resolution voted on today, I asked the European Commission to launch a special campaign in the media and online, aimed at students and teachers and focusing on using the digital resources offered by this portal for educational purposes, in order to raise the profile of the Europeana site. The Europeana portal should become one of the reference points for education and research which will bring young people in Europe closer to their cultural heritage and help create transcultural cohesion in the EU.

In this motion for a resolution, the European Parliament encourages Member States to make equal contributions to the content of the Europeana project and step up their efforts in providing works to libraries and national cultural institutions so that all Europeans can have full access to their own cultural heritage.

Sophie Auconie (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) Europeana, the European digital library, is demonstrating a great ambition, namely to digitise all European works in order to make them accessible to the general public. This is a long-term task that requires close monitoring and measurable progress. The own-initiative report proposes a target of 15 million works being made available by 2015, as well as access to the website for all, and in all of the languages of the European Union.

This European project is essential: it contributes to the enhancement of our common heritage, to its influence in the world and thus prevents the monopolisation of these works by private players. I therefore voted resolutely in favour of this ambitious project.

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D), *in writing*. – I supported the report, as I believe that access to cultural and educational information must be a priority in order to improve educational and living standards in Europe. In view of the benefits for all EU citizens of accessing 'Europeana' library, its availability in all the official languages should be envisaged as soon as possible. As also people with disabilities should have the benefit of digital technology and enjoy easier access to education and information through accessible formats and adapted technologies. The availability of 'Europeana' should be improved ensuring free-of-charge access for pupils, students and teachers in secondary schools, universities and other educational institutions. Therefore it is essential to guarantee and simplify universal access to European cultural heritage and to ensure that it be promoted and preserved for generations to come.

Mara Bizzotto (EFD), *in writing*. – (IT) The collection and preservation of the artistic and cultural heritage of European Union Member States, by establishing a multimedia platform that gathers together images, sounds and videos to create a resource that is simultaneously a library, a museum and an archive: this is the aim of the Europeana project which, launched in 2008, is now putting European artistic heritage online thanks to the contribution of more than 1 000 cultural institutions.

Although it still has a number of weak points, including publicising and raising awareness of the project itself, the problem of putting 'orphan' works or works subject to copyright online and, not least, a certain patchiness of the objects and materials made available, Europeana is nevertheless exploiting new forms of technology to computerise European cultural heritage on a large scale, drawing not only on EU resources, but also on national and private resources.

The preservation of artistic memory, and of the representations and cultural particularities of individual Member States, is essential to ensure that the younger generations have a strong sense of their own identity. For this reason, I am in favour of the draft report.

Ioan Enciu (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) As a result of the vote given in favour of the report ‘Europeana – the next steps’ and as rapporteur for the opinion of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy, I welcome that this report has been finalised and I hope that its recommendations will be adopted by the Commission. Following the debates on the report within the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy, a whole range of subjects have been discussed, such as IT structure, management of the Europeana.eu site, free access to library information, the need to standardise digitisation procedures and the problem of media coverage for the website. Some of these subjects have also been included in the report of the main committee, the Committee on Culture and Education, which gives me hope that we have successfully achieved a complete report.

However, I believe that certain matters, which were not adopted in their entirety, must continue to be discussed, such as managing the site, funding methods and, above all, organising the site in the form of a single database and not a portal. I hope that the recommendations specified by us, along with the Commission’s reflections on the issues mentioned above, will turn this into a successful project. Europeana can become a successful project for the European Union as long as it is built on the EU’s values and ideals and provides the focal point for European cultural information.

Edite Estrela (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of the report on ‘Europeana – the next steps’, which encourages all EU Member States to be more active in making available contributions from their national libraries and cultural institutions, so that all Europeans have full access to their own cultural heritage. The target of storing more than 15 million works on the site in the short term may help to protect Europe’s cultural heritage, so that future generations may be able to put together a collective European memory.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Even during the periods when divisions and even hostility between the countries of Europe were most evident, European culture and science have always been able to cross those borders and spread throughout the area that today makes up the Union, and even beyond. It is more than fair to highlight the role of the universities in that respect. With their religious origins, they played a decisive part in reconnecting the sundered parts of what came to be the *respublica christiana*, and in remembering all those who were able to overcome the divisions and make their ideas heard throughout the continent and, from there, throughout the world. As a Portuguese and an heir to a language and culture that spread around the world, I support the efforts that are being made to make European culture and science more visible and accessible to all those who would like to enjoy them. In that respect, Europeana is heir to the best European tradition. I hope that the project will continue in a sustainable form and that my country, in line with its universalist vocation, will collaborate in it with renewed commitment.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Europeana opened in November 2008 and its aim is to make Europe’s cultural and scientific heritage accessible to all on the Internet. Europeana currently has a catalogue of 6 million digitised works and the aim is to reach 10 million entries by June 2010. The second phase of the project will see the launch of a fully operational Europeana.eu in 2011, which will be more multilingual in character and will have semantic web features. Only 5% of all digital books are available in Europeana and almost half of these come from France, followed by Germany (16%), the Netherlands (8%), and the United Kingdom (8%). All other countries provide 5% or less each. An increased contribution by the Member States is desirable. I support the call for Europeana to reach a stock of at least 15 million different digitised objects by 2015. I agree that special attention should be paid to those works which are fragile and might cease to exist very soon and, among those, audiovisual materials. Ways of including in-copyright material must be found, so that it includes current works and those from the recent past.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) The creation of a digital library, museum and archive of European cultural heritage – from literary works to other materials of cultural and scientific importance – will bring significant benefits in the areas of education, research and culture. In order to achieve the goal of benefiting the general public, by being available to all, not just in Europe, but also in the rest of the world, it is essential for Europeana to ensure free public access to the material that is made available. It is also essential not to forget the importance of doing so in formats and media that ensure access for disabled people.

Nevertheless, there are certain aspects of the adopted resolution that are less clear and others that have not been sufficiently developed. It is not clear how it will be determined what cultural and scientific content will

be included in Europeana or by whom, nor how it will be administered; these issues are important in assessing the extent to which it will ensure proper representation of the diversity of Europe's cultural heritage.

Doubts persist as to how the public-private partnerships proposed in the report and the general financing of the cultural institutions associated with Europeana will work. We believe that cultural and scientific heritage belongs to everyone and must be freely accessible to the entire population; it must not be treated as a tradable commodity.

Sylvie Guillaume (S&D), *in writing*. – (FR) We must safeguard access for all Europeans to the artistic and cultural treasures of Europe that constitute their heritage. It was with this in mind that, in spite of some teething troubles, Europeana, the amazing digital library that today contains nearly 6 million digitised works, was launched in 2008. Today we must improve the contents of Europeana while ensuring respect for intellectual property. Finally, I myself attach particular importance to improvements being made to facilitate access to this tool for disabled members of the public; therefore, the Member States should provide these people with full access, free of charge, to Europe's collective knowledge by means of accessible formats and appropriate technologies.

Cătălin Sorin Ivan (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) The Europeana project, the European Union's digital library, must be welcomed as an initiative intended to create a European cultural forum, providing Europe's citizens with extensive access to Europe's cultural heritage. Unfortunately, although the project was launched back in November 2008, it is not making progress, primarily due to obstacles over copyright, as well as reduced funding. The final version of the European Parliament's report adopted today puts forward useful recommendations for managing this project in the future. Firstly, the type of funding must be reviewed, with a look at public-private partnerships and contributions from Member States, which are very erratic at the moment. Secondly, this report allows us to highlight the fact that real results can be achieved not only through large-scale digitisation of literary works, but also by finding immediate solutions allowing copyright works to be used. This report can make an important contribution to the existing framework through the regulations proposed on displaying works, which must be free of charge, while downloading them should be charged at an affordable price.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The dissemination of European cultural heritage is beneficial for several sectors, particularly education, science, research and tourism, among others. However, it is not being disseminated at all well, and there is a big discrepancy between the Member States as regards the digitalisation of their cultural heritage in order to facilitate access to it. A joint effort is needed that leads to the quick adoption of new technologies allowing the whole of Europe's cultural heritage to be quickly compiled in high-quality digital formats. This effort is needed so that this heritage can be disseminated across the world, thus helping other peoples to get access to Europe's cultural wealth.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) Around a million books, maps and photographs from the EU Member States can be accessed in the Europeana digital library. The fact that commercial operators register considerably more hits with Google Books and have progressed further in their development is logical and is associated with the greater level of awareness of Google Books. In order to achieve more rapid progress with Europeana and to make the digital library more familiar, we first need to get more universities and institutions involved in the project. Only then can we talk about more financial resources. Even if Europeana is important for European cultural heritage and knowledge, understanding for an increase in funds – and to be provided from economic-development funds, too – is limited, particularly at a time of financial crisis and in view of the billions going to help Greece. I have therefore abstained from voting.

Wojciech Michał Olejniczak (S&D), *in writing*. – (LT) The EU motto 'United in Diversity' is very appropriate for the Europeana project. I voted for this report since it is the first serious attempt to present the cultural heritage of the whole of Europe in digital format. Europe has one of the world's largest cultural treasure troves, which, in my opinion, should be accessible to the broadest spectrum of society. It is somewhat regrettable that not all EU countries are equally active in transferring their cultural heritage to virtual space. This is particularly the case among new EU Member States. We should also mention other as yet unsolved problems: project funding, public and private sector cooperation, and most importantly, the issue of copyright protection. They need to be addressed as soon as possible so that the people of Europe and the whole world can access Europe's cultural heritage. I hope that the report we have adopted will further accelerate the implementation of the Europeana project.

Georgios Papanikolaou (PPE), *in writing*. – (EL) The positive vote on the Europeana programme means support for efforts to digitise the cultural heritage of the Member States. However, it is very important to

note that the objective is to protect the electronic format of works per se, without allowing users to modify them. In brief, the objective is not to develop another Internet search engine; it is to develop a website which will simultaneously be a museum, a library and a source of scientific knowledge. However, digitisation of the cultural heritage will not be feasible without the help of the Member States and national agencies. Unfortunately, 47% of the content of Europeana currently comes from France, while countries which should have a strong presence, given their massive cultural heritage, such as Greece, only represent a scant percentage of the digitised files. In addition, particular attention needs to be given to protecting intellectual property rights. Digitisation means free access for citizens to knowledge and science; it does not, under any circumstances, mean a new sphere of action for electronic piracy and unaccountability.

Robert Rochefort (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FR) It was in 2000 that the idea of creating a virtual European library was launched. The objective was to put European cultural heritage online to make it more accessible for everyone. Whoever thinks of Europeana thinks of ‘culture’. Today, Europeana provides access to seven million ‘digitised objects’ (namely images, texts, sounds and videos), whether world-renowned works or small hidden treasures, at the click of a mouse. More than 1 000 cultural institutions provide it with content and these include galleries, archive centres, libraries and museums (including the Rijksmuseum, the British Library and the Louvre no less). The project is certainly nowhere near finished. The new version of Europeana, which is currently under development, will be launched this year with the aim of reaching a volume of more than 10 million digitised objects before June. In order to achieve this, several major challenges have still to be overcome. They involve enhancing the content in the long term, incorporating more material that is subject to copyright, resolving the issue of out-of-print or orphan works, finding new methods of financing, improving accessibility for disabled people, providing a fully multilingual service, all issues that are addressed shrewdly in the text that we voted on and which I, as a result, supported.

Joanna Senyszyn (S&D), *in writing*. – (PL) As a member of the Committee on Culture and Education, I endorse the report on Europeana – the next steps. Europeana, by combining the resources of Europe’s national digital libraries, has become a digital access point to the cultural and scientific heritage of humanity. The project has been endorsed by the Polish Librarians’ Association. Effective realisation of the project requires stable financial resources, which will guarantee the participation of national libraries and universal access to Europeana’s resources. Currently, only 5% of Europe’s cultural heritage is available in digitised form. Almost half (47%) of this comes from France, 6% from Germany and 5% each from the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The project assumes that from June 2010, 10 million digitised objects will be available, and 15 million in 2011. To make this possible, it is necessary to increase funding for the digitisation of cultural products, while ensuring close cooperation between rights-holders, cultural institutions and the public and private sector. In order for as many people as possible to be able to use Europeana, materials must be available in all the official languages of the European Union. An information campaign is needed to heighten awareness of Europeana. The portal must also take into account the needs of disabled people, who should be able to get full access to Europe’s collective knowledge. To this end, the European Commission and individual publishers should ensure that disabled people are provided with special digital versions of works, such as audio readings.

Róża Gräfin Von Thun Und Hohenstein (PPE), *in writing*. – (PL) I think opening the Europeana multimedia Internet library is an extremely significant step in the process of digitising the cultural heritage of Europe and the world. This is why I endorsed Mrs Trüpel’s report.

The project makes available over four and a half million books, films, maps, magazines, photographs and pieces of music, and is an archive which stores, for future generations, material first recorded on paper, canvas or parchment. This is extremely valuable both for ordinary citizens and for researchers, as it facilitates access to rare and difficult to obtain works.

A major barrier to the further development of Europeana is the existence of different copyright regulations in different Member States. We should strive to harmonise the law in order to make as many works available to the citizens as possible, while also ensuring a fair deal for the authors. The success of the project will depend to a large extent on the continued financial commitment of Member States.

Marie-Christine Vergiat (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (FR) I abstained from voting on the alternative resolution on Europeana – the next steps because this resolution was tabled by the Group of the European People’s Party (Christian Democrats) in spite of the vote that took place in committee.

The new resolution reproduces a large part of the initial resolution and therefore incorporates the amendments that I had tabled and which were adopted, but the new text aims, above all, to deny citizens the means to add content to Europeana through a special space and the prospect of developing Web 2.0 tools.

I therefore refused to support this move on both form and content.

Report: Marit Paulsen (A7-0053/2010)

Luís Paulo Alves (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted for this report because it urges the European Commission to assess the application of the animal welfare action plan that is currently in force (2006-2010) and draw up another action plan for 2011-2015. There is also provision in this report for the establishment of a tighter monitoring system and more effective punishments for the owners of animals who do not respect the welfare requirements established by law and for the compensation of European farmers for the additional production costs associated with higher welfare standards; it also argues that the financing of these measures should be incorporated into the grants scheme of the new common agricultural policy from 2013. The next action plan must focus on a general European animal welfare law, on a European centre for animal welfare and animal health, on better enforcement of existing legislation, on the relationship between animal health and public health, and on new technologies.

Elena Oana Antonescu (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) I believe that progress has been made on animal welfare through the implementation of the Action Plan 2006-2010, as the majority of measures featuring in this plan have been implemented in a satisfactory manner.

As a member of the committee which monitors public health and food safety, I particularly welcomed the measures taken to reduce the harmful effects which the use of antibiotics in animal nutrition has on human health, following the ban on them in 2006. These are further reasons why I voted for this report.

However, I wish to emphasise that the future action plan should include more measures aimed at supporting EU farmers and at improving the enforcement of current regulations on animal transport in Member States.

Liam Aylward (ALDE), *in writing*. – (GA) I voted in favour of the report on the Animal Welfare Action Plan 2006-2010. The health of animals and livestock is important to the people of Europe, to the European agricultural sector and to the European economy.

I welcome the report's recommendation that there should be greater emphasis in the Action Plan on enforcing the legislation which is already in place. Certainly, the implementation of European rules and penalty systems in relation to animal welfare must be improved to ensure that there is a satisfactory minimum standard of animal welfare in the European Union. European producers and farmers have high standards. I agree with the report's assertion that it must be ensured that animal products, such as meat, which are imported into the European Union comply with the same animal welfare conditions so that there is fair competition and a level playing field for all participants in the market.

Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D), *in writing*. – (LT) I voted for this report, since it is particularly important to implement European animal welfare policy and legislation to establish common EU animal welfare standards. Good animal health and good livestock farming are important not only for animal welfare, but also for public health as a whole. Given that, under EU legislation, all animals are regarded as sentient beings, we must tighten animal welfare checks and adhere to animal protection standards. Unfortunately, the Commission has not yet prepared a concrete strategy relating to animal welfare standards and has limited itself to the report presented in October 2009. I agree with the European Parliament's call for the Commission to prepare a new Action Plan 2011-2015 and allocate necessary funding. The European Union budget must include sufficient appropriations to enable the Commission to perform its monitoring tasks, to support producers where necessary and to counter the loss of competitiveness faced by producers as a result of adopting new and changing animal welfare standards. Member States must also ensure that any violations of EU animal welfare rules result in effective penalties. Thus, only by tightening animal protection legislation and its implementation can we ensure animal protection and avoid animal products that do not comply with the conditions laid down by the general law being offered on the internal market.

Louis Bontes (NI), *in writing*. – (NL) Whilst the Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV) supports animal welfare, this is a matter for the Member States and not for the EU.

Robert Dušek (S&D), *in writing*. – (CS) In Europe there has been and continues to be an active desire and long-standing tradition regarding decent treatment for animals. The good health and high-quality husbandry

of livestock are also of fundamental importance for human public health. Strict standards compared with the rest of the world are part of the trademark of European farmers, as is the quality of their agricultural products, for example. For these reasons, we must make every effort to create a legal framework specifying the minimum standards valid throughout the EU for all forms of livestock husbandry. Only in this way will free and fair economic competition be made possible on the internal market. It is also necessary to demand minimum standards on the global market, in order to prevent the cattle of European livestock farmers being relocated outside the EU, to regions with lower standards. I welcome the rapporteur's suggestion that the higher production costs associated with stricter standards should be compensated within the framework of support under future forms of the CAP. However, it must be said that no further progress was made in the satellite monitoring of livestock transportation, and it is also regrettable that some European farmers are not following the approved standards, particularly in pig farming. It should be borne in mind that higher standards require greater financial expenditure, and therefore the decent and responsible farmers are disadvantaged on the market through the behaviour of irresponsible ones. For these reasons it is essential to introduce the option of adequate sanctions in case of a breach of EU regulations.

Edite Estrela (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of the report on evaluation and assessment of the Animal Welfare Action Plan 2006-2010, which proposes that a more stringent system of supervision and more effective penalties for the owners of animals who do not respect the welfare requirements established by law be put in place. It is essential that European farmers be compensated under the new common agricultural policy for the higher production costs associated with more demanding animal welfare standards.

Göran Färm, Anna Hedh, Olle Ludvigsson and Marita Ulvskog (S&D), *in writing*. – (SV) After some hesitation, we Swedish Social Democrats chose to vote in favour of this report on animal welfare in Europe. We would have preferred a more ambitious approach to European animal welfare and we do not want this protection to be formulated in such a way that it prevents individual Member States from setting higher standards than those of the EU regulations. However, we have decided to view the report as part of a continuing process that will gradually enable these standards to be met and have therefore voted in favour of the report.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) I agree with the shadow rapporteur of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), Mrs Jeggle, when she says that a more consistent approach to animal welfare is needed, but that does not mean that there is a need for further laws and regulations. Furthermore, I must make the observation – without belittling the issue of animal welfare protection – that too many regulations and standards can, in the final analysis, have negative effects on the market.

It must not be forgotten that the more standards there are, the more difficult it is for producers to comply with them and the less competitive livestock farming in Europe becomes. Moreover, the excessive protection of animals must not make us forget other values that are equally important and that it is important to preserve, such as economic competitiveness, the sustainability of arable and livestock farming, and even some national traditions.

On the other hand, however, human health must be protected from diseases transmitted by animals (whether wild animals, pets, or animals for human consumption), and this requires scientific research to show us how to better regulate and protect public health.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) A high level of animal welfare from breeding to slaughter can improve product safety and quality. European standards in this area are some of the highest in the world. However, compliance with these standards must not put European producers at a disadvantage in the European market. The truth is that these standards entail operating, financial and administrative costs for the EU's farmers. Reciprocity of standards is necessary if there is to be fair competition with regard to non-Union producers. Therefore, European farmers must be compensated for the higher production costs inherent to higher animal welfare standards. The financing of this compensation must consist of new common agricultural policy grant schemes from 2013 onwards. I would stress that European policy on the protection of animals has to be accompanied by a consistent trade policy. I would highlight the fact that there was no mention of animal welfare issues in the framework agreement of July 2004, or in any other of the key documents of the Doha Round of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Further animal welfare standards that have negative effects on the competitiveness of producers must not, therefore, be introduced until our trade partners in the WTO sign up to them.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) There are several significant aspects of the adopted report that are positive: first, the need to regulate imports and ensure that all animals and meat imported from third countries meet the same welfare requirements as are applied in the EU; second, the need to adequately cover

the additional costs resulting from animal welfare promotion; third, recognition of the limited investment capacity of many small and medium-sized producers, damaged by the unfair way in which the food supply chain works; and, lastly, the proposal for incentives for the regional breeding, marketing and slaughter of animals in order to obviate the need for animals to be transported over long distances for rearing or slaughter. Unfortunately, the report fails to acknowledge that the current common agricultural policy (CAP) promotes and favours intensive production models, which are frequently incompatible with animal welfare and health. It could and should have gone further, by criticising the current CAP, rejecting its productivism and arguing for a new agricultural policy. Moreover, it makes proposals that are unrealistic and barely feasible, such as the development of a satellite system for monitoring the transporting of animals.

Bruno Gollnisch (NI), *in writing*. – (FR) I have two comments with regard to this report. Even if the rapporteur does not entirely follow through with her logic, it is refreshing to see that this Parliament is finally becoming aware of a number of problems. The imposition of legitimate rules on our own producers and breeders penalises them in a global ultra-free-trade system where the WTO considers social, environmental or other concerns to be non-tariff barriers to trade. Need I remind anyone that this same Parliament has always prioritised trade and that it is therefore jointly responsible for this situation? I am equally surprised by the fact that there has been no mention of the legislative regressions imposed by the Commission, in particular with regard to organic production, which impact not only on the quality of products, but also on animal welfare and human health. Secondly, it is time to acknowledge that respect, and I quote, ‘for customs relating in particular to religious rites and cultural traditions’ may go against these standards that you claim to defend and against truly European traditions and practices. It is unacceptable that some foreign communities can insist, on that basis, on cruel methods of slaughter, and even recommend that EU regulations be breached in this area.

Dan Jørgensen (S&D), *in writing*. – (DA) The Danish Social Democrats voted in favour of the report on animal welfare in the EU. We support an ambitious animal welfare policy that increases the degree to which animal welfare is taken into account in accordance with Article 13 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union – possibly in the form of a system of positive incentives. However, we are not in favour of the automatic assignment of new funds to the European agricultural sector as a result of financial loss associated with the consideration of animal welfare.

Jarosław Kalinowski (PPE), *in writing*. – (PL) I think animal welfare is a priority which has a huge influence on public health and the European economy. Rapid and efficient implementation of consistent legislation in this area is essential, as well as establishment of an institution which will coordinate animal welfare. At present, the existing Community Action Plan has been implemented to a satisfactory degree, but in the future it will be necessary to pay greater attention to the matter of the transport and monitoring of animals. We need to strive to reduce differences between current levels of animal welfare standards in different countries of the Union, because at present there are large disparities in the living conditions of animals and there is growing destabilisation in livestock markets.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) I welcome the fact that Europe has achieved one of the highest levels in the world in this area. The creation of a tighter monitoring system and more effective punishments for the owners of animals who do not respect the welfare requirements established by law is essential, but as such measures incur higher costs for farmers, we are in favour of the compensation grants that are included in this plan and are included in the grants scheme of the new common agricultural policy from 2013. It is important to stress that, alongside this plan, the EU should impose strict and well-defined rules for other countries that do not respect these standards, and so become unfair competition for EU farmers.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) For years the EU has been trying to attain standardised directives on matters relating to animal husbandry. Progress has been made in the area of intensive livestock farming in particular, but there is still work to be done. In any case, it makes sense to continue with the Action Plan; particularly in connection with the enforcement of existing laws and directives. In this regard, mention clearly needs to be made once again of the problem of dogs being imported from the East, in respect of which not all of the loopholes in the existing regulations have yet been closed. Sick and neglected animals, most taken far too early from their mothers, are transported to the West in the most deplorable conditions to be sold here for a lot of money. This report should be seen as a positive step in the right direction and that is why I have voted in favour of it.

Søren Bo Søndergaard (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (DA) I voted in favour of the European Parliament’s own-initiative report on evaluation and assessment of the Animal Welfare Action Plan (the Paulsen report), because I fully support the objective of strengthening animal welfare in the EU.

However, it is not clear in the report whether the EU is to establish maximum harmonisation in this area. I would not under any circumstances be able to support a future proposal that prevented Member States from producing better mandatory standards for animal welfare than the standards that we are able to agree on at EU level.

On the contrary, I believe that it is vital for the continued pursuit of better animal welfare that it is possible for Member States to lead the way in this area.

Eva-Britt Svensson (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (SV) I voted in favour of Mrs Paulsen's report on animal welfare legislation. However, I should like to point out that it is important for this legislation to represent minimum standards. The Member States and the regions must have the opportunity to implement more far-reaching animal welfare legislation.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The report on which we voted today assesses, objectively and critically, the results of the Animal Welfare Action Plan 2006-2010 and sets realistic and necessary targets for the growth – in the sense of progress – of food production and consumption in the European Union. One point that I would highlight is the recognition that better quality products means increased costs for producers, especially primary producers, which does not normally mean increased commercial demand, since only a minority of consumers will choose more expensive products.

The report therefore emphasises the need to compensate these same producers for their efforts. The intention to impose the regulations applicable to EU products on the products of third countries should also be noted, as it ensures fair and balanced competition in trade. Finally, it seems important to me to make the argument for creating a European coordinating body and adopting general and common legislation, in order to harmonise best practices and establish supervision mechanisms.

Daniël van der Stoep (NI), *writing*. – (NL) Whilst the Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV) supports animal welfare, this is a matter for the Member States and not for the EU.

Artur Zasada (PPE), *in writing*. – (PL) Today, we have adopted an important resolution which assesses the European Commission's Animal Welfare Action Plan 2006-2010. High standards of animal health are required not only by arguments of an ethical nature, but also by concern for the safety and quality of animal products, and this undoubtedly engenders a positive, reliable European agricultural brand.

Report: Stéphane Le Foll (A7-0060/2010)

Richard Ashworth (ECR), *in writing*. – Whilst we support measures to manage and protect European forests, we do not support the creation of a new European forestry policy that would transfer powers in this area to the European Union. The report also refers to the Soil Directive, legislation that the British Conservative Delegation opposes, as soil can be best managed by Member States, because applying the same rules on all soil from Northern Finland to Southern Greece will not bring any benefit to farmers in the UK. UK farmers already meet very high voluntary standards of soil management and have continued to improve standards. The Soil Directive as proposed by the European Commission was flawed in many aspects and would only bring more regulation, more cost and less flexibility to British farmers, who we believe know better than European bureaucrats how to manage their own land.

Sophie Auconie (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) In my opinion, the report on EU agriculture and climate change has the essential quality of combining protection of the environment with the promotion of a stronger European agricultural sector. Indeed, the agricultural sector must move resolutely towards means of production that are more respectful of the environment and more sustainable.

Nevertheless, these objectives absolutely must not be a pretext for weakening agriculture in the EU. To ensure this, we must guarantee better use of resources and product traceability. I therefore voted for this report because it respects these balances.

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D), *in writing*. – I gave my full support to this report. The upcoming CAP reform will have to take into account many issues, including climate change. It is already clear that climate change will have a negative impact on EU agriculture, especially in the south and south-east regions. The new CAP, thus, will have to meet growing public demand for a more sustainable agricultural policy. For the time being, the CAP does not address environmental issues in a consistent manner. The new challenges of climate change, water management, renewable energies and biodiversity were not fully taken on board at the time of the CAP health check. I am certain that the CAP must be turned into an agricultural, food and environment

policy with fairer and more sustainable farmer support systems while ensuring the preservation of rural areas, biodiversity conservation, carbon capture and food security.

Jean-Luc Bennahmias (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FR) The common agricultural policy is a key area in the fight against climate change in the coming years. As such, the report presented by Mr Le Foll prudently places the climate issue at the heart of the CAP.

Agriculture is dealt a double blow by climate change. It is the first to suffer the increase in droughts and natural disasters. However, it is also behind 9% of the greenhouse gas emissions in Europe. The European Parliament is showing that virtuous courses of action are within our reach.

Nitrogen fertilisers used by farmers are significant emitters of CO₂. By targeting their use, by promoting fertilisers based on organic waste and by emphasising organic farming, we will drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Methane from animal faeces is also a renewable source of energy. Moreover, European forests and soil are both incredible reservoirs of CO₂.

Sebastian Valentin Bodu (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) The European Union is the world's largest importer of agricultural produce, but I also welcome the encouragement given to internal production with minimal impact on climate change. The conclusions from the report debated on Wednesday in the European Parliament highlight to us that importing agricultural produce from third countries has a much greater detrimental impact on the environment than internal production, which is subject to stricter regulations on reducing carbon dioxide emissions, making it conducive to climate change.

Agriculture has been and will remain the main source of food globally. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, agricultural production needs to grow by 70% in the next 40 years in order to meet the world population's needs. The European Union must start devising policies or urgently implement existing policies in order to avert a long-term crisis. These policies must be backed up by ambitious targets for cutting carbon dioxide emissions with an adverse environmental impact because we are going round in a vicious circle. According to the experts, agriculture which is carried out with a disregard for its environmental impact will cause global warming, which will lead to major problems, even in terms of carrying out agriculture in the long term.

Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) European agriculture contributes to achieving the Union's climate change mitigation objectives for 2020. Greenhouse gas emissions have been decreasing as a result of the increased efficiency of EU agriculture, constant innovations, the use of new techniques such as CO₂ storage in the soil, and developments in the production of sustainable, renewable energies. Innovation therefore has a major role to play in reducing the impact agriculture has on climate change and its environmental consequences. I call for European funds from the agricultural sector to be used to develop technology to adapt this sector for the fight against climate change. The role of agriculture in the process of fighting climate change must take into consideration the competitive position of the EU's agri-foodstuffs sector in the world market, so solutions must be found that allow conventional agriculture to contribute to the sustainable management of the environment, while at the same time protecting it from speculation on foodstuffs in the commodities market and the protectionism of international trade.

Marielle De Sarnez (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FR) The Democratic Movement delegation in the European Parliament welcomes the adoption of the report on EU agriculture and climate change. It approves of the fact that emphasis is being placed on the new challenges that the common agricultural policy will have to face, such as climate change, the question of water, renewable energies and biodiversity, and soil management (carbon capture, the retention capacity of water and of mineral elements, biological life, and so on). In the same spirit the Democratic Movement delegation wanted a common European forestry policy to be established in order to promote sustainable forest management and production and to turn the contributions of the timber industry and its economic development to better account. These are all essential issues. There will have to be a place for them in future agricultural policy.

Edite Estrela (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted in favour of the report on EU agriculture and climate change because it puts forward specific measures that can contribute to making agriculture more sustainable. Agriculture is one of the activities most affected by climate change, but also one of the biggest contributors to CO₂ emissions. The forthcoming review of the common agricultural policy must incentivise the development of practices that allow European agriculture to be better adapted to the consequences of climate change whilst also contributing to slowing it down.

Göran Färm, Anna Hedh, Olle Ludvigsson and Marita Ulvskog (S&D), *in writing*. – (SV) We Swedish Social Democrats voted against the part of the report that calls for a common forestry policy in the EU. We believe that the Member States should continue to make the decisions on matters relating to forestry policy.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Agriculture is responsible for 9.3% of the European Union's total CO₂ emissions, whereas in 1990 it represented 11% of those emissions. A constant and progressive decrease in greenhouse gas emissions has been seen, and agriculture has made a positive contribution to meeting the targets for decreased emissions set by the European Union.

Moreover, I must point out that, whilst environmental concerns as regards the agricultural sector are legitimate and necessary, they must be duly weighed against the impact of the proposals in terms of agricultural sustainability and productivity. For that very reason, the reform of the common agricultural policy needs to look carefully at the relationship between agriculture and environmental protection, without forgetting that, apart from its negative impact on the environment (resulting, specifically, from CO₂ emissions), agriculture makes a decisive contribution to the preservation and management of natural resources, to green growth, and to landscape and biodiversity management. These are beneficial side effects of agriculture, which must be duly taken into account in any proposal to examine the relationship between agriculture and the environment.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Agriculture is directly involved in the climate change issue, since it contributes part of the greenhouse gases emitted and is, at the same time, itself affected by climate change. The negative impact of climate change is already being felt, with drought and soil erosion causing major problems, especially in the southern Member States. However, agriculture can also contribute to combating climate change and has great potential for sustainable development. The common agricultural policy must, therefore, encourage farming practices that limit emissions and/or improve carbon fixation, since agriculture and forestry are the main economic sectors able to capture the CO₂ produced by human activities, accumulating and storing it in the soil. We need to move towards more sustainable agriculture, which means greater efficiency. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, a 70% increase in world food production will also be needed by 2050 in order to handle the increase in world population. We will have to produce more, but in a sustainable way, which requires greater efficiency, the adoption of the best techniques and practices, and increased investment in scientific research for this area.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) Consideration of the implications of climate change for agriculture is a relevant concern, just as it is relevant, entirely justified and necessary to make farming more compatible with the preservation of a series of things of natural and cultural value, such as soils, landscape and biodiversity. Nevertheless, these concerns must not lead us to forget that agriculture's main role is to produce food, nor must they serve as a pretext for making amendments to the common agricultural policy (CAP) that worsen the already serious and unacceptable food dependency of various countries, both Member States – as is the case of Portugal – and third countries. Such dependency threatens the food sovereignty and security of these countries' peoples in the name of an allegedly untouchable 'competitive position of the EU's agri-foodstuffs sector in the world market'. It would have been important for this report to devote even just a few lines to the need to break with the productivist model that has shaped successive reforms of the CAP and to its tragic social and environmental consequences; unfortunately, not one word on this was included. It would also have been important for it to avoid any ambiguity at a time when we are confronting attempts by the European Commission to impose the interests of agribusiness multinationals regarding the spread of genetically modified crops.

Sylvie Guillaume (S&D), *in writing*. – (FR) I supported the report by my French socialist colleague Mr Le Foll since it defends the idea that European agriculture must continue to adapt, as it has already begun to do, to the consequences of the changes in climate taking place and to prepare for the impact that these changes will have in future for many regions of the European Union. Agriculture actually has a crucial place and a role to play in the fight against global warming. This is an essential issue when it comes to ensuring food security and to embarking on the road to sustainability. In this context the post-2013 CAP must inevitably integrate this 'climate' dimension by providing solutions and assistance to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, by encouraging carbon storage in the ground, by developing the production of sustainable renewable energies and by maximising the function of photosynthesis.

Dan Jørgensen (S&D), *in writing*. – (DA) The Danish Social Democrats voted in favour of the report (A7-0060/2010) on agriculture and climate change. We support an ambitious agricultural policy that equips the European agricultural sector to cope with climate change, but we are not in favour of new funds being assigned to European agricultural policy.

Jarosław Kalinowski (PPE), in writing. – (PL) On the question of climate change, agriculture should not be treated as a branch of the economy which is harmful. Quite the opposite, it should be treated as an industry which possesses not only the best possibilities for adapting to changes in the ecosystem, but as one which positively enables the harmful effects of global warming to be combated effectively. A significant reduction in the level of CO₂ emissions in agriculture is now being seen in comparison with previous decades. Investment in rural development, and so the second pillar of the CAP, will enable better education of farmers, technological modernisation of farms and also suitable supervision and control of the environment and biodiversity conservation. Appropriate management of farms will result in carbon capture and greater food security. Innovative research and appropriate investment under the CAP will help agriculture become a powerful tool in the fight against climate change and pollution of the atmosphere.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (FR) This report supports productivism and liberalism, which goes against the general interest. That depends on respect for human beings and for our ecosystem. Productivism and capitalism do not invite either. Nonetheless, the preference given to short circuits (although they are not described as such), the priority given to renewable energy sources, the review of costly irrigation systems or even the mitigation of the effects of climate change being described as a 'public good' are too many concessions to our arguments to be ignored.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) Climate change has gradually become a reality that we are all going to have to face up to as a priority for EU policy. The climate change phenomenon damages agriculture, which, according to recently published reports, points to a very discouraging outlook for this sector. It will apparently be the countries of Southern Europe, above all, that are hardest hit by climate change. It is essential that the common agricultural policy take appropriate action in response to climate change, promoting better resource management. The optimisation of water resources, the choosing of crop varieties selected for their resistance to climate change and diseases, the protection of soil from erosion, the preservation of pastures, increased forestation, the restoration of damaged areas, better management of forests in such a way as to limit the risk of fire, and new measures to monitor and control disease are all extremely important measures to adapt European agriculture to the effects of global warming. Farmers will be increasingly dependent on the state of the climate, so we approve of any measures that resolve this problem.

Rovana Plumb (S&D), in writing. – (RO) I voted for this report as I believe that agriculture is a production sector which is affected by the consequences of climate change and exposed to the pressure exerted by this. At the same time, however, it is directly associated with the objectives for mitigating the impact of climate change, whether by helping to cut greenhouse gas emissions, retain and ensure satisfactory management of water resources, or by boosting production and decentralising sustainable, renewable energy sources. In this respect, the Eastern European states with highly developed agricultural sectors can benefit fully from the development of the biofuels industry, thereby contributing to the growth of incomes in rural areas and the creation of 'green' jobs (for example, it is envisaged that 750 000 jobs relating to renewable energy sources will be created in the agricultural sector by 2020).

Frédérique Ries (ALDE), in writing. – (FR) All initiatives that aim to reduce global warming are welcome. This follows on from what took place yesterday in the European Parliament, where 1 500 elected officials from major European towns committed themselves to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by more than 20% by 2020. Today's adoption of the Le Foll report on adapting European agriculture to climate change goes along with this approach. Let us not forget that the agricultural sector is responsible for almost 10% of CO₂ emissions. Agriculture has much to gain by anticipating the harmful effects of climate change as far as flooded areas, a decrease in farming areas, deforestation and unpredictable returns are concerned. It is therefore necessary to build on the sustainable aspect of agriculture. Promoting reasonable use of fertilisers and pesticides, combined with diversifying agricultural production and livestock farming, will guarantee farmers far more autonomy and an improved capital base. Clearly, European agriculture must play a major role in combating climate change. There are several possibilities: the use of carbon sinks, a renewable energy supply and new irrigation techniques. All that remains is for these ideas to be transformed into concrete policies and to incorporate them into the reformed CAP of 2013.

Eva-Britt Svensson (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (SV) I voted against this report. The reason for this is that Mr Le Foll advocates a common forestry policy. Forestry policy is a national matter: there are very large differences between the EU Member States. I also believe that, apart from cross-border environmental issues, it is not appropriate for agricultural policy to be decided at Union level, particularly after enlargement of the EU to 27 countries. However, as long as the EU's common agricultural policy exists, I want the decisions to be as good as possible with the clear purpose of tackling climate change. I have great sympathy for many of

Mr Le Foll's proposals for tackling the climate threat, the key issue of our time, but recommending a common forestry policy is the wrong way to go.

József Szájer (PPE), *in writing*. – For the record: as a chief whip of the PPE Group, I hereby state that the PPE Group's original intention was to vote against paragraph 18/2 (roll-call vote). A technical error was made by the group.

Marc Tarabella (S&D), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted *in favour* of Stéphane Le Foll's report. I did so because I am convinced of the significant role agriculture will play in the problems associated with tackling global warming. Our agriculture will assist the European Union in meeting its objectives to reduce emissions. I welcome the adoption of paragraphs 18 and 20 concerning respect for and improvement of the quality of soil with carbon fixing and the use of biomass for heating, which might significantly reduce the harmful impact of climate change. I am resolutely confident that the CAP will become more sustainable over time. I support an environmentally friendly common agricultural policy!

Viktor Uspaskich (ALDE), *in writing*. – (LT) Climate change may affect agriculture: there may be water shortages, new diseases may appear and livestock may overheat. Agriculture can help slow climate change, but it should also be ready to adapt to the impact of global warming. The common agricultural policy (CAP) must acknowledge the impact of global warming and take measures to reduce climate change. This can be achieved by promoting clean and renewable energy, by providing geological storage of carbon dioxide and by limiting the amount of gas emissions causing the greenhouse effect. However, the costs associated with adapting the CAP and reducing climate change are not yet clear. There needs to be a thorough analysis of the economic benefit. Climate change is a real threat, but in the short term better management of resources is required. EU expansion had a great impact on EU agriculture. The 6 million farmers of the existing EU were joined by another 7 million farmers. Rural areas account for 90% of the EU's territory, and more than half of these are involved in farming. This fact alone underlines the importance of farming to the EU's natural environment. At the Warsaw Conference in February 2010, Lithuania and another eight EU Member States signed a declaration on the new CAP, as a further expression of solidarity and decency. We must not divide Europe into 'new' and 'old' Member States; we must show solidarity. In order to guarantee a stable and fair income for European farmers post 2013 and to reduce climate change we need a strong European agricultural policy.

Report: Herbert Dorfmann (A7-0056/2010)

Sophie Auconie (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted *in favour* of this excellent report by the Italian, Mr Dorfmann, on the process begun by the European Commission to revise the criteria for granting the status of 'agricultural area with natural handicaps' and, therefore, the Compensatory Allowance for Permanent Natural Handicaps (ICHN). In particular we should stress the importance of paragraph 18 of this report, which already refuses to support the criteria proposed by the European Commission: 'emphasises that a final opinion on the basic territorial unit chosen, the criteria and the threshold values proposed by the Commission can only be given when the detailed maps drawn up by the Member States are available [...]'.
 Report: Herbert Dorfmann (A7-0056/2010)

Liam Aylward (ALDE), *in writing*. – (GA) I voted *in favour* of the Dorfmann report on farming in areas with natural handicaps (Less-Favoured Areas).

Roughly 75% of land in Ireland has been designated as disadvantaged areas, and the current scheme provides aid to roughly 100 000 farming families. This scheme is necessary for rural viability and development, and to combat land abandonment, as well as to protect biodiversity and the environment. With the correct funding, this scheme can give income aid to farmers who are farming in very difficult conditions.

As farming in Ireland is restricted due to cold, wet weather conditions, I am pleased to see that the report makes reference to difficulties related to farming on unworkable, wet soils. I also welcome the reference to 'field capacity days', which helps to take into consideration the interaction between the type of soil and the climate.

Vasîlica Vîorica Dăncilă (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) I believe that the application of uniform criteria will simplify the implementation of the payments scheme for areas with natural handicaps across the European Union, providing greater transparency and uniform treatment for the beneficiaries of these support schemes.

It is absolutely paramount to focus this support in the areas most affected by land abandonment. At the same time, the following criteria must be taken into account as part of the exercise: no additional costs must be incurred and consideration must be given to the impact which the change in delimitation will have in areas

where agriculture plays a key role in the local economy. In this respect, I think that it is appropriate to have measures in place in the areas affected by changes in delimitation, which are aimed at boosting the agricultural sector's competitiveness and promoting diversification.

Robert Dušek (S&D), in writing. – (CS) The report on support for disadvantaged rural regions has the aim of redefining the disadvantaged areas of the EU and reforming their financial and structural assistance. Member States have previously identified as disadvantaged more than half of all land used for agriculture in the EU, and it is therefore essential to redefine the concepts and conditions applying to such land. Support for rural development from the European Agriculture Fund allows Member States, within the framework of improvements to the environment and the countryside, to make payments for natural disadvantages in mountain areas as well as payments in other disadvantaged areas. These payments should, through the permanent use of agricultural land, contribute towards the preservation of the countryside and support for sustainable systems of agriculture, and should compensate for additional costs and lost earnings. Research has shown that Member States identify temporarily disadvantaged areas on the basis of a range of different criteria, and these can lead to varying responses and varying levels of payment between the different Member States. I therefore welcome the rapporteur's suggestion to leave some room to Member States to review the new criteria before commencing payments. However, there should be a time limit placed on this, as the entire reform process may be greatly delayed through the apathy of some Member States, which would not only have a negative effect on payments from these funds, but would also contribute to a confused legal environment in individual Member States. I support the entire report.

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) Aid for less-favoured rural areas is an essential element of the second pillar of the common agricultural policy (rural development policy), as it is natural that regions with natural disadvantages should be targeted by specific tools and policies.

The Commission is proposing in this communication that, according to Article 50(3) of Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005, the 'other less-favoured areas' be defined in accordance with objective criteria. For this purpose, it is proposing eight soil and climate criteria indicating, at a certain threshold value, severe limitations for European agriculture: climate criteria (long-term low temperature or heat stress), biophysical criteria (poorly drained soil; stony, sandy or clay soil; low rooting depth; salty soil) and geographic criteria (areas with very unfavourable moisture balance or steep slopes). This definition of objective criteria is positive, but they must be tested on the ground to verify their reliability and adaptability to real situations and the specific characteristics of each natural area.

The possibility of a transitional period, with its own scheme, for any region that loses its classification as a less-favoured area must also be considered.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), in writing. – (PT) Support for less-favoured rural areas constitutes an essential element of rural development policy. I advocate the awarding of adequate compensation payments to less-favoured areas so that farmers help to preserve the rural environment and take up sustainable agriculture that provides public goods, such as landscapes, quality of water and air, and the preservation of biodiversity. This aid allows social and territorial cohesion, preserving rural areas and gives them the status of an area of vital economic and natural importance. It is criteria relating to 'other areas with natural handicaps', pursuant to Article 50(3)(a) of Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005, that are in question in this report. A panel of experts identified eight soil and climate criteria indicating, at a certain threshold value, severe limitations for European agriculture. I agree that that the geographical criterion referred to as 'isolation' must also be taken into account, as it is a natural handicap. I hope that the Member States can apply objective soil criteria that are adapted to the conditions of their natural area when designating areas with natural handicaps.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) It is positive that there is a belief that 'LFA payments must be linked to active farming of the land' and that 'strict and purely biophysical criteria may not be suitable'. We also see as valuable the inclusion of the geographic criterion 'isolation' and the statement that 'the cumulative use of the adopted criteria might prove necessary'. However, these aspects contradict others included in the report, specifically the definition of a 'transitional period' for adapting to the new criteria; in other words, tacit acceptance of the new criteria proposed by the Commission. We are utterly opposed to the reflection of the new criteria in the future development of the common agricultural policy (CAP), as is also being argued there, so keeping this policy in the sphere of rural development with cofinancing; in other words, retaining another way of discriminating between countries. If implemented, the Commission's proposal would be extremely damaging to the interests of the southern countries, particularly Portugal. That is why we are warning of the need when drawing up the CAP to correct this proposal and to demonstrate and assess the

use not just of the set of biophysical criteria, but of socioeconomic ones as well, such as: GDP per capita, income per family labour unit and desertification indicators.

Lorenzo Fontana (EFD), *in writing.* – (IT) This report emphasises the importance that the new common agricultural policy will have for all Member States. The safeguarding of areas with natural handicaps will be one of the main points of this policy that the EU and the regions of the Member States will be implementing, thereby putting subsidiarity into effect in practical terms. The EU Commission must take this subsidiarity into account, especially when it comes to identifying the parameters that will define these areas. The Commission must not neglect the fact that the recovery of areas with natural handicaps will provide tangible help for farms affected by the current major crisis, and will help to keep the environment in good condition. May I remind you that all this must be possible not just in theory, but also in reality, through the allocation of appropriate funds for safeguarding and redeveloping these areas. In doing this, we could recover and provide incentives for the economic development of agriculture in all areas with potential for growth and determine knock-on effects in the market, such as the agricultural production of foodstuffs typical of the area, and safeguarding of the landscape and the environment. I thank Mr Dorfmann and congratulate him on his excellent report.

Jarosław Kalinowski (PPE), *in writing.* – (PL) In order to achieve fair and uniform conditions for all farmers in the European Union, which should, unquestionably, be the main objective of reform of the common agricultural policy, care should also be taken over areas with natural handicaps. In order to harmonise the legislation which classifies areas as eligible to receive payments it is essential, above all, to harmonise the classification criteria of such areas. Achieving this objective will not be possible without close cooperation with Member States. The pragmatism proposed by the author of the report in allowing biophysical criteria to be defined by individual countries may pose a threat in the form of attempts to impose particular national interests. However, as long as the Commission takes care to ensure that European legislative framework provisions are observed, this solution should significantly improve objective identification of the areas under discussion.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) Considering that more than half of the utilised agricultural area in the EU (54%) is classed as less-favoured areas – whether because of orography, climatic conditions or less fertile land – and that such a measure is essential to rural development, we conclude that aid for less-favoured areas must constitute a priority for the Member States. For this reason, the preparation of a comprehensive strategy for less-favoured areas that meets the local needs of the various regions will lead to a reduction in the existing disparity between Member States as regards the aid that is awarded to them. Therefore, by exactly defining the areas with natural handicaps, it will be possible to obtain sufficient funds to make use of the land and improve agricultural output.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing.* – (DE) There is no doubt that farms in the outermost regions are in particular need of financial support. Small mountain farms often have to fight to survive, as it is scarcely possible for them to react quickly to new market requirements. Smallholders in particular lack the staff to be able to remain competitive. Consequently, from a business point of view alone, their situation is much more difficult than that of large agricultural undertakings in exposed locations. The high rate of farms going under in the past few years and the increase in part-time farmers clearly show that the EU subsidy policy focuses far too heavily on intensive livestock farming and the like. In order for the EU Member States to remain even remotely self-sufficient, it is high time we renationalised our farming subsidies. With a view to a fairer distribution of compensation payments, I have voted in favour of this report.

Rareş-Lucian Niculescu (PPE), *in writing.* – (RO) I voted for this report, which tackles the problems facing farmers in many EU Member States. I would like to emphasise in particular the importance of an amendment which I tabled in committee, and I wish to thank my colleagues who supported it. The aim of the amendment I am alluding to is to ensure that the way in which areas with natural handicaps are delimited is relevant by basing it on homogeneous ecological zones rather than on LAU 2, as is the case at the moment. I also wish to point out that I feel that it is appropriate to include in the Commission's future proposal flexible rules which also allow aid to be granted to farmers in zones with natural handicaps with a small area, located from an administrative perspective in units which do not meet the established criteria.

Franz Obermayr (NI), *in writing.* – (DE) Support for rural areas with challenging natural handicaps is one of the most important components of the second pillar of the common agricultural policy. In addition, the report provides for subsidies for these regions not only in respect of food production, but also in a macro-economic context. I have therefore voted in favour of this report.

Wojciech Michał Olejniczak (S&D), *in writing*. – (PL) I voted in favour of the European Parliament resolution (A7-0056/2010), because the second pillar of the common agricultural policy, namely rural development policy, is extremely important for improving the effectiveness of the CAP itself, but also for facilitating the management of land which has natural handicaps. The document drafted by the rapporteur is very necessary, not only for us, but for the whole of the European Union. We must have information about land which, for reasons not dependent on the owners, cannot be used effectively or well. I agree with the rapporteur in his assessment of the review, which began in 2005, of criteria for classifying disadvantaged areas. The previous criteria for support of these areas must be modified so that they reflect actually existing handicaps. It should also be remembered that there are areas which come under specific criteria but where the handicaps have now been removed due to the use of effective solutions. It is Member States which should be responsible for identification of less-favoured areas and for development of aid and development programmes. Of course, all measures must be based on an EU framework.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – I voted in favour of this report, together with my group.

Eva-Britt Svensson (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (SV) I abstained/voted against the Dorfmann report. The reason for me taking this position is evident from the report. The EU is far too large an area to be able to handle agricultural aid efficiently for areas with natural handicaps. The EU's rural areas are extremely diverse. This is the case with regard to the crops that are cultivated, moisture levels in the soil, combinations of soil types and climate conditions. Climate change makes it particularly difficult to draw up a list of criteria and fixed standards for subsidies. The EU has requested detailed maps from the Member States, but only a few countries have supplied them. One example that is highlighted in the report by the Court of Auditors is that Spain pays out EUR 16 per hectare whereas Malta pays out EUR 250 per hectare for what are understood to be similar circumstances. The common agricultural policy was drawn up when the EC/EU had six Member States. The situation today is completely different and even more complicated. The management of agricultural aid should be handled by the Member States. They have the local knowledge. We are currently in the midst of a crisis for the euro. A single currency is an obstacle to adapting interest rates and currencies to different circumstances within the euro area. A single agricultural policy is equally inappropriate for all 27 Member States.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) In this communication, the Commission has sought greater rigour and uniformity in the criteria for apportioning aid to farmers in areas with natural handicaps. It has also attempted to correct the uneven apportioning of compensatory payments among Member States resulting from differences in classification, especially of the so-called 'intermediate less-favoured areas (LFAs)'.

These payments are crucial to the preservation of employment and rural communities, to the continued use of farmland, and to biodiversity and the cultural landscape.

I am generally satisfied with the report and especially with the opinion of the Committee on Regional Development, which is attempting to safeguard the interests of the outermost regions, since the islands are excluded from the Commission's communication.

In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, it seems logical to me that, when identifying intermediate LFAs, the Member States be allowed to take into account not only biophysical criteria but also others, such as being an island or an outermost region.

It also seems important to me that any region that loses its status as an 'area with natural handicaps' should benefit from a transitional period, enabling it to lessen the impact of losing its subsidies.

We must now ensure that, in the general review of the common agricultural policy, the new aid schemes for farmers are thought out in a consistent way and that there is better coordination between agricultural policy and cohesion policy.

Report: Pilar del Castillo Vera (A7-0066/2010)

Elena Oana Antonescu (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) I voted for this report on a new Digital Agenda for Europe: 2015.eu, as I believe that Europe needs to play a leading role in promoting innovation in the information and communications technology sector. This is why we need to speed up the investments towards this. Unfortunately, at the moment Europe is at risk of lagging behind Asia, just judging by a few indicators, such as average data transfer rate or the fact that, although broadband communication services are available to more than 90% of the European Union's population, they have only reached consumers in 50% of households. The Commission must present a clear, ambitious agenda in this area, which takes the form of more than just

a vision or a prospects document. There are solutions which we must support, such as the use of open source programs, which would help speed up software innovation through open contributions and cut costs for businesses using these programs. At the same time, we must adopt measures aimed at reducing the red tape within the EU framework programme and at boosting our competitiveness globally.

Sophie Auconie (PPE), *in writing.* – (FR) The own-initiative report by Mrs del Castillo Vera is ambitious where the issue of the digital strategy for Europe is concerned. This matter revolves around Internet access for all citizens of the EU. In this regard, it is recommended that half of the European population should have broadband access by 2015 and the entire population by 2020. This widespread use of the Internet is supported by proposals on the manner in which legislation concerning consumers and security should evolve, as well as on necessary digital access to public services. Moreover, this agenda will enable us to provide support for innovative research and development, thus facilitating a rapid growth in knowledge and access to heritage. For all these reasons, I voted in favour of this report.

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D), *in writing.* – I voted for this report. I am convinced that Europe will only reap benefits of the digital revolution if all EU citizens are mobilised and empowered to participate fully in the new digital society. This requires many challenges, such as commitment to long-term investments, confidence by the governments to move more strongly to e-government and confidence by citizens to use the digital services. To attain those goals it is necessary to significantly reduce digital literacy and competence gaps by 2015. I especially welcome the proposals which seek to ensure that all primary and secondary schools have high speed connections by 2015 and that all adults of working age should be offered ICT training opportunities. In order to have a competitive digital agenda we must start from the people.

Regina Bastos (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) Information and communication technologies (ICT) is one of the areas that has been developing most in recent decades, and they are present in all areas of human life. In an environment of permanent change and growing competitiveness, ICTs can be a powerful tool in helping sustainable development, as well as fighting poverty and social and economic inequalities. Each person must be empowered with the appropriate competences and ubiquitous and high-speed access, and a clear legal framework is required that protects rights and that offers the necessary trust and security. The report 'on a new Digital Agenda for Europe: 2015.eu', of which I voted in favour, seeks to cooperate with the Commission on drawing up the universal strategic proposal and action plan for 2015. To this end: every EU household must have access to broadband Internet at a competitive price by 2013; particular attention must be paid to rural areas, areas affected by industrial transition, and regions which suffer from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps, in particular the outermost regions; and, lastly, it is important to guarantee disabled end-users access at a level equivalent to that available to other end-users.

Mara Bizzotto (EFD), *in writing.* – (IT) One of the most ambitious but unrealised objectives of the Lisbon Strategy was to make Europe the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based society in the world. The aim of adopting the 2015.eu agenda, which is complementary to the EU 2020 strategy, is to make citizens qua consumers the focus of an EU measure that aims to ensure that all Member State citizens can draw on an appropriate reserve of IT abilities to guarantee them access to the main forms of information and communication technology available today. The path to ensuring the computer literacy of families, students, businesses and European governments will be aided by various strategies that will deal with the issue of defining digital rights, and also implement infrastructure to improve and extend broadband, especially in rural areas.

As I strongly believe that the future of training must necessarily go hand in hand with the enhancement of computer-based training and the interoperability of IT skills, I am in favour of the report.

Carlos Coelho (PPE), *in writing.* – (PT) I support the excellent report on the new Digital Agenda by Mrs del Castillo Vera. I agree that the EU must play a leading role in creating and applying Information and Communication Technologies, thereby generating added value for its citizens and companies. I also agree that it will only reap the rewards of this digital revolution if the European public in its entirety is mobilised and given the means necessary to participate fully in the new digital society. I welcome the goal of giving broadband coverage to every European citizen and across the whole territory, including the outermost regions. I also welcome the recommendation that the concept of digital literacy be introduced into education systems, starting as early as the pre-primary level, in parallel with foreign languages, with the aim of producing skilled users as early as possible. I would highlight the potential value for citizens and businesses of the digital switchover of public services (e-government) in order to enable a more efficient and personalised provision of public services. I would also point out the fact that by using e-procurement systems (public works contracts)

significant gains in terms of transparency and competitiveness are possible, with greater choice, higher quality and lower prices.

Lara Comi (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) I voted in favour of this report, which I endorse both in terms of its spirit and its content. I believe that, by adopting this report, the European Parliament has sent out a clear signal of political leadership with the creation of a digital agenda, a true coherent and comprehensive European plan, which is a fundamental step for Europe's future.

On the one hand, digital development offers a major opportunity for growth, but, on the other, it entails major social change, with a significant impact on citizens' behaviour. The important thing is to ensure that this change leads to a more democratic, open and inclusive European society and to a prosperous, competitive and knowledge-based future economy. This can only come about if, as highlighted in the report, 'the person is placed at the core of the policy action'.

It is important to focus closely on the growth of broadband connections and the application of digital technologies in key market sectors, such as energy, transport and health. This political action, however, must set out appropriate guarantees to avoid widening the gap between large enterprises and SMEs; public authorities and the private sector; densely populated areas and rural, insular and mountainous areas; and national and cross-border electronic commerce.

Ioan Enciu (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) I appreciate the efforts made by Mrs del Castillo Vera in drafting this report, along with the contribution made by my fellow Members. The Digital Agenda and the development of the single ICT market feature among our priorities and those of the Presidency. I welcome the emphasis which is placed in this concept on promoting digital literacy among young people, as they use new technologies the most and must do it, therefore, in a safe, efficient manner.

I wish to thank my fellow Members for the support they have given to the action taken by me in asking the Commission to draw up a plan for promoting new online businesses and providing facilities, especially for those recently made redundant. I am confident that the votes from my fellow Members and I mark an important step towards a total, efficient approach to the European digital future. I hope that the Commission will support us in establishing clear rules in this area at both EU and Member State level.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) A 'digital agenda' is increasingly important and unavoidable in our society. Technological developments, especially in terms of making information, content and knowledge available online, have been extremely swift, and in little more than a decade the 'digital' landscape has changed drastically, with mass access to the Internet and mobile communications. It is, therefore, important to look to the future and define a strategy for the digital agenda, setting concrete goals and paying particular attention to issues relating to the rights of consumers to privacy and to personal data, as well as copyright and the fight against Internet piracy.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) play a part in a prosperous and competitive economy, and help to cement a more environmentally friendly, democratic, open and inclusive society. ICTs allow efficiency, helping towards sustainable growth, and so contribute to the objectives of the EU 2020 strategy. There are major disparities between and within the Member States in terms of potential public access to broadband at the moment. We urgently need to build a digital single market for services that prevents fragmented rules and contributes to the free circulation of digital services and e-commerce. An ambitious digital agenda and a universal action plan must be adopted, enabling Europe to progress towards an open and prosperous digital society offering all citizens economic, social and cultural opportunities, and paying particular attention to rural areas. I would stress the importance of offering all citizens ubiquitous and high-speed access to fixed and mobile broadband. National and European funds should be used to ensure that all EU citizens have access to broadband Internet at a competitive price by 2013.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) There are quite a lot of positives in this report, despite its being developed in the framework of the internal market, which the European Union advocates. We recognise the underlying benefits of a digital agenda for Europe included in the report, specifically the guarantee of 'access to cultural products for all citizens', the guarantee to 'disabled end-user access at a level equivalent to that available to other end-users', the readiness for 'greater investment in the use of open source software in the EU' and the assertion that 'particular attention should be paid to rural areas, areas affected by industrial transition, and regions which suffer from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps, in particular the outermost regions'. Let us contribute to these proposals.

Nonetheless, we believe that a cutting-edge digital agenda rejects any commercialisation of knowledge, education and research. That is why we do not accept the watering-down of the positive goals with the ambiguities and variations of the European single market.

Strengthening and promoting a 'well-functioning' internal market do not make it more 'consumer-oriented', nor do they lead 'to lower prices', as they are trying to make us believe. The reverse has been proven to be the case on various occasions, in the full range of the European Union's activities. That is why we abstained.

Cătălin Sorin Ivan (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) Increased attention needs to be focused on defining a new digital agenda, 2015.eu, which is intended to be more competitive and innovative than the i2010 strategy launched recently, especially with regard to its educational and cultural aspects. For this reason, as rapporteur for the opinion for the Committee on Culture and Education, I supported this report, especially the points it contained relating to the role of information and communications technologies in the training of young people and preparing them for the job market. In the text submitted and adopted I emphasised both the importance of children acquiring a basic knowledge of ICT already from primary school level and the added value that online learning can provide to our society, which is in constant flux. On the same lines, I welcomed that young people are the section of the population which is most receptive to ICT. In fact, they need to focus on this area, as this can make an important contribution to reducing the level of unemployment in the EU, in line with the EU 2020 strategy objectives. Last but not least, I reaffirmed the need to develop the Europeana project as part of the 2015.eu agenda, implementing it in a way which guarantees it a high profile, while also ensuring that its inherent cultural objective is met.

Petru Constantin Luhan (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) I welcome the adoption of this report, which will help when drafting a comprehensive 2015 strategy proposal for information and communications technologies (ICT). I believe that our emergence from the economic crisis depends to a large extent on the proposal's ability to facilitate the wide-ranging and efficient application of ICT in the business sector. SMEs can act as the catalyst for economic recovery in Europe. In fact, the European Commission must strengthen in future the measures supporting SMEs in the use of ICT tools, with a view to boosting their productivity. I am using my vote today to support the proposal from this report on devising a Digital Plan for promoting online companies, with the primary aim of offering other options to those who have been made redundant recently in the current financial crisis. Such an initiative could be implemented by specifically offering free Internet connection and consultancy.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) A new digital agenda for Europe is essential in order for there to be a digital revolution from which the European public as a whole can benefit. However, the involvement of all citizens in this process is necessary for such a revolution; it is necessary in order for them to become actors in the new digital society. In order for this to become a reality, large-scale investment is needed to enable the digital divide that currently exists in the EU to be reduced. We cannot forget that an informed and enlightened public contributes to increasing Europe's potential.

Miroslav Mikolášik (PPE), *in writing*. – (SK) Making full use of information and telecommunications technology is a precondition for a more competitive Europe and for sustainable growth.

The EU should ensure the development and application of these technologies, and enable all EU citizens to link up with the new digital society through high-quality, high-speed Internet connections at affordable prices. Unfortunately, telecommunications markets in many Member States have still not achieved sufficient levels of openness to competition, and consumers and households are therefore discouraged by high prices and do not obtain sufficient digital skills.

I therefore consider it essential to extend the integration and overall liberalisation of the single market and to eliminate obstacles to the provision of cross-border telecommunications services.

At the same time, I support the creation of a better legal framework for the new digital space, which will ensure the protection of basic civil rights and intellectual property rights, as well as preventing computer crime, the dissemination of child pornography and other crimes on the Internet.

Franz Obermayr (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) It is envisaged that every household within the EU should have a broadband Internet connection at a competitive price by 2013. In addition, the intention is for Europe to be the most mobile continent in the world in terms of Internet access by 2015. I support the measures to that effect and have therefore voted in favour of this report.

Georgios Papanikolaou (PPE), *in writing*. – (EL) The new Digital Agenda for Europe is an ambitious programme to disseminate new technologies and fast links in the Member States, which is why I voted for it. However, apart from the pronouncements in principle which it makes, such as increasing mobile connection speeds and familiarising citizens with the new technologies, it would appear that some objectives will be extremely difficult to attain. For example, it would appear that, although highly desirable, the objective requiring all schools in the European Union to have high-speed Internet by 2015 will be difficult to achieve for objective reasons (for example in remote mountain and island countries, it is difficult to achieve high speeds immediately). Consequently, the new Digital Agenda for Europe should be supported by a series of coordinated actions and initiatives, such as more generous EU funding to safeguard better access to the Internet, even for pupils at a geographical disadvantage.

Aldo Patriciello (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) Europe continues to be a global leader in the field of advanced information and communication technologies (ICT). The World Wide Web, the GSM standard for mobile telephones, the MPEG standard for digital content and ADSL technology are European inventions. Retaining this leadership and transforming it into a competitive advantage is a vital political objective.

Over the last four years, ICT policies have confirmed these technologies' role as a driving force in the economic and social modernisation of Europe, and have strengthened Europe's resilience in times of crisis. All of the Union's Member States have developed ICT policies and consider these technologies to be an essential contribution to domestic growth and employment in the context of the renewed Lisbon Strategy.

Despite this, in the first decade of the 21st century, the EU is lagging behind in terms of ICT research and innovation. This is why the Union has launched ambitious research programmes intended to close the gap and to support far-sighted research and development activities. I would therefore repeat, clearly, my full support for these actions, in the firm belief that Europe can once again become a leader and prime mover in this extremely important sector.

Teresa Riera Madurell (S&D), *in writing*. – (ES) I voted in favour of this Parliament own-initiative report given the importance of the Digital Agenda in strengthening European technological leadership. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are a key factor for growth at this time of economic recovery, but they are also essential to sustainable growth and the fight against social exclusion. The report supports the main points identified by the Ministerial Declaration on the Digital Agenda approved at the Informal Meeting of Telecommunications Ministers in Granada on 18 and 19 April. Parliament reiterates the need for the EU to have sound, swift and efficient infrastructures and encourages the adoption of measures that enable the achievement of full broadband coverage for all citizens. All citizens need to partake in the digital revolution for it to become a success. However, in order for this success to become a reality, aspects such as Internet security cannot be left to one side. The adopted report, therefore, is not only committed to providing all citizens with computer skills, but at the same time highlights the need to reinforce Internet security and respect for citizens' rights.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – I voted in favour of the resolution given the fact that no damaging modifications were included.

Report: Bogusław Liberadzki (A7-0099/2010)

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) As recommended in the excellent report by my Polish fellow Member, Mr Liberadzki, I voted in favour of granting the European Commission discharge in respect of the implementation of the EU general budget for the financial year 2008. I am pleased that certain ideas to which I am very attached have been taken up: the organisation of an interinstitutional conference involving all the parties concerned, in particular the national parliaments and the national auditing bodies, with a view to reforming the discharge procedure; the shortening of deadlines so that discharge is voted on in the year following the year under review; and the call by the European Court of Auditors for a single opinion (the application of the 'single audit' rule) on the reliability and the regularity of the underlying transactions as provided for in the Treaty. Moreover, we must simplify the rules on the allocation of European funds since many of the errors stem from the complex nature of procedures, which national complexities often add to. Finally, concerning audits of research bodies in Europe, I am pleased that the European Parliament has reinforced the message that we sent out to the Commission not to question in a harsh and often unfounded manner funding in relation to international audit standards.

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D), *in writing*. – (LT) Progress has been made with the implementation of the budget for the financial year 2008, but there still remains a high number of errors in the areas of the Structural and

Cohesion Funds, rural development, scientific research, energy and transport. The funds disbursed incorrectly amount to 11%. This was caused by complicated rules and regulations that Member States must adhere to. Therefore, when implementing the budget for the coming year, special attention should be paid to the simplification of those rules and regulations, the improvement of the mechanism for recovering incorrectly paid funds and the introduction of more effective systems for supervision and control. Once these measures have been implemented, it is likely that the execution of the EU budget will improve, more effective control of budget funds will be assured, and projects implemented by Member States will have greater added value for the development of various areas of the economy and other areas.

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) Article 317 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union provides that responsibility for implementation of the EU budget lies with the Commission, in cooperation with the Member States, and that the Court of Auditors sends Parliament and the Council a statement on the reliability of the accounts and the regularity and legality of the underlying transactions. In the interests of transparency, I consider it essential that the European Parliament be able to verify the accounts and analyse in detail the implementation of the Union budget. I agree with the rapporteur and the resolutions on discharge when they draw attention to the urgency of introducing a national declaration at an appropriate political level, covering all EU funds coming under shared management, in order that each Member State take responsibility for the management of EU funds received. This is particularly important if we realise that 80% of EU expenditure is administered by the Member States. Lastly, I would note the positive opinion of the Court of Auditors concerning the accounts, which reassures the European public that the Union budget is being appropriately and rigorously managed, despite certain problems that continue to exist and are analysed in detail by this report.

Bruno Gollnisch (NI), in writing. – (FR) The overview provided by the nearly 40 reports devoted to the implementation of the 2008 EU budget by the various EU bodies is painful. For the 15th year running, the European Court of Auditors has been unable to approve the implementation of the budget of the European Commission, so marred is it by errors and unwarranted spending. However, the European Parliament is granting it discharge in respect of its management. The Commission is hiding behind the responsibility of the Member States, which are supposed to manage 80% of expenditure, in particular agricultural and regional expenditure. However, the problems in these two areas are lessening, whereas they are rocketing in the case of subsidies managed directly by Brussels. The situation as regards pre-accession assistance for Turkey is particularly serious and worrying. This is without mentioning the decentralised bodies that are multiplying, and the botched public procurement procedures with them, the random management of personnel and recruitment, the budgetary commitments that precede the corresponding legal commitments, and the excessive supervisory boards which make management costs soar and which, in the end, are unable to properly plan their occasionally rather unclear action, and therefore their budget. This is so much the case that, in one of her reports, Mrs Mathieu calls for an overall assessment of their usefulness. That is why we voted against the majority of these texts on budget discharge.

Cătălin Sorin Ivan (S&D), in writing. – (RO) A vote for discharge does not mean that the situation is totally ideal. I think that the situation is evolving in the right direction, but at too slow a rate. The number of errors has fallen, but we have still not reached the 'tolerable error level'. I wish to stress the need to make it compulsory for all Member States to submit national management declarations, just as Parliament has repeatedly requested. I am opposed to the traffic-light system (red, amber, green) for Romania and Bulgaria alone, as this would be a discriminatory measure. There are shortcomings in many other Member States, and common monitoring rules need to be applied.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) All the European institutions that depend on the European Union budget have to be thoroughly audited by the Court of Auditors and by all entities with that function. It is necessary to check whether Union funds are being well used, whether these institutions are meeting the objectives outlined for them, and whether any resources are being wasted. Generally – with only a few exceptions, to judge by the audits that we have already seen – we can say that the institutions at issue are using the funds made available to them properly and meeting the objectives proposed for them. That is why I voted for the report on the Commission and executive agencies.

Georgios Papanikolaou (PPE), in writing. – (EL) The Liberadzki report on discharge in respect of the implementation of the European Union general budget for the 2008 financial year, Section III – Commission and executive agencies adopts a very negative tone for Greece on a series of issues from manipulation of financial statistics to vague accusations of generalised corruption in the country. Our parliamentary group asked to be able to vote separately against specific references which are insulting to Greece under the part

vote procedure. However, this proved to be unfeasible, which is why I voted against the entire Liberadzki report.

Alf Svensson (PPE), in writing. – (SV) On 5 May I voted in favour of Mr Liberadzki's report on discharge in respect of the implementation of the European Union general budget for the financial year 2008, Section III – Commission and executive agencies. However, I voted for the removal of paragraph 376, which proposed that the pre-accession aid for Turkey be reduced to the level provided in 2006, and paragraph 378, in which the European Parliament calls on the Commission to amend the objectives of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance, for example by means of special forms of membership. The reason for this is that I believe it to be wrong that a report on the Commission's discharge should call into question the accession process and accession perspective of candidate countries. I firmly believe that once membership negotiations have commenced, irrespective of the candidate country concerned, they should be continued in a positive spirit without further complicating the EU accession process or putting obstacles in its way.

Report: Inès Ayala Sender (A7-0063/2010)

Jean-Pierre Audy (PPE), in writing. – (FR) As recommended in the very good report by my excellent fellow Member and Spanish neighbour, Mrs Ayala Sender, I voted in favour of granting the European Commission discharge in respect of the implementation of the Seventh, Eighth, Ninth and Tenth European Development Funds (EDF) for the financial year 2008. I unreservedly support EDF budgetisation and, when the time comes, the Union will have to create its own instrument for taking action in the area of development. Concerning the investment facility managed by the European Investment Bank (EIB), which is a risk-bearing instrument funded by the EDF to encourage private investment in the difficult economic and political context of the ACP countries, I have very mixed feelings about the idea that the EIB should present a report as part of the discharge procedure, but this will be a point for discussion, especially if, as Parliament hopes, the Union becomes a shareholder in the EIB.

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I believe it is essential for public servants to be answerable to the public, which is why they must give objective and detailed accounts of how public funds have been used. Although the Court of Auditors believes that the revenue and commitments are free from material error, it is, however, concerned about the high incidence of non-quantifiable errors in budget support commitments and the material level of error in the payments. I, like the rapporteur, deplore the fact that the Court of Auditors was not able to obtain all the information and documentation concerning 10 sampled payments to international organisations and that consequently it is not able to express an opinion on the regularity of expenditure amounting to EUR 190 million, or 6.7% of the annual expenditure. I therefore call on the European Development Fund to resolve all of these issues for the next financial year (2009).

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) All the European institutions that depend on the European Union budget have to be thoroughly audited by the Court of Auditors and by all entities with that function. It is necessary to check whether Union funds are being well used, whether these institutions are meeting the objectives outlined for them, and whether any resources are being wasted. Generally – with only a few exceptions, to judge by the audits that we have already seen – we can say that the institutions at issue are using the funds made available to them properly and meeting the objectives proposed for them. That is why I voted for the report on the Seventh, Eighth, Ninth and Tenth European Development Funds.

Report: Bart Staes (A7-0095/2010)

Liam Aylward and Pat the Cope Gallagher (ALDE), in writing. – (GA) The Members Pat 'the Cope' Gallagher and Liam Aylward voted in favour of the report on the discharge of the European Parliament regarding the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2008, and they both welcome the report's recommendations in relation to improving transparency and responsibility. This transparency and responsibility is necessary for the successful functioning of the European Parliament and to encourage good governance in the European Union.

Mr Gallagher and Mr Aylward gave particular support to the amendments which sought further transparency and which recommended providing the reports of the Internal Audit Service to the public. They also supported recommendations in relation to providing information to European taxpayers about Parliament's use of public money.

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I believe it is essential for public servants to be answerable to the public, which is why they must give objective and detailed accounts of how the public funds made available to them

have been used. This report carries out an exhaustive analysis of Parliament's budgetary situation, drawing attention to certain issues that must be urgently reviewed. I note that the rapporteur expresses his concern at the continuing cases of petty crime on Parliament's premises, requesting as a result that the Secretary-General pay special attention to this matter in order to reduce petty crime. Although this point may appear trivial, it is naturally extremely important for all of us who use the European Parliament's facilities every day. Lastly, I would note the positive opinion of the Court of Auditors concerning the accounts, which reassures the European public that the Union budget is being appropriately and rigorously managed.

Dan Jørgensen and Christel Schaldemose (S&D), *in writing*. – (DA) The European Parliament has voted on the discharge in respect of Parliament's own accounts for 2008. Never before has this been done so thoroughly and with such a critical eye. It is a clear victory for both transparency and control and is in keeping with the traditional Danish view of good practice. The discharge report contains a number of points of criticism which require a tightening up of the current procedures and practices. These include increased clarity and openness with regard to the use of additional funds and the accountability of the financial players in Parliament. We are, of course, in favour of this and have therefore voted in favour of discharge and of the resolution as a whole. The European Parliament has to grant discharge to itself each year and that is precisely why a critical review is needed. The report is, of course, the result of a lot of compromises, but in essence it takes a particularly critical stance while at the same time pointing in the right direction with regard to future discharge procedures. Moreover, a great deal of support has been shown for this critical report across many groups in Parliament.

Astrid Lulling (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) My scepticism, or indeed my opposition to some of the statements contained in the resolution of the Staes report, should not be masked by my vote in favour of the discharge of the European Parliament's 2008 budget. Stating that the renovation costs of the Strasbourg seat following the disaster that took place in August 2008 should not be borne by European taxpayers is not enough.

In fact, the European Parliament is legally obliged to look after the buildings that it owns with due care and attention.

Moreover, appropriate legal proceedings have been initiated in order to obtain a refund for the costs incurred following the disaster.

Finally, I should like to see a rigorous and objective review of the situation concerning the pension funds of MEPs rather than let it drift towards a certain demagoguery.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) All the European institutions that depend on the European Union budget have to be thoroughly audited by the Court of Auditors and by all entities with that function. It is necessary to check whether Union funds are being well used, whether these institutions are meeting the objectives outlined for them, and whether any resources are being wasted. Generally – with only a few exceptions, to judge by the audits that we have already seen – we can say that the institutions at issue are using the funds made available to them properly and meeting the objectives proposed for them. That is why I voted for the report on the implementation of the European Union general budget, Section I – European Parliament.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – We followed the rapporteur, Staes, in this vote, even though we lost one key amendment, number 22, on the transparency of the use of public funds, defended by the same rapporteur.

Report: Ryszard Czarnecki (A7-0080/2010)

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) I believe it is essential for public servants to be answerable to the public, which is why they must give objective and detailed accounts of how the public funds made available to them have been used. The Court of Auditors indicated in its annual report that the audit did not give rise to any significant observations as regards the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). Nevertheless, the Court of Auditors points to some situations where there has been no improvement, such as the reimbursement of the travel expenses of members of the EESC, which must be based on no more than their true costs, or the fact that the EESC grants its staff a financial advantage not granted by the other institutions, and that that results in higher expenses. I note with satisfaction the fact that the EESC has adopted the practice of including a chapter in its annual activity report describing how the previous discharge decisions of Parliament and the Court of Auditors were followed up.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) All the European institutions that depend on the European Union budget have to be thoroughly audited by the Court of Auditors and by all entities with that function. It is necessary

to check whether Union funds are being well used, whether these institutions are meeting the objectives outlined for them, and whether any resources are being wasted. Generally – with only a few exceptions, to judge by the audits that we have already seen – we can say that the institutions at issue are using the funds made available to them properly and meeting the objectives proposed for them. That is why I voted for the report on the implementation of the European Union general budget for the financial year 2008, Section VI – European Economic and Social Committee.

Report: Ryszard Czarnecki (A7-0082/2010)

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I believe it is essential for public servants to be answerable to the public, which is why they must give objective and detailed accounts of how the public funds made available to them have been used. Parliament's evaluation of the accounts submitted and their respective discharge falls into this category. I note with satisfaction that the report of the Court of Auditors mentions that the audit did not give rise to any significant observations as regards the Committee of the Regions (CoR). I agree with the rapporteur's positive assessment of the improvements found in the CoR's internal control environment, in particular the inventory of its main administrative, operational and financial procedures. Lastly, I note with satisfaction the quality of the CoR's annual activity report, especially the explicit inclusion of how the previous discharge decisions of Parliament and the Court of Auditors were followed up, highlighting the importance and relevance of these decisions.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) All the European institutions that depend on the European Union budget have to be thoroughly audited by the Court of Auditors and by all entities with that function. It is necessary to check whether Union funds are being well used, whether these institutions are meeting the objectives outlined for them, and whether any resources are being wasted. Generally – with only a few exceptions, to judge by the audits that we have already seen – we can say that the institutions at issue are using the funds made available to them properly and meeting the objectives proposed for them. That is why I voted for the report on the implementation of the European Union general budget for the financial year 2008, Section VII – Committee of the Regions.

Report: Véronique Mathieu (A7-0074/2010)

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) The increase in external agencies has been playing an important role in concentrating the technical and administrative capabilities that support decision making in the Commission. The fact that they are scattered throughout EU territory also allows the institutions to really get closer to the public, increasing their visibility and legitimacy. Although the increased number of agencies is, in general, positive, the truth is that it creates challenges regarding the monitoring and evaluation of their performance. For this very reason, following the adoption of the Commission communication 'European agencies – the way forward', of 11 March 2008, Parliament, the Council and the Commission relaunched the project of defining a common framework for the agencies and, in 2009, set up an interinstitutional working group. I think that this group will play a fundamental role in eliminating the problems that the Court of Auditors has identified in several of the agencies, many of them in common, and in defining a common framework that will allow for better financial and budgetary management in the future.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) All the European institutions that depend on the European Union budget have to be thoroughly audited by the Court of Auditors and by all entities with that function. It is necessary to check whether Union funds are being well used, whether these institutions are meeting the objectives outlined for them, and whether any resources are being wasted. Generally – with only a few exceptions, to judge by the audits that we have already seen – we can say that the institutions at issue are using the funds made available to them properly and meeting the objectives proposed for them. That is why I voted for the report on performance, financial management and control of EU agencies.

Report: Véronique Mathieu (A7-0075/2010)

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) In its report on the annual accounts of the European Police College for the financial year 2008, the Court of Auditors added a rider to its opinion on the reliability of the accounts, without expressly qualifying it, and qualified its opinion on the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions. In addition, overall, the College's replies to the Court of Auditors' remarks are once again inadequate and the remedial measures it puts forward are too vague and non-specific to enable the discharge authority adequately to determine whether the College is capable of improving in future. Further to this, there remain innumerable structural problems and irregularities relating to the College that are detailed in the report. It is for this very reason that I agree with the rapporteur in her decision to postpone her decision

on granting the Director of the European Police College discharge in respect of the implementation of the College's budget for the financial year 2008.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) All the European institutions that depend on the European Union budget have to be thoroughly audited by the Court of Auditors and by all entities with that function. It is necessary to check whether Union funds are being well used, whether these institutions are meeting the objectives outlined for them, and whether any resources are being wasted. Generally – with only a few exceptions, to judge by the audits that we have already seen – we can say that the institutions at issue are using the funds made available to them properly and meeting the objectives proposed for them. That is why I voted for the report on the European Police College.

Report: José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra(A7-0111/2010)

Elena Oana Antonescu (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) Consolidation of the biregional strategic partnership between the European Union and the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, signed in 1999, must be a priority on the European Union's foreign policy agenda. Although significant progress has been made during the last 10 years in terms of developing EU-Latin American bilateral relations, further steps still need to be taken. The partnership's ultimate objective is to create in 2015 a Euro-Latin American global interregional cooperation zone in the areas of politics, economics, trade, and social and cultural affairs, thereby ensuring sustainable development in both regions.

Today's vote means that the European Parliament supports the adoption in future of a Euro-Latin American Charter for Peace and Security which will include, based on the UN Charter and related international legislation, strategies and guidelines on political actions and common security.

I also think that the fight against climate change, which hits the poorest population in the world hardest, must become a key component in the EU-Latin American strategy. Both sides must make significant efforts to reach a common negotiating position as part of the discussions leading up to the UN Conference on climate change, which will be held at the end of the year in Mexico.

Sophie Auconie (PPE), *in writing*. – (FR) The own-initiative report on the EU strategy for relations with Latin America incorporates the approach that the EU promotes within international relations. Indeed, this text reconciles economic, social, political and institutional dimensions in order to ensure that trade between the two geographical areas also benefits the most disadvantaged populations and contributes to the sustainable development of the subcontinent. Moreover, the report recommends the harmonisation of financial regulations to introduce greater responsibility on the issue at global level. I therefore clearly voted in favour of this report.

Sebastian Valentin Bodu (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) The resolution adopted today during the European Parliament plenary is an important sign indicating that the EU is very well aware of its global role. Latin America is the favourite tourist destination of many Europeans, but it means much more than this to Europe. Latin America may fall short in the area of democracy, judging by European standards and principles.

The European Parliament recently debated a resolution concerning blatant human rights violations in Cuba. The situation ended in the death of people who were exercising their right to free expression. These are tragic situations which must never happen again. However, the European Union's experience indicates that a relationship built over time, based on friendship and diplomacy, is much more productive in the long term.

A constructive approach will allow the European Union to successfully become an exporter of democratic principles, as it wishes to be. Latin America is a huge continent, which cannot be ignored from an economic or social perspective. In fact, the European Investment Bank has already been operating in the South American continent for a long time, offering the opportunity for long-term investments, which is a noteworthy sign in itself. The resolution adopted today is part of a clear mandate given to the EU High Representative on how to approach relations with Latin America.

Corina Crețu (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) I support the message conveyed in the resolution on improving the coordination of the positions of countries on both continents with regard to the methods for implementing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), especially as the MDG Summit is going to be held this September. We need to establish common ground, all the more so as we are behind in achieving the targets proposed for 2015, particularly for combating poverty. Especially at a time of global recession, investments need to be focused on poorer countries and on the more vulnerable population groups so that they can benefit from new jobs and the conditions required for social integration.

Edite Estrela (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted for the report on the EU strategy for relations with Latin America, which argues for the creation of a full biregional strategic partnership. I would stress the importance of the recommendation to reconcile the positions of the two regional blocs regarding the negotiations on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) I share the rapporteur's opinion regarding the need to create deeper and closer ties of biregional cooperation between the European Union and Latin America. Nevertheless, I believe that the EU has to pay particular attention to one of the Latin American countries whose huge population, economic potential and position as a regional leader already demand it. I am talking, obviously, about the largest Portuguese-speaking country in the world: Brazil. Commission communication COM (2007) 281, of 30 May, explicitly recognised that 'EU-Brazil dialogue has not been sufficiently exploited and carried out mainly through EU-Mercosur dialogue. Brazil will be the last "BRICS" to meet the EU in a Summit. The time has come to look at Brazil as a strategic partner as well as a major Latin American economic actor and regional leader.' While the other European institutions are doing their duty, the European Parliament resists forming a relationship with this great country except through Mercosur, making it the only one out of Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC) in which the European Union does not maintain a separate parliamentary delegation. The correction of this anachronistic and regrettable situation is urgent.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The biregional strategic partnership contributes to further coordination between the EU and Latin America within international forums and institutions. As well as setting a common agenda it should continue to coordinate positions on matters of global importance, taking account of the interests and concerns of both parties. That is why I voted for the communication from the Commission 'The European Union and Latin America: Global Players in Partnership', which seeks to identify operational proposals aimed at the full implementation of the biregional strategic partnership.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) This report does not give consideration to the real problems that are being experienced in Latin America and does not set out the essential points that should be included in the EU strategy for relations with Latin America.

For example, it glosses over all the economic and social problems that will result from the signing of free trade agreements, and it accepts the normalisation of relations with Honduras as an incontestable fact, ignoring the *coup d'état* and the still recent murders of members of the Resistance Front against the *coup*. It ignores the situation in Colombia: the crimes of the paramilitaries, and the persecution of trade-union members and politicians are not problems worthy of any mention. It does, on the other hand, criticise Bolivia and Venezuela, although it never makes explicit reference to these countries.

However, it says nothing about the redeployment of the United States Fourth Fleet in the region, the plan for the United States to use seven Colombian military bases, or the intervention operations that are undertaken from military bases in the territories of EU and NATO countries.

Regrettably, the majority of the proposals that we made on the aforementioned issues were rejected, so in the end we voted against the resolution.

Erminia Mazzoni (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) I voted in favour of the report with one reservation, which is also a hope: that we will find a solution to the deep-rooted 'tango bond' situation that casts such a shadow over our relationship with Argentina.

The determination to promote relations with Latin American countries could pave the way to resolving the whole issue of European investors' rights, in an appropriate manner.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (FR) This text, which is of an arrogant and imperial nature, is not acceptable. It endorses the resumption of free trade agreement negotiations with Central America, Colombia and Peru. These negotiations are harmful from an economic and social perspective as much as a democratic one. How can we negotiate with Porfirio Lobo Sosa's putschist government in Honduras and then claim to be guardians of the rule of law and human rights? How can we negotiate bilaterally with the oppressive governments of Álvaro Uribe and Alan García and flout the opinion of other sovereign states, members of the Andean Community, Bolivia and Ecuador? I vote against this text, which is in breach of the principles of democracy and humanism.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) We feel that the fact that the EU is the main investor and the second largest trading partner in Latin America, as well as the main donor of development aid, is reason enough for there to be a clear and well-defined strategy for relations between the EU and Latin America. We advocate

the definition of clear guidelines on the best way of collaborating to promote political stability, fight climate change, manage migratory flows and prevent natural disasters. As was demonstrated in the Haiti tragedy, the EU is clearly now second rate compared to others that intervened. We therefore argue that the EU must improve its actions at international level. That being the case, it must intervene in a more consistent and effective way in international politics. This improvement must take place at the next summit, which is being held on 18 May in Madrid and in which the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission must participate actively.

Willy Meyer (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (ES) I was not able to vote in favour of this text because one of the objectives of the strategic partnership is to conclude subregional partnership agreements with Central America, Peru and Colombia, and Mercosur, despite the *coup d'état* in Honduras and the illegitimate Government that Porfirio Lobo has formed as a result. The EU cannot treat governments that have been part of a *coup d'état* in the same way as elected governments. Likewise, the objective of creating a Euro-Latin American global interregional partnership area does not take into account the asymmetries between the regions. The current terms of the Association Agreement between the EU and Peru and Colombia are similar to those of a free trade agreement, and it will not benefit the European or Latin American people. I also do not agree with the possibility of opening up a triangular political dialogue (such as EU-Latin America-United States). There are already multilateral organisations such as the United Nations for this sort of dialogue. It also includes the creation of the Europe-Latin America and Caribbean Foundation. I would not be opposed to this concept if the rapporteur were not proposing that it be established using public and private capital, which is a clear way in for multinationals.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), in writing. – (DE) The comprehensive report on Latin America takes a sensible approach in providing for the development of relations between the EU and the South American States by means of a strategic partnership. This creation of a Euro-Latin American area has the potential not only to bring positive economic results but also, above all, to strengthen the role of the EU as a foreign-policy player, particularly in respect of the United States. Unfortunately, the report also contains some paragraphs and certain wordings which hint at the almost missionary zeal of some Members of this House and which could be construed as too much interference in the internal affairs of the South American States. It is neither necessary nor meaningful to prescribe in detail how these countries should organise their economy or their education and science policies, or the details of how they regulate their foreign policy. It is absurd to call on the Latin American countries to introduce sex education, for example. I therefore abstained during the final vote.

Justas Vincas Paleckis (S&D), in writing. – (LT) The European Union is Latin America's partner. Together we must combat today's challenges and global problems. Problems like the economic and financial crisis, climate change, threats to security, the fight against terrorism, the drug trade and organised crime. Together we must conserve the environment, save natural resources and also fight poverty, inequality and migration. I voted for this report since it proposes appropriate measures for combating poverty in the region: education and a reduction in the disparities between the richest and poorest countries in the region. The EU has the Solidarity Funds and also promotes integration projects, whereas Latin America does not have such opportunities. I agree with the rapporteur that, if Latin America follows the EU model of integration, this region will become stronger. Moreover, it will bring its inhabitants increased security and prosperity.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), in writing. – I abstained on the final vote on this report. Though the report is by no means anything we could accept as a good contribution to the forthcoming EU-Latin America Summit in Madrid, we managed to keep or vote into the text some important aspects. The green highlights in the middle of a disappointing report are: the paragraph concerning the ruling by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights on feminicides (the case of Campo Algodonero in Mexico) was kept in the text, with 359 votes in favour, 235 against and 17 abstentions; we succeeded in getting into the text that the European investment facility should in particular be used for projects contributing to combating climate change, such as local public transport, electric vehicles and the Yasuni-ITT project in Ecuador ('Keep the oil underground'). All in all, 10 out of the 16 green/EFA amendments were adopted. Unfortunately, we lost all amendments which referred sceptically to the recently concluded free trade agreements and the association agreements under negotiation, and which warn against the risks of weakening the existing fragile regional integration efforts. Finally, our amendment asking for the phasing-out of mega-energy projects that heavily damage the environment was rejected, too.

José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra, (PPE), in writing. – (ES) In view of the fact that some of the expressions included in paragraph 34, introduced by the opinion of the Committee on Development, are so ambiguous that they could be interpreted as being somewhat complacent regarding something as repulsive as abortion, the Spanish delegation of the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) has

asked the group for a separate vote on that paragraph, in order to make it crystal clear that it is opposed to any initiative aimed at infringing the inalienable rights of the most vulnerable.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The European Union and Latin America have been developing a strong strategic partnership for years. The Union is the main investor in Latin America, its second largest trading partner and its main donor of development aid. The ultimate goal is to create a Euro-Latin American global interregional partnership area by 2015, in the areas of politics, economics, trade and social and cultural affairs, intended to ensure sustainable development in both regions.

In this context, I would stress the importance, first of all, of resuming negotiations on the EU-Mercosur Association Agreement, which will surely be the most ambitious biregional agreement ever. I also welcome the trade partnership agreements between the European Union and Central America and with the Andean Community, as well as the deepening of the existing Association Agreements with Mexico and Chile.

Nevertheless, it is regrettable that such agreements could affect internal EU production in those very sectors, especially in the outermost regions, which face permanent difficulties. It is also regrettable that adequate compensation for these regions has not been found at Union level. I voted for this report because I consider a partnership between these two regions of the globe essential, as it will bring mutual advantages in the political, economic and social spheres.

Motion for a joint resolution RC-B7-0233/2010

Elena Oana Antonescu (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) The resolution voted on today expresses the European Parliament's concern about the Canadian authorities retaining the visa requirement for Romanian, Bulgarian and Czech citizens, and it calls for this requirement to be waived as soon as possible.

Retaining the visa requirement for citizens from these Member States violates the principle of freedom of movement, creating unjustified discrepancies and inequalities. European Union citizens must enjoy equal and fair treatment.

Although the EU-Canada Summit held in Prague in 2009 reaffirmed the partners' common objective of ensuring the freedom of movement of persons in complete security between the EU and Canada, it is now 2010 and nothing has changed.

I firmly believe that, in the near future, the Canadian authorities will make every effort to waive these visas. Along with my fellow Members of the European Parliament, I will continue the actions already initiated to allow Romanian, Bulgarian and Czech citizens to travel freely as soon as possible.

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D), *in writing*. – I voted for this resolution, as I believe that the ongoing negotiations towards a comprehensive economic trade agreement could strengthen EU-Canada relations. It is expected that the forthcoming EU-Canada Summit would focus on reinforcement of the political relationship between the two partners, in particular addressing such shared challenges as negotiations on a comprehensive economic trade agreement, foreign and security challenges, a coordinated response to the financial and economic crisis as also climate change and energy. As the EU and Canada are committed to build a low-carbon global economy that is safe and sustainable, also to invest in clean energy technologies and become the leaders in green job creation in order the capacity to adapt to the impacts of climate change would be strengthened.

Corina Crețu (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) Citizens of three EU Member States still require visas to enter Canada. The Romanians and Bulgarians have been joined by the Czechs, who have had the compulsory visa requirement reimposed on them due to the large influx of Roma. In this situation closer cooperation is needed, on the one hand, between EU Member States in order to resolve the Roma community's problems and, on the other hand, between Member States and Canada in order to create the most effective and transparent system possible for providing information about the conditions for granting visas, so as to reduce the refusal rate. At the same time, Canada's asylum system needs to be reviewed. In fact, in this respect, the resolution's merit lies in that it makes a direct request to the Canadian side to take action in waiving the compulsory visa requirement.

Ioan Enciu (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) Canada is one of the European Union's oldest partners, and this year's summit is important in order to continue and consolidate this close bilateral cooperation in every area. I voted for the joint resolution because it reflects in a concise and objective manner the positive prospect of our future cooperation.

Guaranteeing reciprocity in bilateral relations is one of the European Union's basic principles. I hope that, in the near future, Canada will waive the visa requirements for Romanian, Czech and Bulgarian citizens, thereby ensuring fair and equal treatment for all European Union citizens. At the same time, I wish to welcome the measures which have been taken so far aimed at signing an EU-Canada trade agreement and I hope that this year's meeting will give the necessary impetus to finalise it.

Bearing in mind the current economic situation and state of the climate, I must emphasise the need for close cooperation in order to identify alternatives to the traditional resources for producing energy, which will respect the particular features of each state, as both the EU and Canada are involved in developing and using low-carbon technologies. At the same time, cooperation must also be promoted in the energy, climate and maritime sectors in the Arctic region.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Canada constitutes a reliable and important partner for the European Union for historical and cultural reasons, because of ethnic and political affinities, and because our civilisations share values and points of reference. A comprehensive economic trade agreement with Canada could make a positive contribution to deepening the already excellent relations between the EU and Canada. Although difficulties have arisen in this relationship, specifically as regards fisheries, security and immigration, the truth is that, in comparison with other countries, the EU-Canada relationship is stable and profitable for both partners. I hope that this trust relationship lasts a long time and that both sides of the North Atlantic continue to be peaceful and prosperous.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) I note that the partnership between Canada and the European Union is one of our oldest and closest, dating back to 1959, and that the current negotiations towards a comprehensive economic trade agreement aim to further strengthen EU-Canada relations. I would stress that in 2010 Canada holds the chairmanship of the G8 group of countries and will be hosting the next G20 Summit. I therefore warmly welcome the Commission statement in which progress in the negotiations on a comprehensive economic trade agreement is cited as fundamental to EU-Canada economic relations. In this regard, I believe that the EU-Canada Summit in Brussels on 5 May 2010 offers a good opportunity to speed up those negotiations. In particular, I welcome the intention to launch a major reform of Canada's fisheries management system, also involving the North Atlantic Fisheries Organisation.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (FR) This text is very much in favour of the negotiations initiated by the Commission with a view to securing a global economic and trade agreement between the EU and Canada. This agreement will be negotiated behind the backs of European citizens despite the fact it will have a significant impact on their daily lives in the following areas: the dismantling of public services; the superiority of the right of investors to protect their profits over that of states to protect the general interest; the downgrading of workers' rights; and the restriction of access to health services, water, education and culture. The Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, the European Conservatives and Reformists and the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament propose backing and even speeding up this policy and this glaring denial of democracy. I completely oppose it.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Canada has a history of partnership with the EU. It is therefore natural that over the years this relationship has deepened and improved. The comprehensive economic trade agreement is going to be approached in a very special way at this summit, in the hope that these negotiations are successful, because the agreement is fundamental to EU-Canada economic relations. There are still other relevant issues between the EU and Canada, such as Union aid, in particular to Haiti, questions relating to fisheries, and environmental concerns. We cannot forget that the Treaty of Lisbon has given this House new powers with regard to negotiating international agreements: Parliament must now be involved at all stages of negotiations.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) I have voted in favour of the joint motion for a resolution on the EU-Canada Summit, held today, as I think that it is important not only to maintain relations at a high level, but also to deepen and improve them further. In particular, the planned joint action for the introduction of a bank levy or financial transaction tax at a global level should also be emphasised in this context.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – The resolution was carried with a large majority. I abstained because of the wording in paragraph 6 on Roma people justifying Canada's restrictive visa policy against Bulgaria, Romania and the Czech Republic. However, the Verts/ALE Group was successful in getting the following in the resolution regarding bluefin tuna and CITES: 'expresses its disappointment about the position

of the Canadian Government at the most recent conference of CITES parties with regard to the extension of CITES Appendix 1 for bluefin tuna'.

Alf Svensson (PPE), in writing. – (SV) When the European Parliament voted on the resolution setting priorities for the forthcoming summit between the EU and Canada, I was among the minority that voted against the proposal. The text is largely sound, but it contains two paragraphs that I simply cannot support. Paragraph 2 states that one of the priority topics to be discussed at the summit should be 'the issue of introducing a bank levy or a transaction tax at global level'. I strongly oppose this type of levy or tax on international transactions. In my opinion, there are numerous other issues within the economic sphere that it would be better to give priority to during the summit.

Furthermore, I am concerned about the wording in paragraph 6, which states that Parliament 'notes that the visa requirement for Czech citizens has been introduced by the Canadian Government in response to an influx of Roma people into Canada'. This may be the reason why Canada has done this, but, as I see it, there is no reason whatsoever for us as Europeans to support it or even mention it in an EU text. As these two passages were included in the resolution and the request to delete them was, unfortunately, not supported by the majority, I voted against the resolution as a whole.

Motion for a resolution (B7-0243/2010)

Elena Oana Antonescu (PPE), in writing. – (RO) The European Parliament has demonstrated through today's vote that it is receptive to signing a new agreement on the processing and transfer of financial messaging data as part of the Terrorist Finance Tracking Programme. It has also reiterated that any new agreement in this area must comply with the new legal framework introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon.

The fight against terrorism is still a priority for the EU, and productive cooperation with the US, which includes activities such as exchanging data and information, is an important condition for averting terrorist attacks in future.

I believe that it is vital for this exchange of data to be strictly limited to information requested for combating terrorism, with any transfer of bulk data marking a departure from the principles underlying European legislation and practices. This is why I have used today's resolution to request the Commission and Council explicitly to raise this issue in an appropriate manner as part of the negotiations with the US due to take place in the near future, and to examine, along with our US partners, the means of establishing a procedure that is legally transparent and viable, with the aim of authorising the transfer and extraction of the relevant data.

Sophie Auconie (PPE), in writing. – (FR) I voted in favour of the joint resolution on SWIFT, which concerns the transfer of Europeans' banking data to the United States as part of the fight against terrorism. Following the warnings issued by the European Parliament a few weeks ago, the negotiation process is now on the right track. The European Parliament will now play a part in this, in accordance with the procedures laid down by the Treaty of Lisbon. The objective is to achieve a good balance between effectively protecting our fellow citizens from terrorist risks and respecting individual rights. In my view, the negotiation mandate presented to the Council today by Parliament supports this view.

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D), in writing. – I supported this resolution, since it is important to have an agreement which would help both Europe and the United States strengthen the fight against terrorism in the interests of the security of the citizens, without undermining the rule of law. Fundamental principles still need to be laid down by the EU stating how it will generally cooperate with the US for counter-terrorism purposes. Therefore it goes under the responsibility of the Commission and the Council to explore ways of establishing a transparent and legally sound procedure for the authorisation of the transfer and extraction of relevant data as well as for the conduct and supervision of data exchanges. Such steps are to be taken in full compliance with the principles of necessity and proportionality and with full respect for fundamental rights requirements under EU law, which would make it possible for relevant European legislation to become fully applicable.

Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D), in writing. – (LT) We must strive to enhance transatlantic cooperation in the areas of justice, freedom and security within a context of respect for human rights and civil liberties. A system for protecting personal data must be implemented transparently and unequivocally. European legal requirements for the fair, proportionate and lawful processing of personal information are of paramount importance and must always be upheld. Currently targeted data exchange is impossible. Solutions should include restricting the scope of the transferred data and listing the types of data that the designated providers are able to filter and extract, as well as the types of data which may be included in a transfer. Therefore, it is

particularly important to urge the Council and the Commission to explore ways of establishing a transparent and legally sound procedure for authorising the transfer and extraction of relevant data as well as for executing and monitoring data exchange operations. Any agreement between the EU and the US must include strict implementation and supervision safeguards on the day-to-day extraction of, access to and use by the US authorities of all data transferred to them under the agreement. There should be an appropriate EU-appointed authority to monitor the implementation of these measures.

Sebastian Valentin Bodu (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) As a national state, Romania has supported the adoption of the SWIFT agreement. However, the European Parliament considered that the first version of the agreement negotiated by the representatives of the Commission and the US Administration breached the rights of European citizens whose data was processed in bulk rather than only on a specific basis when suspicions were aroused. It is important for the new agreement, negotiated recently in Washington between representatives of the EU and the US Congress, to address the European Parliament's concerns. There is always the risk that the new version of the agreement will be rejected too, if it continues to contravene the European Charter of Human Rights.

The European Parliament is aware that this agreement is important even for Europeans' security. As a result, it is becoming clear that MEPs' objections relate to the content rather than form of the agreement. The European Parliament has acquired greater decision-making powers through the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon. It is the norm for this institution to exercise its own prerogatives and to monitor the interests of the European Union's citizens. However, as long as the spirit of the views expressed by the European legislative are going to be preserved in the future version of the agreement, it will be adopted. The fight against terrorism and the rapid detection of suspicious bank transfers remain as much as ever at the top of the EU's list of priorities.

Françoise Castex (S&D), *in writing*. – (FR) Following the rejection of the SWIFT agreement by the European Parliament in February 2010, a new agreement must be negotiated between the European Union and the United States for the transfer of bank data in the context of the fight against terrorism. By rejecting the agreement in February, we MEPs refused to allow the continuation of the massive, uncontrolled transfer of data to the United States Treasury Department. I voted for this resolution today in order to influence the new mandate that the European Commission will have to negotiate a new agreement with the United States. Basically, we are asking for the 'bulk' transfer of personal data to be reconsidered so that it is carried out in a more targeted way, so that legal redress is provided for, so that data is kept for the shortest time possible and so that data exchanges are performed on a reciprocal basis. The issue of the protection of personal data is an important one for the European Parliament. Therefore, we have been very vigilant as regards the issue of transferring air passenger data. We will protect the fundamental rights of our fellow citizens all the way.

Proinsias De Rossa (S&D), *in writing*. – I supported the resolution on the new Commission recommendation to the Council to authorise the opening of negotiations with the United States on the transfer of financial messaging data to combat terrorism. Under the new provisions of the Lisbon Treaty, the interim agreement between the European Union and the USA, signed in November 2009, required the consent of the European Parliament. I voted against that agreement, which was blocked by Parliament out of concern for the privacy rights of European citizens and companies, put at risk by unregulated bulk data-sharing arrangements. Terrorism has to be fought decisively, but the means employed cannot be allowed to create an environment of insecurity for citizens' rights which is the very objective of terror attacks in the first place. Any new agreement needs to be subordinated to fundamental principles such as a strict limitation of exchanges to necessary counter-terrorism purposes and a European authority has to ensure judicial oversight and respect for fundamental rights requirements under EU law. The agreement needs to be limited in duration and liable for immediate termination should any obligation not be met.

Nikolaos Chountis (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (EL) I voted against this particular motion for a resolution, because it does not reject the mass exchange of data with the US and other countries within the context of the so-called fight against terrorism. Nor does it promote the need for an internationally binding agreement between the EU and the US on a framework for the exchange of information for the purpose of imposing the law. Finally because, as the European Parliament will need to approve the agreement drafted, it is unacceptable for even unofficial negotiations to have started without its full and equitable participation.

Carlos Coelho (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted against the interim agreement signed between the EU and the United States on the processing and transfer of financial data on European citizens, not only because it is manifestly bad owing to the fact that it calls into question respect for the principles of necessity and proportionality, as well as the integrity and security of European financial data, but also because Parliament

was denied the chance to properly exercise its prerogatives. I believe in the need to enhance transatlantic cooperation in all relevant areas, specifically in the area of freedom, security and justice, but this can only happen if there is absolute respect for fundamental principles, such as proportionality, necessity and reciprocity. I must, at this juncture, compliment both the Commission and the Council on their new position regarding cooperation with Parliament. I hope that together we succeed in establishing the basic principles that must orientate and facilitate future cooperation between the EU and the United States on fighting terrorism. I look forward to the conclusions of the visit of Parliament's delegation to Washington, and hope that here too we will be able to see the start of a new chapter.

Ioan Enciu (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) I voted in favour of this resolution and I must reiterate that EU-US cooperation in the fight against terrorism, in the same way as the signing of a specific agreement between the EU and US in this area, is of crucial importance. This agreement must be permanently on Parliament's radar. The Council and Commission must keep Europe's legislative body informed during every stage of the negotiation and signing of this agreement. The European Parliament has expressed its stance on this matter on a number of occasions.

Another key aspect of the resolution stipulates that any data transfer request must be approved by a European judiciary authority. The data transfer must be justified and take place in a transparent manner. Citizens must have their rights guaranteed, such as being allowed to have access to, amend and delete data, as well as receiving compensation and damages in the event of any violation of their privacy.

I wish to stress the need to find a solution for restricting data transfers, which will only allow data to be exchanged for persons suspected of terrorism. It is important that the principles of reciprocity and proportionality in the agreement are respected and that it is cancelled immediately in the case of non-fulfilment of the obligations which have been assumed. I firmly believe that the JHA Council will take into consideration the recommendations featuring in this resolution.

Edite Estrela (S&D), *in writing*. – (PT) I voted for this resolution because I believe that any agreement between the EU and the United States in this area must also include strict safeguards on implementation and supervision, to be monitored by an appropriate EU-appointed authority. Only in this way can it be ensured that these data transfers do not constitute a departure from the principles underpinning EU legislation and practice.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) International legal cooperation and transatlantic cooperation are fundamental to the fight against terrorism. That is why the existence of a long-term agreement between the European Union and the United States dealing with the prevention of terrorism financing should be welcomed. Nonetheless, such an agreement cannot put the privacy of the transactions of natural and legal persons at risk. For that reason, European legal requirements for the fair, necessary, proportionate and lawful processing of personal information are of paramount importance and must therefore continue to apply in all circumstances.

The EU must lay down the fundamental principles governing the forms of general cooperation with the US for counterterrorism purposes and the mechanisms for passing on information on transactions by its citizens that are considered suspicious or irregular. An EU/US legal-cooperation agreement dealing with the prevention of terrorism financing must be signed, ensuring that personal data transfers respect the rights and freedoms of European citizens and companies, and that their security is protected, without putting the privacy of their transactions at unnecessary risk.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Under the terms of the Interim Agreement signed between the US and the EU, I recognised the need for transatlantic cooperation in the fight against international crime and terrorism. I stressed that this cooperation should be established on the basis of mutual trustworthiness and respect for the principles of reciprocity, proportionality and respect for citizens' rights. Security, however, should not override but rather be compatible with other rights, freedoms and guarantees. It is not acceptable that the police in Portugal can only access the bank details of a person on the basis of a warrant but that millions of pieces of data can be sent to be interpreted and analysed by the US police without any judicial control. I therefore voted against the Interim Agreement. Nonetheless, the new motion for a resolution in question demonstrates a new position from the Commission and Council in terms of collaboration with Parliament. I hope that future EU-US cooperation in the fight against terrorism is based on the principles of proportionality, necessity and reciprocity.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (PT) Following the significant defeat of the EU's draft SWIFT agreement with the United States, a resolution has come back to us that is worthy of our strongest criticism because it accepts the idea of a major exchange of data in the area of the so-called 'fight against terrorism'.

Many specialists have stated that the protection of rights, freedoms and guarantees are not ensured under such an agreement. The so-called 'SWIFT agreement' and the framework agreement on the protection and sharing of data constitute a threat, not a guarantee of security.

There is a different understanding of data protection, competencies, legislation and privacy where EU-US relations are concerned. These issues need to be clarified before the Commission is given a new mandate.

Nevertheless, the majority of this House has given the Commission a truly blank cheque by setting ambiguous limitations such as 'proportionality' or 'reciprocity'. This opens a veritable Pandora's box against liberty and promotes the removal of functions from the Member States, such as the decision over transferral of data about their citizens, which is being given to a European 'judicial public authority'.

There is no possibility of 'proportionality' and 'reciprocity' in the case of bulk data storage and transfer, since it involves a series of uncontrollable dangers, specifically relating to who has access, how the data are used and for what purpose.

Sylvie Guillaume (S&D), *in writing*. – (FR) I voted in favour of the European Commission having a strengthened mandate to negotiate with the US authorities on the SWIFT issue. Indeed, we must receive assurances that two important reservations – the question of bulk data transfer and the opportunity for Europeans to have legal redress in the United States – are lifted. That is why I believe that this mandate should be substantially changed before it is adopted, otherwise at the end of the negotiations I would again be compelled to vote against this agreement, as I have already done in the past.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (FR) I am voting against this text, which favours the possibility of an agreement between Europe and the United States on the transfer of SWIFT data. It is impracticable, under the current conditions, to filter the data that will be sent to the US authorities. The US authorities will thus have access to a great deal of private data sent as an urgent measure as a result of a terrorist threat that, while genuine, is still being exploited for imperial purposes. Moreover, this text does not require reciprocity on the part of the United States, but merely dares to 'point out' submissively that it would be normal. To turn Europe into a vassal of the United States is completely unacceptable. There has never been a better time for Europe to assert its independence from the United States.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The fight against terrorism is a concern for the EU, as well as the rest of the democratic world. Any mechanism that may help discover possible attacks is essential to success in this fight. The SWIFT agreement is a very powerful instrument in the fight against terrorism, as it gives access to privileged financial information regarding sums transferred between countries. The renegotiation of this agreement with the United States is a unique opportunity for the EU to make an effective contribution to discovering new terrorists and potential attacks. At the moment there is great desire to cooperate on the US side: it is promoting an agreement that effectively protects the transmitted data and has the maximum amount of reciprocity possible.

Willy Meyer (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (ES) I voted against this joint resolution on behalf of the Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and the European Conservatives and Reformists Group because the text supports the possibility of reaching an agreement between the 27 Member States and the United States for the transfer of bank data under the pretext of combating terrorism. Under the current conditions, the United States authorities would have access to a large quantity of private data on millions of Europeans. I think that the United States' request is unacceptable and is a threat to the freedoms and rights of European citizens. With this proposal the most conservative forces are trying to hand us over bound hand and foot for US interests without giving a thought to the security or privacy of citizens. The European Parliament cannot allow the civil rights and freedoms of Europeans to be violated for counter-terrorism purposes.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) The motion for a resolution on the negotiations for a new SWIFT agreement contains numerous detailed proposals for how data protection can be improved in future in connection with making financial messaging data available to the United States. That is very much to be welcomed. However, in so doing, it conceals the question of the fundamental necessity of such a massive invasion of privacy. This is clearly simply assumed. However, it is unclear whether we can counter the phenomenon of terrorism effectively in this way. It is also unclear how the calls for more data protection are to be implemented in practice. We know from past experience and common practice that data are used as extensively as possible and often also for profit. I therefore reject the transfer of highly personal data on principle and thus also voted against the motion for a resolution.

Georgios Papanikolaou (PPE), *in writing*. – (EL) I voted today in favour of Parliament's resolution, which was also supported by most of the political groups and which contains Parliament's conditions for the ratification of the new SWIFT agreement and the start of a new round of negotiations with the US. Parliament's objective is to lay down flexible rules for promoting transatlantic cooperation which will help to combat terrorism and create a transmission system in which Union citizens can trust. One of the most sensitive points of negotiation, to which particular attention must be paid, is a reduction in the volume of data transmitted. In order to achieve this, the new agreement will need to include a series of guarantees designed to ensure compliance with European legislation which protects the personal data of European citizens. In addition, as stated in the resolution, it is important for EU citizens to be given a better appeal mechanism, so that they can defend their rights more effectively.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – I abstained on the vote on the Swift resolution (TFTP). It was adopted, however, by a very large majority (no roll-call vote). Our group abstained because our key amendments were rejected, namely Amendment 8 asking for data transfer to be subject to judicial authorisation, and Amendment 9 asking for the Mutual Legal Assistance Agreement (MLAA) to be used for Tracking Finance Terrorist Programme (TFTP) purposes. Other important Verts/ALE amendments were also rejected: EU definition of terrorism instead of the US one, ban on further transfer to third countries or bodies and limits to data retention period. The resolution can be seen nevertheless as a quite strong message in view of the EU-US negotiations for a new TFTP agreement after the rejection (assent procedure) last February of the former one even though in our view the text adopted today is a step backwards in comparison with the Parliament resolution adopted last September.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The fight against terrorism and its financing is an inescapable reality and deserves our full attention, so transatlantic cooperation is imperative. The previous attempt at an agreement between the European Union and the United States on the processing and transfer of data lacked proportionality, reciprocity and transparency.

This motion for a resolution calls for the adoption of a common definition of 'terrorist activity' and a clarification of the concept of 'non-extracted data'. It also reiterates the need to use the principle of necessity to limit the exchange of information, with such exchanges being strictly limited to the period of time necessary for their purpose.

A series of guarantees is now being proposed that is based on European legislative practice and, therefore, offers greater protection for the fundamental rights of citizens. Attempts are being made not only to safeguard the principle of non-discrimination throughout the data-processing procedure, but also to set up a European authority that is capable of receiving and overseeing the United States' requests. I voted for this motion for a resolution because I understand that the foundations have now been laid to allow the start of negotiations that favour the reaching of a balanced agreement between the European Union and the United States.

Motion for a resolution: (B7-0244/2010)

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D), *in writing*. – I supported this resolution. Whereas in our digital age, data protection, the right of informational self-determination, personal rights and the right to privacy have become values that play an ever increasing role and must therefore be protected with special care. In order to protect these rights in an appropriate way it should be ensured that all transfers of personal data from the EU and its Member States to third countries for security purposes are based on international agreements with the status of legislative acts. Even more the use of PNR data should be based on a single set of principles that would serve as a basis for agreements with third countries and must be in line with European data protection standards.

Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D), *in writing*. – (LT) I agree with the proposals set out in this European Parliament resolution that, before adopting a new legal measure, we must assess the impact on privacy based on proportionality, since it is essential to evaluate whether existing legal measures are insufficient. Technology and mobility are essential features of today's world, and so personal rights and the right to privacy have become values that we must ensure and guard closely. I agree with Parliament's calls for an examination of Advance Passenger Information and Passenger Name Record measures; while combating crime we must at the same time ensure that current measures are proportionate and do not violate people's fundamental rights. Thus, the transfer of passenger data must comply with EU data protection standards, and data must only be used in connection with specific crimes or threats. Given that Passenger Name Record data is used for security purposes, the conditions for the transfer of data must be laid down in international agreements with the EU, ensuring legal certainty for EU citizens and airlines. In new EU agreements, we must also lay down appropriate

supervision and control measures that would help us coordinate the transfer and use of Passenger Name Record data.

Carlos Coelho (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The need to reach a balanced agreement with the United States on the transfer of Passenger Name Record (PNR) data has been a constant concern in recent years. The current state of the negotiations still does not reflect the existence of true legal protection for data in the United States, as these data can be kept for years after the security checks have been carried out and there is no legal protection for anyone who is not a US citizen. The agreements reached with Australia and Canada are more acceptable because more respect is given to the principle of proportionality, as access to the data is limited in terms of type, time and amount by judicial controls. It is only through a consistent approach and the establishment of general principles and rules regarding the use of PNR data that we can bring an end to this impasse and move on to conclude any international agreements in this field, whether with these three countries or with the avalanche of similar requests that will soon come. I support the joint proposal to postpone the vote on Parliament's consent, in the hope that with a little more time the negotiations might meet the concerns that Parliament has always expressed.

Diogo Feio (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The debate on the transfer of the personal data of passengers on transatlantic flights by airlines has been a significant sore point in the European Union's relations with the United States, Australia and Canada, and it captures the essence of one of the dilemmas of our times.

On the one hand, nobody doubts the particular need to protect the privacy and confidentiality of every citizen's data. On the other hand, few people would deny that we live in a time in which threats to people's security require, not just better information exchange between police authorities in crime fighting, but also better processing of this information in order to make it more suitable for fighting organised crime and, particularly, terrorism. I hope that the postponement in the process imposed by the European Parliament will enable a fair balance between these values to be reached.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) The current state of the negotiations on data transfers still does not ensure effective legal protection of the data in the United States, as they can be retained for years after the security checks have been carried out and there is no legal protection for anyone who is not a US citizen. I therefore support the joint proposal to postpone the vote on Parliament's consent, in the hope that more time may allow the negotiations to meet the concerns that this House has expressed on this matter.

Sylvie Guillaume (S&D), *in writing*. – (FR) I supported this resolution in order to demonstrate my concerns over the use of PNR data (data that is basically purely commercial) as part of the negotiation of agreements with the United States and Australia (for the purposes of fighting crime). Indeed, I believe that, before signing any agreement on the transfer of data to third parties, it would be wiser to first work on the development of a general framework on this type of agreement, defining minimum conditions, such as legal limitation, a solid legal basis, data protection standards and a restricted retention period. We must also defend the right of European citizens to have incorrect data deleted and obtain reciprocity for European access to our partners' data. That is why I hope that the discussions continue.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon (GUE/NGL), *in writing*. – (FR) I shall vote in favour of this text. It proposes the rejection of the current agreements with the United States and Australia on the transmission of what is known as the PNR data of European air passengers. Transmitting such data undermines the freedom of movement of European citizens. The group to which I belong has some experience of this: one of the members of staff, a human rights activist, has been forbidden outright from visiting or flying over United States territory after having been included on a blacklist for potential terrorists. This is the kind of arbitrary restriction of freedoms to which agreements of this type expose us. Terrorist acts do occur. They must be combated. However, they must never be used as a pretext for repressing fundamental freedoms.

Nuno Melo (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Passenger Name Records (PNR) are another weapon in the fight against terrorism. Under the Treaty of Lisbon, Parliament is once again called upon to take part in the negotiations on a new PNR agreement between the EU, the US, Australia and Canada. As a great advocate of the fight against terrorism, the EU is prepared to negotiate any agreement that may be effective in this fight. The Union will not, however, endanger civil liberties and fundamental rights.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) For the reasons already mentioned in connection with the SWIFT agreement, I oppose the transfer of data, in particular if the constructive use of these data cannot really be demonstrated or if the misuse of the data cannot be ruled out. The motion for a resolution refers to the possible dangers in detail and recommends postponement of the vote on the request for consent on the

agreements with the US and Australia on passenger name record data. For this reason, I voted in favour of the motion.

Georgios Papanikolaou (PPE), in writing. – (EL) The creation of a single model for passenger records which will be applied in PNR agreements with all interested countries and the postponement of the vote on the request for approval of agreements with the US and Australia would appear to be the best solution. A rushed approach which might result in a negative note on PNR agreements with the US and Australia would stop the flow of data and that might result in landing rights being cancelled, with disastrous consequences for the airlines. The motion for a joint resolution tabled today by all the groups in Parliament, which I too voted in favour of, rightly states that PNR agreements must take account of minimum specifications which are non-negotiable. The primary objective is passenger security, but that cannot be achieved at the expense of respect for privacy and protection for personal data. Restricting data collection, which must always be in keeping with the principle of proportionality and necessity, is of crucial importance to passenger data transmission.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), in writing. – I voted in favour of this resolution. The PNR resolution was adopted by a very large majority and with our support. It calls for a postponement of the vote on the assent on the Passenger Name Record (PNR) agreements with the US, Canada and Australia until the strongest guarantees have been obtained on data protection, period of retention, limitations to the purpose, parliamentary scrutiny, judicial control, right of access and redress.

Motion for a joint resolution (RC-B7-0238/2010)

Zigmantas Balčytis (S&D), in writing. – I did support this resolution as raised many concerns both in the European Parliament and outside it. Cyanide has been recognised as a highly toxic chemical used in the gold-mining industry and which qualifies as a main pollutant and can have catastrophic and irreversible impact on human health and environment. This chemical has caused the largest ecological disaster in the history of Central Europe. It is unfortunate that no clear rules are being established at the EU level and cyanide continues to be used in gold mining putting the workers and environment at a great risk. I believe that only a complete ban on cyanide mining technologies can protect our water resources and ecosystems against cyanide pollution.

Elena Băsescu (PPE), in writing. – (RO) I am not an MEP from Hungary, defending the interests of that country and, therefore, supporting Mr Áder, nor am I employed by an NGO. I am an MEP from Romania, defending my own country's interests.

As such, I feel duty-bound to ask for a study to be carried out on the impact of using this technology before calling for the use of cyanide technologies in mining to be banned.

It was the duty of those who tabled the resolution to offer an alternative which would be economically feasible and less toxic than the option on which they have called for a complete ban.

Following the statement made by the European Commission's representative, Cecilia Malmström, two weeks ago and the meeting with the representatives of the local communities (including the mayors from the towns in the Roşia Montană area), I have come to the view that an in-depth study must be carried out and all the existing options examined before imposing a complete ban on this technology.

We must consider all the following aspects before making a decision: environmental protection, job creation, attracting investment, as well as the lack of alternative activities other than mining for the population of the entire region.

Finally, I voted against this resolution and submitted two amendments as this resolution reflects the viewpoint and interests of a single party.

George Becali (NI), in writing. – (RO) I support the amendment aimed at removing paragraph 4 contained in the draft resolution voted on today. I therefore voted for this amendment. However, I voted against the draft resolution for a number of reasons. We cannot ask the European Commission to ban the use of cyanide technology in gold mining for some Member States, such as Romania, which has major untapped resources. The Roşia Montană project deserves to receive support in view of its economic and social impact and its full compliance with the restrictions intended to protect the environment and archaeological sites. As an MEP, I support the opportunity being offered to this area with all its problems. I firmly believe that responsible

national government authorities will negotiate a level of licence fees which can revitalise and protect the Roşia Montană area with its gold deposits. As a Member State, Romania is entitled to mine its deposits in safe conditions ensuring protection for the environment, while also reaping the economic and social benefits commensurate with the natural assets it has.

Jean-Luc Bennahmias (ALDE), in writing. – (FR) Cyanide is an extremely dangerous chemical used by the mining industry, despite the risks that it poses to the environment and human health. Ten years ago, more than 100 000 cubic metres of cyanide-contaminated water were accidentally discharged into the river system from a gold mine reservoir in Romania. This spill is responsible for one of the worst ever environmental disasters in Central Europe. For several years toxic substances there have endangered the ecological balance, the food chain and basic human requirements for the water from these rivers. There is nothing to stop an accident such as this from happening again. In Europe there are several mining projects using cyanide. A new disaster could happen at any time. It is simply a matter of time and of human negligence. Cyanide mining employs only a small workforce, but poses the risk of real environmental disasters. European environmental legislation enshrines the precautionary principle and requires the prevention and monitoring of water pollution. I therefore voted in favour of Parliament's resolution calling for a ban on the use of cyanide in the gold mines of the EU.

Nikolaos Chountis (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (EL) I endorse and I voted in favour of this specific motion for a resolution, because the question of the use of cyanide mining technologies is extremely serious and requires immediate and decisive action, without prevarication. To date, the Commission has taken a very relaxed approach to the issue and that must change at once. This issue concerns numerous countries, the health of European citizens and environmental protection. The cases which have resulted from and consequences of the use of cyanide in mining, as in Romania and other countries, are well documented and extremely worrying. When I asked the Commission about the recent decision to create cyanide-based gold mines in Bulgaria, the Commission's reply increased my fears. Unfortunately, it would appear at present that cyanide may be used in northern Greece in three investment programmes by foreign companies. Finally, the Commission should propose a full ban on the use of cyanide in the EU within the next six months, so that it can be applied by the end of 2012 at the latest. Also, all Member States should undertake to ban the use of cyanide, as Hungary did recently.

Marielle De Sarnez (ALDE), in writing. – (FR) The European Parliament has adopted a resolution in favour of a general ban on the use of cyanide mining technologies by the end of 2011. The environmental consequences of cyanide pollution are transnational, and therefore this ban must apply at European level. For example, in January 2000, more than 100 000 cubic metres of cyanide-contaminated water escaped from a gold mine in Romania and polluted the rivers and streams of Romania, Hungary, Serbia and Bulgaria. We hope that the Member States will stop supporting mining projects using cyanide-based technologies. At the same time, the Commission will have to encourage the industrial redevelopment of these areas with financial support for green substitute industries, renewable energies and tourism.

Lena Ek, Marit Paulsen, Olle Schmidt and Cecilia Wikström (ALDE), in writing. – (SV) In the Swedish gold mining industry, cyanide is used in closed systems in an environmentally sustainable way. It is degraded before water is released from the system and the best available technology (BAT) provides limit values that are well below internationally agreed safety levels. High safety standards prevent the cyanide from having any impact on the environment. These mines help to provide employment in sparsely populated areas, and as yet it has not been possible to develop alternative technology. Research and development should be encouraged in this area too, but in the current climate a ban would be disastrous from both a social and an economic perspective.

Göran Färm, Anna Hedh, Olle Ludvigsson and Marita Ulvskog (S&D), in writing. – (SV) We Social Democrats are working on a broad scale to get hazardous substances in food, the environment, manufacturing and so on phased out. Cyanide is one of these hazardous substances and the handling of cyanide is regulated for obvious reasons. In Sweden, all cyanide in mining is handled in closed processes and in a way which is considered to be safe. In other parts of the EU, the handling of the substance is not as strictly controlled.

We chose to abstain in the final vote because we cannot support a hasty outright ban that would also penalise mining in those countries in which the handling of cyanide is considered to be safe. However, we would like the Commission to take immediate action to make processes involving the use of cyanide safe, to ensure that there are closed processes in all Member States and in the long term to phase out the use of cyanide in production by means of a ban.

Diogo Feio (PPE), in writing. – (PT) The particular toxicity of the use of cyanide and the effects of its use in mining, both for those using it and for fauna and flora surrounding the mines, demand a move towards the prohibition of its use in mining, for fear of increased numbers of cases of contamination, with disastrous consequences for people and the environment. Nonetheless, given the current needs of the mining industry, this prohibition cannot be immediate, so measures to minimise the environmental impact of cyanide use must be studied and introduced.

José Manuel Fernandes (PPE), in writing. – (PT) I voted for this resolution because it proposes a general ban on the use of cyanide mining technologies in the European Union by the end of 2011, and because I understand that a ban constitutes, at the moment, the only reliable way of protecting our water resources and ecosystems from the pollution caused by the use of cyanide in mines. I would stress the need to oblige operating companies to take out insurance to cover compensation for damage and all remedial costs incurred in restoring a site to its original ecological and chemical status in the event of an accident or malfunction.

Françoise Grossetête (PPE), in writing. – (FR) I voted in favour of this text and am satisfied with the outcome of the vote because cyanide is an extremely toxic chemical that has potentially catastrophic and irreversible effects on the environment and human health. Cyanide also qualifies as a main pollutant under the Water Framework Directive (WFD).

Need I remind anyone that, in January 2000, more than 100 000 cubic metres of cyanide-contaminated water escaped from a gold mine in Baia Mare, Romania, and contaminated the Someş, Tisza and Danube rivers? It killed the fish and living organisms, and drinking water has been permanently contaminated in Romania, Hungary, Serbia and Bulgaria.

Need I remind anyone that this incident is referred to as a 'second Chernobyl' due to the devastating impact it has had on the environment?

If we fail to adopt, in a simple joint motion for a resolution, a firm position in favour of a complete ban on the use of cyanide mining technologies in the European Union, then the message that we are sending out to the European Commission becomes meaningless for the future.

Cătălin Sorin Ivan (S&D), in writing. – (RO) There are times when environmental well-being, protection of natural heritage and human welfare generally manage to gain the upper hand even over economic and partisan interests. This is highlighted by this resolution.

The European Parliament has managed to show today that it defends, first and foremost, the general interests and welfare of people. The use of cyanide technologies in mining poses a risk which we cannot afford to take as the effects are irreversible.

However, I support the idea of encouraging industrial reconversion in areas where mining based on cyanide technologies has been banned, by providing sufficient financial support for 'clean' industrial sectors, as well as for renewable energy and tourism.

Tunne Kelam (PPE), in writing. – I voted in favour of this resolution as I believe that the use of cyanide in mining should be banned in Europe. Cyanide is a highly toxic chemical used in gold mining. It poses a serious threat to the environment and human health. The severe accidents in the past have proven that cyanide contamination can have an irreversible impact both on the environment and on human health. In this regard I strongly support the cause of banning this type of mining in the shortest possible term to ensure that no one, today or in the future, has to be exposed to the devastating impact of cyanide in mining.

Marian-Jean Marinescu (PPE), in writing. – (RO) I voted against the resolution on banning the use of cyanide mining technologies by the end of 2011 for a number of reasons. Halting current mining projects using cyanide technologies would deal a severe blow to the Member States using this technology (Finland, Sweden, Spain, Romania, Bulgaria and Greece) and to the Member States which produce cyanides (Belgium, the UK, Czech Republic and Germany). Europe would become 100% dependent on importing gold, a metal used in Europe's precious metals industry, as well as in the electronics sector. Approximately 87% of cyanide production is used in other industrial sectors outside the mining industry, such as the production of vitamins, jewellery, adhesives, electronic components for computers, fireproof insulation materials, cosmetics, nylon, paints, medicines, and so on. There are technologies in the economic sector which pose a hazard to human health and the environment. Cyanide technology is just one of them. Regulations and standards are in place to allow such activities to be carried out in safe conditions, in order to prevent any adverse impact. This

principle applies to mining technology as well. There is legislation in force which must be respected. We do not have the right to ban, but we do have the right to protect.

Nuno Melo (PPE), in writing. – (PT) The EU was very explicit in the objectives set out in the Water Framework Directive regarding the quality of water resources, which must be free of any type of chemical agent. In order for these objectives to be met, a ban on the use of cyanide mining technologies is crucial. We have to replace this technique with environmentally friendly alternatives, as cyanide mining technologies are responsible for more than 30 serious accidents in the last 25 years.

Rareş-Lucian Niculescu (PPE), in writing. – (RO) I voted against this resolution because the 2006 directive which is in force provides maximum protection to the environment and human health, with regard to the use of cyanide technologies in the mining industry. Given the directive's stringent provisions on mining residues and the lack of viable alternatives, there is no need to impose a blanket ban on the use of cyanide technologies for extracting gold.

Raül Romeva i Rueda (Verts/ALE), in writing. – I voted in favour of the final text. The joint motion for resolution was adopted with only one small positive addition (encouraging industrial reconversion in areas where cyanide mining is banned). The attempts to change the call for 'initiating a comprehensive ban' to just doing an impact assessment was rejected by roll-call vote (161/416), and so was the amendment to merely 'consider' a ban (roll-call vote: 246/337). Our joint amendment with the S&D and GUE/NGL Groups to 'propose a ban' with a date when it should be effective was defeated (roll-call vote: 274/309). The final resolution was adopted with 524/54/13 votes (the ALDE Group abstaining, as the change to the impact assessment was not adopted).

Alf Svensson (PPE), in writing. – (SV) In yesterday's vote in the European Parliament on a general ban on the use of cyanide mining technologies in the European Union, like many other Swedish MEPs I voted against the motion for a resolution. Cyanides are toxic and it is extremely important for their use to be kept within the framework of established environmental guidelines and for leaching to be carried out in closed processes. This is standard practice in Europe and minimises the risk of hazardous emissions. An outright ban on the use of cyanide in mining would mean that the gold mines in Europe, including Sweden, would have to close. In my opinion, an outright ban on cyanide-based mining technology would be inadvisable until we have an alternative to cyanide leaching that is technically, economically and environmentally feasible. I therefore voted against the motion for a resolution.

15. Corrections to votes and voting intentions: see Minutes

IN THE CHAIR: MR BUZEK

President

16. Statements by the President

President. – We have been saddened by news of the murder in Mexico of the Finnish international human rights observer Jyri Antero Jaakola. He and Mexican activist Betty Cariño Trujillo, who was accompanying him at the time, were murdered during a mission to monitor the observance of human rights in Mexico. On behalf of the European Parliament, I offer condolences and expressions of sympathy to the victims' families. As we can see, the world we live in still entails sacrifices such as these.

I am sure you are aware that last week I made an official visit to the US. I officially opened Parliament's new Liaison Office with the United States Congress in Washington. I also had many important talks which should contribute to closer cooperation, especially economic cooperation, between the European Union and the United States. We also talked about strategic partnership and about the changes which have taken place in the European Union following the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon. We expect cooperation with the United States to take place on equal terms.

This Sunday, 9 May, is the 60th anniversary of the Schumann Declaration. To mark this event, the European Parliament will open its doors to all those interested on Saturday 8 May in Brussels, and on Sunday in Strasbourg. There will also be ceremonies to commemorate this event in Luxembourg. In Strasbourg, among other visitors we will have one of the Vice-Presidents of the Commission and the French and German Ministers for European Affairs. I, too, will be there, and I would like to encourage all of you to come to Strasbourg this Sunday, in four days' time.

17. Revision of the Treaties – Transitional measures concerning the composition of the European Parliament - Decision not to convene a Convention for the revision of the Treaties with regard to transitional measures concerning the composition of the European Parliament (debate)

President. – The next item is the joint debate on the following:

– the report by Mr Méndez de Vigo on behalf of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs on the draft protocol amending Protocol No 36 on transitional provisions concerning the composition of the European Parliament for the rest of the 2009-2014 parliamentary term: the European Parliament's opinion (Article 48(3) of the EU Treaty) [17196/2009 - C7-0001/2010 – 2009/0813(NLE)] (A7-0115/2010), and

– the report by Mr Méndez de Vigo on behalf of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs on the recommendation on the European Council's proposal not to convene a Convention for the revision of the Treaties with regard to transitional measures concerning the composition of the European Parliament [17196/2009 - C7-0002/2010 – 2009/0814(NLE)] (A7-0116/2010).

Íñigo Méndez de Vigo, rapporteur. – (ES) Mr President, please allow me to begin my speech with a line from Rilke: *'Herr, es ist Zeit. Der Sommer war sehr groß...'*. Rilke was the favourite poet of our recently deceased fellow Member, Dimitris Tsatsos. Some time ago now, on 19 November 1997, Dimitris Tsatsos and I had the honour of submitting the report on the Treaty of Amsterdam to this House.

It was in that very report on the Treaty of Amsterdam that we proposed that any amendment to Treaties be prepared beforehand by a Convention.

We called that the Community method. Indeed, it is that Convention method that was used in preparing the Charter of Fundamental Rights and, above all, the Constitutional Treaty.

I wish to remember Dimitris Tsatsos today in particular, as we are on the threshold of carrying out the first reform of the Treaty of Lisbon, which, in the last analysis, Mr President, is the Constitutional Treaty for which we fought so hard.

That first reform, which is going to consist of the amendment of Protocol (No 36) of the Treaty of Lisbon, is caused by an anomaly because, at the time the elections to this Parliament were held in June last year, the Treaty of Lisbon had not come into force owing to the vicissitudes with which we are all familiar.

Consequently, the last parliamentary elections were held under the Treaty of Nice, which was in force at that time, and said Treaty of Nice provides for the existence of 736 MEPs, as opposed to the 751 provided for in the Treaty of Lisbon.

To complicate matters even further, Mr President, the 1976 Act lays down that an MEP's mandate lasts for five years. This means that we cannot now simply apply the number laid down in the Treaty of Lisbon, namely the 751 MEPs, given that under Lisbon a certain country loses three Members who have been elected and, therefore, cannot leave Parliament during this parliamentary term.

That, Mr President, is why Protocol (No 36) has to be amended in order to enable the Lisbon agreements to come into force, and why during this parliamentary term, 2009-2014, when the amendment of Protocol (No 36) comes into force, this Parliament will, exceptionally, have 754 Members.

That is why, Mr President, the European Council addressed a letter to you asking that, in accordance with Article 48(2) of the Treaty, this Parliament give its opinion on two questions.

The first question is whether or not a Convention is necessary in order to prepare the amendment to Protocol (No 36). The second is whether or not the Heads of State or Government can call an Intergovernmental Conference to amend Protocol (No 36).

Both questions are linked, although they are dealt with in two different reports. I will begin with the calling of an Intergovernmental Conference. As I have said, we are dealing with the political result of applying the Treaty of Lisbon and we are also dealing with a transitional and exceptional solution that will only last for the duration of this parliamentary term. Therefore, that Intergovernmental Conference will confine itself to something that has already been agreed: how to distribute those 18 MEPs among 12 countries.

Consequently, Mr President, there is no debate. I believe that the Intergovernmental Conference can be very quickly called and can even resolve the issue in a single morning, given that the political decision has already been taken.

For that reason, I am going to ask for a 'yes' vote for an Intergovernmental Conference and say that I do not believe that a Convention is required for an issue that has already been resolved. We are in favour of holding the Intergovernmental Conference; we are against calling a Convention.

Diego López Garrido, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – (ES) Mr President, I wish to express my satisfaction at the fact that the European Parliament, through the auspices of my dear colleague and friend, Íñigo Méndez de Vigo, shares the opinion of the European Council in the sense that in order to bring about the proposed change to Protocol (No 36) of the Treaty of Lisbon there is no need to call a Convention, given that we are dealing with a minor change, albeit one that is essential to enable the presence in this Chamber, before the next elections are held, of the number of MEPs that should have been here if the Treaty of Lisbon had been in force.

This particular case is quite paradoxical, because both Mr Méndez de Vigo and I formed part of the Convention that drew up a Constitution for Europe. In this case, the aim is to try and avoid this procedure, given that we are dealing with a very minor change – just one of form, in fact – to the Treaty of Lisbon.

I am delighted that in this way, if Parliament passes the motion put forward by Mr Méndez de Vigo, and after an Intergovernmental Conference has been held and the corresponding ratification procedures have been completed in the 27 parliaments of the European Union Member States, a further 18 MEPs from 12 countries – the United Kingdom, Slovenia, Poland, the Netherlands, Malta, Latvia, Italy, Bulgaria, Sweden, France, Austria and Spain – can come as soon as possible.

Therefore, the citizens of these countries will be even better represented in the European Parliament. That is why I am pleased that this report has been drawn up by Mr Méndez de Vigo and that it has been adopted by the Committee on Constitutional Affairs in the form that he proposed. I also hope that there will be widespread approval here at this plenary session and that we will be able to see these 18 missing MEPs here in Parliament as soon as possible, and that this will be provided for by the Treaty of Lisbon.

Maroš Šefčovič, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, I would like to thank Mr Méndez de Vigo for an excellent report. I am also happy to be able to inform the European Parliament that the Commission adopted a positive opinion on the opening of the IGC that will examine the necessary Treaty changes that would endorse an additional 18 MEPs.

The European Council had requested the opinion of the Commission acting on the proposal from the Spanish Government and, since the Spanish Government's proposal reflects the long-standing political agreement to bring the additional 18 MEPs into office without delay, the Commission has recommended opening an intergovernmental conference as soon as possible.

In line with the Spanish proposal, the Commission has also stressed in its opinion that the IGC should be limited to dealing with the issue of the additional MEPs. I was very glad to see that that report by Mr Méndez de Vigo was supported by a strong majority in the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, and we hope that it will be the case in Parliament's sitting tomorrow.

I would also like to express the hope of the Commission that the limited Treaty changes to be discussed at this IGC will be agreed quickly and the ratification by Member States will allow the additional 18 MEPs to take up their mandate as soon as possible.

Carlo Casini, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I will be very brief since the committee I chair reached a very comprehensive agreement, in line with what has already been said, and so there is no need to make the debate too long-winded.

The problem which arose and was discussed in committee mainly concerned the following: both the Electoral Act of 1976 and the Treaty of Lisbon require Members of this Parliament to be directly elected by the peoples of the various nations. This is a problem for cases in which the electoral system used to elect MEPs for this parliamentary term does not allow entry into Parliament of candidates who did not obtain enough votes to secure a seat, but did obtain enough votes to allow their entry at a later date.

Some electoral systems do allow this, but it appears that others do not. Therefore, if we do not wish to considerably delay the integration of the Members into Parliament, we should have recourse to exceptional, transitional appointment systems, as envisaged by the Council.

Following lengthy discussions, my committee concluded that this is a fair position. We therefore support what has already been said. Indeed, I must say that I personally tabled an amendment proposing the appointment of observers for an interim period prior to the election of the new Members to this Parliament. Although this amendment is still under discussion, we shall have to vote against it – even if it is my amendment – since the compromise amendment provides for the swift, immediate integration of the MEPs into Parliament.

Ramón Jáuregui Atondo, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (ES) Mr President, I would like to begin by saying that the decision we are taking on this occasion is not a light one. Firstly, we are revising the Treaty. Soon after it came into force, we are, for the first time, proposing a revision of the Treaty. This is no light matter.

Secondly, however, what we are doing is restoring, confirming and creating the chance for 18 MEPs, who would have had the right to take their seats if the Treaty had been approved before the elections, to exercise that right. Moreover, we are enabling 12 countries that have the right to rearrange their situation in this Parliament, because they have an agreement with the entire European Union that they should have greater representation than at present, to exercise that right. That is all this is about, but it is an important question.

Nevertheless, the Treaty itself requires that a Convention be held to revise the Treaty. The Council quite reasonably asks us if it is necessary to hold a Convention in order to ratify an agreement reached with all of the EU Member States. Parliament responds that there is no need. There is no need on this occasion.

It therefore mandates the Council to convene an Intergovernmental Conference and to revise the Treaty, thus giving rise to the possibility that the 27 countries ratify the revision, thereby enabling the 18 MEPs to come here and the 12 countries involved to attain their full level of parliamentary representation.

This is what we are dealing with, but there is a problem. To begin with, I would like to acknowledge the fact that we had some difficulty when it came to determining if those who are coming necessarily have to be directly elected for these seats, or if they can be elected in some other way.

I think that this problem that has come up, which must be examined and presented realistically, has been satisfactorily resolved. I wish to thank not only the rapporteur for the report, Mr Méndez de Vigo, but Mr Duff also, for the fact that we have managed to come to what is, in my view, a very important agreement among the three groups.

What we say is, yes, let the Treaty be revised, but without a Convention, so that a start can be made to the right to that confirmation. At the same time, however, this House would remind the national parliaments that they must send Members who have been directly elected to the European Parliament, and that here in Parliament we intend to carry out a revision of the European electoral system in order to endow the European electoral model with a unified, supranational system for electing its Members.

I am delighted that these two considerations have enabled a balance to be struck, so that this matter can be reopened.

Andrew Duff, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – Mr President, the proposal before us of course precedes the Treaty being brought into force. If the Treaty had been brought into being before such a proposal had come forward we would not have accepted it.

Parliament could not accept the fact that France would be seeking to appoint two deputies from the *Assemblée Nationale* to Parliament. And if we had agreed this after the Treaty had come onto force – if this proposal had not come forward before it had been brought into force – we would also have been in breach of the Treaty because this proposal does not respect the principle of digressive proportionality.

We are accepting a transitional solution, but the controversy has been quite successful in exposing the problems concerning Parliament's composition and electoral procedure. I am pleased that all our groups now agree that a substantial reform of the electoral procedure is now required, and Parliament will soon be bringing forward proposals which are going to require an IGC, which will be fully and properly prepared by a Convention that will include national parliaments, will be broadly consultative and include national political parties to conclude a substantial settlement of this issue in time for 2014.

I am extremely grateful to my colleagues and coordinators of the other groups for the constructive negotiations which have been concluded by a firm intent to reform the electoral procedure of Parliament.

Gerald Häfner, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, we have a broad consensus on this matter. We look forward to the enlargement of Parliament and we look forward to 18 new Members. We want to create the conditions for this now so that they can come and work together with us.

There is only one small difference of opinion, which in truth is actually very large, because it concerns the basis of our work, including our understanding of the principle of democracy and our appreciation of this House itself. It concerns the question of who decides who these new Members will be. For us, that is not a secondary issue, it is a key question. According to the Treaty, Members of the European Parliament 'shall be elected for a term of five years by direct universal suffrage in a free and secret ballot'. It is the citizens who do the electing. In 11 out of 12 countries that is what has happened.

One country is now saying that that is not possible and that they will send us MEPs who were elected by their citizens for a totally different job. We do not consider that to be a satisfactory way to treat Parliament or the right of the citizens to vote and the principle of democracy.

We could dispense with a convention if this were merely a technical issue, in other words if we had agreed on the principle of compliance with the Treaties. However, at this point the Treaty is at risk of collapsing. Let us insist on the convening of a convention, which is a wonderful method of achieving consensus outside of the level of governments in Europe on precisely these types of questions.

Ashley Fox, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – Mr President, I welcome this report and its conclusion that there is no need for a constitutional convention. Such a convention would merely serve to waste time and taxpayers' money. Indeed, there is no appetite amongst my constituents for a convention which would no doubt discuss further political integration. Indeed, the balance of opinion in Britain is that political union has already progressed too far.

Whilst I welcome the measures that enable the 18 additional MEPs to take their seats, I do not believe that they should enjoy observer status until the transitional provisions come into force. Such a move would entitle them to claim their salaries and expenses before they are entitled to vote, and I believe, as a matter of principle, that that is wrong.

At a time when large cuts in public expenditure are anticipated in almost every Member State, this Parliament should set an example. We should be prudent with public money at all times. My group will vote against this report because it disregards that important principle.

Søren Bo Søndergaard, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (DA) Mr President, we disagree on many things where the EU is concerned. We doubtless also disagree on many things where the European Parliament is concerned. However, I believe that there is broad consensus that what gives the European Parliament legitimacy is that it is democratically and directly elected by the citizens. So, here we are today with a proposal that forces us to face the fact that this can change. A proposal is on the table that could put us in a situation in which, in the next four years, things can be adopted in this Parliament by people who have not been democratically elected, but rather appointed. I think this is a very bad development. I also think it is a very unfortunate development.

It is, of course, contrary to the Treaty. We would therefore have to revise the Treaty. However, it is also contrary to what we actually do in practice. When Romania and Bulgaria joined the European Union in 2007, did we tell them that they did not need to hold elections? Did we say that the Members from these countries could sit for two-and-a-half years without elections being held? No, we instructed them to hold elections, and that is what should be done in the case of new Members. This should be the case even if elections are to be held in only one country, for example in France.

Morten Messerschmidt, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – (DA) Mr President, there is something bizarre about the situation that we find ourselves in right now. For years we have heard how the Treaty of Lisbon would be the instrument to ensure democracy, transparency and citizens' influence on legislation in the EU. Then one of the first things the European Parliament chooses to do after telling citizens this for years is to say no to direct elections, no to convening a convention and no to all of the instruments that we have used in the past to convince citizens why this Treaty was necessary. There is something rather strange about this.

The natural thing to do, of course, would be for us to take seriously the promises we made to the electorate, to take seriously the fact that this House should be made up of people with a direct popular mandate, and

to take seriously the fact that it is not governments but elected representatives who change the Treaties. Both of these fundamental elements – and, incidentally, fundamental promises – will be destroyed if the two reports are adopted. The whole idea, indeed the whole argument for having the Treaty of Lisbon – everything that was intended to convince citizens why they should give even more power to the EU – is precisely what we are turning our back on today now that we have got what we wanted. Like the previous speaker, I therefore have to say that my group cannot support these reports.

Bruno Gollnisch (NI). – (FR) Mr President, I shall come straight to the point. Paragraph 2 of Mr Méndez de Vigo's report rightly emphasises the fact that one of the Council's proposals goes completely against the spirit of the 1976 Act. It concerns the appointment, by the national parliaments, of MEPs who, under the 1976 Act, must be elected by direct universal suffrage.

With all due respect to the rapporteur, I regret that he has not taken greater account of this and addressed it in a stricter, clearer and more uncompromising way in paragraph 5. It is not at all impossible to stick to the election. If the Member States do not wish to hold by-elections, they should simply consider the outcome of the election that took place in 2009 and apply, on a proportionate basis, the outcome of that vote to the new number of MEPs who have just been assigned to them.

Any other solution is undemocratic, especially in my country, France, where the national parliament is appointed on a non-proportional basis, without proportional rule. This would be, in fact, a form of governmental appointment that goes against the spirit of the Treaties.

Mario Mauro (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, it is still a mystery how the Council could have treated an issue such as this so lightly. I hope that this unfortunate hitch will not leave problems in its wake and that the credibility of our institutions and our project will not be undermined. I shall give you a specific example: Italy is required to elect one MEP in a possible additional election, but should we be more concerned that we would have an election with a likely turnout of no more than 5% of the electorate, or that we would refer to the results of the last elections of 2009 in order to confirm the election of an MEP elected, in any case, by direct universal suffrage?

At all events, we must not make the situation worse: never before has it been more important for Europe to avoid institutional obstacles and delays in the process of integration. I, too, would highlight how important it is for all 18 MEPs to take up their seats in the European Parliament at the same time, in order to avoid upsetting the delicate balance between the nationalities represented in the House. This is a question – I repeat – that must be resolved immediately: I find it unthinkable that the new Members may not be elected to Parliament for the remainder of the 2009-2014 term.

Therefore, we must urgently adopt the recommendation and report in question so that amendment of Protocol No 36 to the Treaty of Lisbon will be given the go-ahead, without convening a convention, but by directly convening an intergovernmental conference, as proposed by the rapporteur. Indeed, we must take the quickest path, because at this stage there is little to discuss. Instead, we need to turn the page and make a fresh, constructive start following what has been, unfortunately, a very negative episode.

IN THE CHAIR: MRS ANGELILLI

Vice-President

Matthias Groote (S&D). – (DE) Madam President, first of all I should like to thank the rapporteur, Mr Méndez de Vigo. I see no need to convene a convention. It is a matter of detail that needs to be clarified. Since 1979, the European Parliament has been elected in a direct and secret ballot and that is the way it should continue to be done in future, too. We and the Council would be well advised to deal with this problem as quickly as possible at an intergovernmental conference, because out of the 18 Members, 16 are in a state of suspense, which is rather intolerable. The ball is therefore back in the Council's court. I would ask the Council not to give in on this point because one Member State has failed to find clear rules on account of it expecting the Treaty of Lisbon to enter into force sooner. I am pleased that we now have this Treaty in place, but we now have our homework to do.

The Méndez de Vigo report is a good basis for strengthening this process. However, the Council would be well advised not to succumb to the temptation to accept Members being sent here from a national parliament. That would set a precedent and I am not happy to accept that. Therefore, the rapporteur has my full support, with the proviso that no Members be sent here from national parliaments.

Sandrine Bélier (Verts/ALE). – (FR) Madam President, France is the only Member State that did not anticipate the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon and that is refusing to abide by the outcome of the European elections of June 2009. By accepting the third option – the French exception – of appointing two new MEPs, we are being asked to endorse a serious violation of the Union's primary legislation: the election of Members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage, from which we have derived our legitimacy for 31 years.

Are we going to abide by the Council's decision, under pressure from one Member State, which shows a certain lack of regard for the Union and the European citizens? Our Parliament must not sanction this serious breach of the principle of European democracy. We must refuse to undermine our legitimacy and our credibility as elected representatives of the European public. It is the European citizens who choose who they want to represent them in the European Parliament, not the governments of the Member States.

This French exception justifies our demand for Parliament to be involved, in the case of a convention on the revision of the Treaties, and to reject any intergovernmental conference.

Trevor Colman (EFD). – Madam President, delaying ratifying the Lisbon Treaty meant that 736 MEPs were appointed rather than the 751 now proposed. This higher number is to be achieved by 18 seats being distributed amongst 12 Member States and Germany losing three seats, but this cannot take place as it is unlawful to prematurely curtail the mandate of the three German MEPs.

A further complication is that the Treaty stipulates the total number of MEPs shall not exceed 751. To include the 18 additional MEPs without losing the three German seats will require a revision of Protocol 36 of the Lisbon Treaty. This should be achieved by a convention producing proposals for agreement by Member States for incorporation into the Treaty by way of amendment. Failure to do this would render unlawful any act this Parliament takes on the basis of a 754-strong Chamber – three over the limit of 751.

The proposal before this House is that this problem be dealt with by way of an intergovernmental conference, but this is a significant revision and amendment to the Lisbon Treaty requiring ratification by all Member States and providing the opportunity for individual national referenda. I urge this House to oppose this proposal.

Rafał Trzaskowski (PPE). – Madam President, I strongly disagree with the previous speaker. This House had to answer a question on whether or not we should convene a convention to decide that issue, and we have taken a decision not to do so, but we have done so out of respect for this instrument – for this new instrument, which actually increases the legitimacy of all the decisions which we make. Obviously that does not set a precedent for the future, because all the really important issues concerning the changes to the Treaty, such as for example the electoral procedure, would require the convening of a convention.

Let me thank Íñigo and the coordinators for taking the decision. It was not easy. We had a problem with designating an additional 18 Members of this House because certain Member States did not actually plan for a procedure, but we decided that representativeness is the most important issue, that this is the principle which we should be guided by and that this House should have a balanced representation as quickly as possible. That is why we took a pragmatic solution, prompting Member States to complete their election procedures as quickly as possible, provided, obviously, that all the parliamentarians who are going to join us are going to be directly elected.

Sylvie Guillaume (S&D). – (FR) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, the issue of appointing additional MEPs is not new; let us remember that our fellow Members Mr Severin and Mr Lamassoure already worked on this matter during the previous parliamentary term. How, then, can one fail to be surprised at the total lack of preparation of a country – mine, as it happens, France – with regard to the appointment of its two new MEPs? Could it not have reasonably assumed that the Treaty of Lisbon would one day enter into force and that the issue of the new MEPs would be raised? What explains, then, such a lack of foresight, such a casual attitude?

The fact is, by offering France the possibility, under the draft Protocol No 36, to go ahead and appoint MEPs within the national parliament – thereby allowing it to save face at little cost – we actually risk infringing the fundamental rule that stipulates that Members of the European Parliament must be elected by direct universal suffrage. This goes against the spirit of the 1976 Act on the election of the Members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage, and would undermine the very legitimacy and credibility of the European Parliament.

On the other hand, for their part, the elected representatives of the 11 other Member States who have been duly elected must not pay the price for such amateurishness. This situation has simply gone on for too long, for them and for their countries, and it is only right that these elected representatives be able to join us as quickly as possible and set to work. That is why we believe that this issue should be resolved via an intergovernmental conference that could quickly approve the appointment of these Members.

However, we must insist that France fulfils its obligations just as its European partners have. Arrangements of this kind are unacceptable in the heart of the Chamber that brings together the representatives of the European people. In spite of everything, this debate will have had the virtue of implicitly demonstrating the need to make provision, in the future, for a uniform means of electing MEPs by direct universal suffrage. This reform will, for its part, have to be achieved by means of a convention. Once again, it is the voice of the peoples that must carry weight here, in this Chamber, not that of the governments.

Zita Gurmai (S&D). – Madam President, I would like to thank Íñigo for doing a great job and all those colleagues who took part for their cooperation. After many years of work and quite serious ratification problems, the Treaty of Lisbon is finally in force. It gives much-needed reinforcement to the role of the European Parliament.

We must take this opportunity seriously and base our actions on these acquired institutional reforms. We need to concentrate on progressive decision-making for the benefit of all European citizens. We should not take so much time on administrative matters. I am the type of person who is a quick, efficient but good decision-maker. European citizens rightfully expect us to do our job efficiently and transparently.

I fully respect the balance and good cooperation among the European institutions, even though I am convinced that the proposed compromise reflects a viable solution. This way we can do our job more efficiently. We will therefore be strengthening the European Parliament and doing a great service for European citizens.

Last, but not least, I personally know some of the already-elected future colleagues, and the sooner they can start working the better. I strongly believe that their expertise will give an added value to our institutions.

Constance Le Grip (PPE). – (FR) Madam President, I too wanted to follow other speakers in thanking our colleague, Mr Méndez de Vigo. He has done an outstanding job in circumstances that were at times fiery, and always exciting. The debates within the Committee on Constitutional Affairs have lasted a long time; they have been equal to the challenge and equal to the intense and important character that MEPs associate, of course – and rightly so – with a major issue that has immediate implications for them, namely the composition of our Parliament and the methods of appointing its Members.

Once again, the rapporteur has been able to compile what were at times differing opinions and contributions and to summarise them – I would say – in an extremely balanced text. I would like to thank him for this. I believe that the recommendations made in these two reports, both in the one on convening an intergovernmental conference and in the one on the transitional measures concerning the composition of our Parliament, are characterised by realism, pragmatism and effectiveness. I believe that, on this and other issues too, this is by and large what our fellow citizens expect of Europe.

Karin Kadenbach (S&D). – (DE) Madam President, I too should like to offer my sincere thanks to the rapporteur, and also to all of the shadow rapporteurs. As Parliament, we should send out a clear signal today that we are very much looking forward to having the new Members here in Parliament and that the Council is indeed remiss. It should once again be highlighted here that we have the very clear task of finding a solution as quickly as possible so that freely elected Members – 18 of them in fact – can start their work as soon as possible.

As Parliament, we have not only the very general task of representing the people in the best way possible but also the job of working as efficiently and effectively as possible in the committees, and to do this we also expect to draw on the expertise and knowledge of those fellow Members who have largely already been freely and properly elected. As an Austrian, I very much look forward to seeing Joe Weidenholzer here and I hope that we shall be able to welcome him here as a Member of Parliament as soon as possible.

Franz Obermayr (NI). – (DE) Madam President, the ink is barely dry on the abortive Treaty of Lisbon and already the next amendments have been tabled, and the chaos surrounding our new Members – people are talking about phantom Members – is truly perfect. This has of course been caused, among other things, by our different election systems, which give rise to democracy-related problems. In France, for example, where

candidates stand at a regional level and no lists are available, it is not very difficult to allow Members to move up. We should speak out clearly in favour of an election and not selection by a parliament.

Secondly, it would also make perfect sense – and this is what the citizens expect – for us to provide specific information on the activities and earnings of Members during the observation period. This ‘phantom’ situation will certainly not do much for citizens’ confidence in the EU. We also need to provide clarification as quickly as possible as to when the new Members should come and what status they should have. Moreover, it is still not clear whether the Treaty of Lisbon will be re-examined – which would be desirable – and what the situation is with regard to Croatia’s accession. Citizens expect a quick resolution of this matter by the Council.

Czesław Adam Siekierski (PPE). – (PL) Under the provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon, the composition of the European Parliament has changed. Despite the fact that it entered into force six months ago now, an intergovernmental conference to implement these changes still has not been convened. The Member States have to ratify a special protocol concerning the additional number of Members of the European Parliament. This is a big operation, but it does not alter the fact that the Treaty must be implemented in full and without delay. I share the position presented on this matter by the rapporteur.

It should be remembered that it is in the interest of those Member States which have an increased national delegation under the provisions of the Treaty for their new Members to be able to represent their electorate as soon as possible. This is in accord with the fundamental democratic principles upon which the Union is based. It is important that all the additional Members enter Parliament at the same time, in order for our institution to avoid accusations of functioning improperly.

Milan Zver (PPE). – (SL) I, too, would like to join those of you who wish to emphasise the need for the European Parliament to be fully representative and to work with a full complement of members as soon as possible. I believe that we are still not fully represented given the amendment to the Treaty of Lisbon, which is our constitution. I also think that the Intergovernmental Conference would be the right path to follow, and the quickest way, to enable us to consolidate our legal basis and to permit the European Parliament to achieve full representation. I would like to congratulate the rapporteur, Mr Méndez de Vigo, who has been exploring legal bases, and I think that today’s resolution does indeed express them well. In addition, I join those of you who are looking forward to welcoming new Members to the European Parliament as I think that we need them. To those of you who did not foresee in your own elections, the last European elections, that it would be necessary to appoint, or rather, elect, additional Members, to you I say that this House will not lose any legitimacy just because two Members will come from national parliaments.

Seán Kelly (PPE). – Madam President, like other colleagues, I think that if people are elected to the European Parliament they are entitled to take their seats just the same as the 736 Members have taken their seats in the last 12 months. This is a short-term problem which needs a short-term solution, because in four years’ time everything will have settled down and will work normally.

I also think it is wrong to blame Member States for not taking anticipated action 12 months ago because 12 months ago there was a strong possibility that the Lisbon Treaty would not be ratified, and certainly that was a position which many people felt in my own country and in other countries. But, now that everything has been ratified, it is important that the people who have been elected be allowed to take their seats so that they can contribute to Parliament and we can get on until the next election in four years’ time, when everything will be, as they say, ‘hunky-dory’.

Diego López Garrido, President-in-Office of the Council. – (ES) Madam President, I would merely like to add that I agree with those speeches made by honourable Members who have expressed the importance of resolving this outstanding issue as regards the Treaty of Lisbon, namely, the case of the 18 MEPs who have still to take their seats in Parliament because the last elections were held a little before the Treaty of Lisbon came into force.

Therefore, this revision of Protocol (No 36) is worthwhile. I also wholly agree with those who feel that it should be done at the earliest opportunity and that the absence in this Parliament of 18 MEPs who represent the citizens of 12 Member States be remedied as quickly as possible. That is why, in the last analysis, I agree with Mr Méndez de Vigo, who proposes that there is no need for a Convention, that an Intergovernmental Conference be called as soon as possible, that the 27 Member States’ parliaments ratify the decision at the earliest opportunity, and that, as a result, the 18 MEPs in question can be seen in this Parliament, as they should have been here from the outset of this parliamentary term.

Maroš Šefčovič, *Vice-President of the Commission*. – Madam President, I think that this debate has clearly demonstrated that we are trying to resolve an exceptional situation, that we are looking for a practical solution and that this is the solution for the transition. Therefore I very much welcome the pragmatic approach of Mr Méndez de Vigo and the report which he prepared, and, as I can gather from the debate, it is also getting very strong support here in the plenary. I think it is very clear that our common goal is to have 18 new MEPs as soon as possible.

Coming back to the Commission's position, I think we have been asked very straightforward questions about how this change should be administered and through which instrument. The Commission has agreed very clearly to the IGC because of the scope and nature of the change which will be discussed.

As regards the modalities of how the additional MEPs are chosen, this would be, I am sure, raised within the framework of an intergovernmental conference, but let me add: when the European Council was considering this matter, I think that it was quite clear that the Council was looking to seek a balance, a balance between the natural desirability that the additional MEPs are chosen in a way as close as possible to the European Parliament elections themselves and the need to respect national constitutional arrangements; that is the origin of the three options to cover the realities of today's situation which of course will be regularised at the next elections.

To conclude let me also welcome the internal reflections within the European Parliament about possible future changes to the European elections, but I think that we have to underline that these are, and should remain, different issues. Today we are discussing how to get 18 additional MEPs into the European Parliament. Next time we will be discussing possible changes to the electoral vote.

Íñigo Méndez de Vigo, *rapporteur*. – (ES) Madam President, when people coming from positions as different and far-removed as those of Mr Mauro, Mr Gollnisch and Mr Colman come to the conclusion that there are problems with the electoral procedure and systems for the election of MEPs to the European Parliament, it means that we need a uniform electoral procedure.

That was a mandate that already existed in the Treaties of Rome. Therefore, we coordinators – and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of them, most especially Mr Jáuregui and Mr Duff – have agreed on Amendment 2, which will be voted on tomorrow. I hope that this amendment will be supported by this House, particularly so that we can soon resolve this issue of a uniform electoral procedure for elections to the European Parliament. By means of this, we would, it seems to me, remove this type of question mark.

In his speech, Mr Trzaskowski spoke about the necessary representativeness of this Parliament, something that the majority of the speakers and Vice-President Šefčovič, among others, have also highlighted.

I agree. Indeed, we say as much in paragraph 1 of the report, to the extent that the 18 MEPs should enter *en bloc*, otherwise we would lose representativeness.

In order for them to enter *en bloc*, in order to comply with this act of political justice that is the Treaty of Lisbon, we have to be practical, because a transitional and exceptional situation, ladies and gentlemen, also requires transitional and exceptional situations and solutions.

This is why, and I am quite open about it, I do not like the possibility of MEPs joining this Parliament who were not elected in 2009, something which, by the way, I clearly state in paragraph 2 of the report. Nevertheless, if I have to choose between that and the 18 Members not taking their seats, or coming up with a practical solution and the 18 joining, meaning therefore that we comply with the Treaty of Lisbon, I ask this House, as I have already done in the report, to choose that solution; a transitional and pragmatic one but, above all, Madam President, a just one.

I would like to thank everyone for their collaboration and for the interesting contributions that were made to this report.

President. – The debate is closed.

The vote will take place on Thursday 6 May 2010 at 11.00.

Written statements (Rule 149)

John Attard-Montalto (S&D), *in writing*. – I feel that it is not equitable that those countries which have been allocated additional seats in the EP are not yet represented. I am not talking only on behalf of Malta which has been allocated the 6th seat but also with regards to all the other countries which found themselves

in the same position. It is a fact that there are legal and constitutional constraints to be overcome in order for the new European parliamentarians to take their rightful seats. On the other hand the time which has elapsed from the EP elections of June 2009 illustrates that the EU has become a cumbersome institution which takes months, if not years, to activate parts of the Lisbon Treaty which was finally approved less than 6 months ago. Apart from the deficiency in representation regarding the countries involved, there is another element which I feel requires immediate attention. I am referring to the human element. Eighteen prospective parliamentarians must be going through a very difficult period in their life especially from the psychological point of view. I am sure that there isn't one present European parliamentarian who does not understand the plight of these eighteen politicians.

Krzysztof Lisek (PPE), *in writing*. – (PL) In my opinion, the European Parliament is under an obligation to decide as quickly as possible about this, to enable our future fellow Members, who have been democratically elected, to take their seats. This is extremely important, not only for their sakes, but principally out of respect for the decisions made by their voters. We must not force them to wait any longer.

All of our new fellow Members should be chosen in democratic elections. I am aware of the fact that at the present moment significant differences exist between the electoral rules in different Member States. Therefore, I would like to express the hope that the current situation will motivate us to begin a dialogue about harmonising electoral procedures in EU Member States.

Indrek Tarand (Verts/ALE), *in writing*. – We would like to thank the rapporteur for an excellent job. However, we are disappointed with the French decision to alter the original will of the European electorate by appointing new Members of the European Parliament from the National Assembly. *Ceterum censeo* – France has decided to sell a Mistral-class warship to Russia; we believe that it will sincerely regret its action.

IN THE CHAIR: MR BUZEK

President

18. Preparation of the Summit of Heads of State or Government of the euro area (7 May 2010) (debate)

President. – The next item is the statements by the Council and the Commission on preparation of the Summit of Heads of State or Government of the euro area (7 May 2010).

Diego López Garrido, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – (ES) Mr President, this week, on 7 May, there is going to be a meeting of Heads of State or Government of the euro area, and this is the debate in the European Parliament regarding this important meeting. The aim of the meeting will be to formalise the agreement reached on loans to Greece, the financial support package for Greece to tackle the serious financial situation of this euro-area country, and to reflect on the lessons that can be learned from this situation and these agreements in relation to the future of the euro area and of the whole of the European Union.

What the Heads of State or Government are going to do on Friday is confirm the financial solution that the European Union has given to Greece. In other words it is going to formalise the commitment – which at this stage is a political commitment – made at the meeting of European Union Heads of State or Government on 11 February, a commitment to support Greece in resolving its extremely difficult financial situation.

Therefore, what the Heads of State or Government are going to do on Friday is to present, set out and agree the will of the 15 other Member States in the euro area for Greece to receive this aid, these loans, once its Government has adopted a stringent programme of economic and financial adjustments. They are aimed at ensuring Greece's financial stability and the financial stability of the euro area as a whole, which is something that was agreed politically not only for the case of Greece, but was agreed politically on 11 February in a resolution by the European Union Heads of State or Government.

This is an important decision, politically and historically speaking, because it is essential for the credibility of the euro area and for the external credibility of the whole of the Union from a financial point of view. It is important for the fiscal consolidation required by the Treaties on European Union, fiscal consolidation in the euro area and in the whole of the Union, and it is very important for consolidating an effective and lasting economic recovery in the European Union.

Today Mr Rehn, who is here with us, published the Commission's forecasts for 2010-2011, sending a message of gradual economic recovery for the European Union. The Commission's forecasts confirm that the economic

recovery is happening in the European Union and that after experiencing the biggest recession in its history, the European Union as a whole is forecast growth of 1% in 2010 – this year – and 1.75% in 2011.

Therefore, the economic recession came to an end in the European Union in the third quarter of last year and economic recovery has begun. The European Economic Recovery Plan and the decisions made by the Member States have made a clear contribution to this by injecting large amounts of money into the economies of the various countries from the budgets of the Member States and from the Union budget, through the European Economic Recovery Plan. This is one of the reasons why – I will say it again – after going through the worst recession in its history, we are already seeing economic recovery in the Union.

These are the European Commission's forecasts, and undoubtedly the decision to lend to Greece is making a decisive contribution to ensuring that the economic recovery in the euro area and in the whole of the European Union is both effective and lasting.

We believe that the European Union has responded well to the current economic situation, to the economic crisis, by doing everything in its power to respond to the situation. Specifically, we think that it has responded well to the extremely serious financial situation in Greece, because what the European Union has definitely done in recent months has been to take clear steps towards what we have begun to describe as the economic governance or the economic government of the Union. Clear steps forward have been taken. At times they may have seemed slow, too slow, but steps forward have been taken, in any case, in a secure, determined manner, which will culminate on Friday in the meeting of the European Union Heads of State or Government.

We believe that the economic governance, the economic government of the Union needs to have solid foundations. The first of these is taking responsibility for the commitments made, for example when a Treaty on European Union is signed and ratified. The second is solidarity, which is a principle that is at the heart of the European Union and of all of its policies. The third is coordination of fiscal consolidation, coordination in the external representation of the European Union – for example, looking towards the G20 meetings – and coordination for growth and getting out of the crisis. I am convinced that this is what will be said in the document that Commissioner Rehn is preparing on the subject and will present to the Commission on 12 May.

Finally, I would like to say that the economic governance of the Union that is being established and developed, and for which the foundations are being laid in the European Union, requires effective instruments and an element of supervision. I am certain that the document that the European Commission is preparing will refer to this. We need quality in public finances. We need supervision of the financial system, European supervision of the financial system, and in this respect I would like to call on the European Parliament to adopt a financial supervision package as soon as possible. This package should involve the regulations and directives that are being debated here and now in Parliament, and are going to be debated in the relevant committee in the next few days and then in the relevant plenary sitting.

We also need mechanisms to prevent possible crises, and we also need – as I said before – the capacity to have a single voice in the external representation of the Union, and in this case I am clearly talking about the G20 meetings. I think that these are steps that are being taken towards an economic government or governance of the Union; the aid and loans to Greece are part of this, and this is why I believe that the European Union is going in the right direction and has consolidated that direction.

I am certain that the Heads of State or Government will adopt this financial aid package for Greece, which is, in short, as they said in their statement on 11 February, a commitment to financial stability, to the economic stability of the euro area and of the whole of the European Union.

José Manuel Barroso, *President of the Commission*. – Mr President, I was asked to make a statement to this House ahead of Friday's meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the euro area.

Let me first say a word of condolence for the families of the victims of the violence in Athens today. To disagree and protest is a right of citizens in our democratic societies, but nothing can justify the recourse to violence.

Let me address the financial support package for Greece endorsed last Sunday. Then I will give you some of my views on what needs to be done to prevent a repetition of a crisis of this type.

As regards Greece, a multi-annual programme of fiscal consolidation and structural reform has been agreed by the Greek authorities. This was jointly prepared with the Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

The Greek Government has put forward a solid and credible package that will steer its economy on a sustainable path and restore confidence. It is important that we acknowledge the courage that Prime Minister Papandreou and his Government have shown.

Greece will undertake painful efforts, but we all know that there are no alternatives to such efforts.

In return, following the recommendation of the Commission and of the European Central Bank, the coordinated European mechanism for assistance to Greece has been activated. This is an unprecedented act of solidarity, unmatched anywhere in the world.

This assistance will be decisive in helping Greece to get its economy back on track and will preserve the financial stability of the euro area as a whole.

Allow me to stress that the Commission has made sure that the mechanism, whilst being based on bilateral loans, is a European one. The Commission was instrumental in setting it up and will play an important role in its management and implementation.

The Commission is, and will remain, central in assessing Greece's compliance with the package's conditionality. The Commission will also manage the bilateral loans from the Member States.

By the end of the week we will already have a critical mass of Member States that have completed the process to provide those bilateral loans to Greece. It is my firm conviction that the unprecedented financial support given to Greece – EUR 110 billion – and the adjustment programme are an adequate response to the Greek crisis. We have no reason to doubt that it will be firmly implemented both by Greece and by the euro-area Member States.

This view is shared by others who matter. I noticed, for instance, the supportive statement of the past, current and future Chairs of the G20 Finance Ministers, issued just now. Regrettably, not all market players seem convinced already. We have to say loud and clear that the doubters are wrong. I will come back to this in a moment.

At the meeting of the euro-area Heads of State and Government on Friday, we will look beyond this deal to what we need to do to draw the right lessons from this situation. The debate will of course be a starting point, because decisions need to be debated further and ultimately taken with all the 27 Member States – the euro-area Member States but also all the other Member States of the European Union. Let me say this very clearly: discussing and taking decisions at 27 is a source of strength.

Whilst we have to speed up our processes, the fact is that the joint action of the 27 – unparalleled anywhere in the world – provides the best possible foundation for our joint future in an ever more interlinked world.

I see two main strands for reflection and action: first, a reassessment of the rules for economic governance, including the Stability and Growth Pact, and second, financial markets reform.

The Commission has been working intensively on economic governance and is ready to present its proposals on how to improve this next Wednesday. There are three main building blocks to be considered. First, responsibility: we need to reinforce the Stability and Growth Pact and, above all, Member States' compliance. The case for reinforcement of both the preventive and the corrective arm of the pact is obvious. I am pleased that most of those who have previously questioned – or even suggested weakening – the pact now accept the need for stronger rules and – most importantly – for their strict implementation.

Second, interdependence: we are all in this together. I think the crisis has clearly shown that we need to address the imbalances between our Member States, in particular within the euro area. This includes divergences in their competitiveness, as this is one crucial element that causes other types of imbalances.

This cannot, of course, mean that some become less competitive so that others look relatively more competitive. We are all competing on world markets. What we need is to enhance our overall competitiveness in a balanced, mutually reinforcing way. I also believe we need to look at the other causes of imbalances. To make progress, we will propose increased surveillance and increased economic policy coordination. I am also happy that I see more openness now when it comes to the Member States for this purpose.

Third, coherence: we have to ask ourselves whether our system of fiscal rules is complete. I see merit in creating a permanent mechanism for dealing with disruptive situations. After all, it is better to be safe than sorry.

I hope that we can seize the moment – and I count on you to help us deliver these reforms. I believe from a political point of view that, in terms of European integration, we are at one of those moments where, if we do not build up Europe, we will fall behind. We cannot have a standstill. It is a very special moment, the moment we are living today in Europe where our solidarity, our responsibility, is being tested every day. I hope the leaders of our Member States will be able to rise to the occasion, not just to help the others but to show their responsibility to our common European project.

These reforms will be introduced against the background of unprecedented efforts already under way. That deficit and debt levels in some Member States need to be corrected with determination, and faster than targeted before the crisis, is undisputed.

But it must also be said that we cannot ignore the fact that the budgetary deterioration in 2009 was largely due to the working of the automatic stabilisers in the face of an unprecedented decline in economic activity caused by a financial crisis not originating in Europe. In other words, the overall situation in the euro area was largely the result of anti-recession policies advocated all over the world.

It was always clear that the situation would subsequently be corrected, and most euro-area members have already undertaken bold reforms, for example of their pensions systems. The responsibility shown by the governments needs to be matched by financial-market players. This is why it is no less urgent to continue delivering a sustainable and responsible financial sector, at the service of the economy and its citizens.

One must bear in mind that financial-market players are key actors in driving market sentiment. Psychology also matters in markets. The financial crisis was born out of short-termism, pro-cyclicality and a lack of responsibility. That is what we must urgently correct.

We need strong and stable European financial services markets to deliver the investments needed for future growth in line with the Europe 2020 vision. We need responsible behaviour from all our market players. We have already been doing a lot as regards financial markets reform. I count on this House to make this clear to all.

European institutions are acting, and must be seen as acting together: Parliament, the Council and the Commission. We have prioritised work on responsible risk management, safer derivatives markets, better financial supervision and ensuring that banks hold adequate capital to cover their real risks. This work must be speeded up.

In the coming weeks we will need to complete the reforms already under way. As I said to this House only two weeks ago, I hope to see a breakthrough soon on our proposal for hedge funds and private equity.

I would also like early agreement on effective new European supervisory arrangements. The European Systemic Risk Board and the three supervisory authorities should start working at the beginning of 2011.

But they must not be mere paper tigers: we have a shared responsibility to ensure they have the tools they need to do their jobs. This includes binding decision-making powers to deal with genuine emergencies, to enforce European rules – and I insist on European rules, not only national rules – and to settle any disputes within the colleges of national supervisors. It is high time to deliver these decisions and make sure they are ambitious.

More proposals are on their way this year to improve depositor and investor protection, to strengthen measures against market abuse, to further improve the quality and quantity of bank capital and discourage excessive leverage.

Over the past three months, and paradoxically still this week, the situation on the sovereign debt markets has brought new concerns to light. The Commission is already working on a fundamental overhaul of derivatives markets to increase transparency and safety in these markets. In a first stage, we will present legislation to standardise eligible derivatives contracts, putting them through central counterparty clearing that is properly regulated and supervised. We are also now considering whether further specific measures are needed for sovereign derivatives markets.

The crisis has also once again brought the role of credit rating agencies to the fore. These agencies play a pivotal role in the functioning of financial markets, but ratings appear to be too cyclical, too reliant on the general market mood rather than on fundamentals – regardless of whether market mood is too optimistic or too pessimistic. Because credit rating agencies have such a key role and influence over the markets, they also have a special responsibility to ensure their assessments are both sound and comprehensive. That is

why in 2008 the Commission quickly put forward new legislation for these agencies, which will come into force in the next few months.

These rules will ensure that credit rating agencies act more transparently, publish their methodologies and avoid conflicts of interest, but we need to go further. To strengthen the supervision of these actors of Europe-wide dimension, the Commission believes they should be put under the direct supervision of the future European Securities Markets Authority, and that is exactly what we will propose.

We have also launched a reflection on whether further measures may be needed to ensure the appropriate rating of sovereign debt in particular. We must get our own house in order while pushing others to do the same.

The Commission will do whatever is necessary to ensure that financial markets are not a playground for speculation. Free markets constitute the basis for the functioning of successful economies, but free markets need rules and compliance, and rules and compliance need to be tightened if irresponsible behaviour puts at risk what cannot and should not be at risk.

Market behaviour must rest on sound and objective analysis, and financial services must realise that they are exactly that: a service, not an end in itself. They must not become detached from their economic and societal function. In fact, financial-market players are still in business because regulatory authorities and democratic institutions – ultimately the taxpayers – stabilised the markets in the financial crisis.

We acted swiftly then, and precisely for that reason, we will also act swiftly in the future. So the message from this Friday's meeting of Eurogroup Heads of State and Government should be clear, and it will be clear: we will do what is needed – on all fronts.

President. – We would like to add our voice to the condolences which Mr Barroso has expressed in his speech. The events of which Mr Barroso was speaking took place today in Greece. We have high hopes that the impasse in Greece will be broken. The recent problems there arouse the concern and interest of all Members of the European Parliament.

Joseph Daul, on behalf of the PPE Group. – (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, we in Europe are going through a particularly difficult period with the serious crisis in Greece, its consequences for the citizens and, as you pointed out, tragic and dramatic consequences, with the debts that are piling up in most of our Member States, and with a European response that does not always live up to our hopes, but which at least exists.

The time has now come for Europeans to learn lessons from these events and to call for radical reforms of European governance. Reforms that will ensure that our Member States stop taking decisions on their own, without consulting their partners – with whom they do, after all, share a currency, values and, hence, a common destiny – about their budgetary priorities, their fiscal priorities and their social priorities. Reforms of people's mentalities, so that our parties, our ministers, our national colleagues stop systematically denigrating the decisions taken in Europe, when they themselves have been party to those decisions.

Can we in fact continue any longer to call for solidarity from our partners when we face difficulties and totally ignore them when things return to normal? Can we continue any longer to call for substantial aid from our partners without being able to guarantee absolute transparency in the presentation of public accounts? Lastly, can we continue any longer to be surprised that questions keep being asked when we call for solidarity among peoples of whom some work 35 hours and retire before the age of 60, and others work 48 hours and retire at the age of 67? I do not think so. On the contrary, I believe that the time has come to ask the real questions and to provide the real answers to those questions.

These answers are not, for the most part, national, but European in the world in which we live. These answers are not about courting popular opinion, but about being responsible and sensible. These answers are our responsibility; we must provide them without hesitation, or else they will be imposed on us more quickly than we think. Not only will our peoples be able to accuse us – and rightly so – of having failed to do our duty, of having failed to tell them the truth, but they will also have to put up with decisions that are even more painful than the ones that have to be taken today. We must call very explicitly for an economic Europe, a social Europe and a fiscal Europe, something which requires very practical measures on the part of our governments, on both the right and the left.

Will this argument be heard by the Council? Will we be able to ensure that it is heard loud and clear? I put the question to Mr Verhofstadt, who has some experience of this Council. Does he think it is possible to enter into discussions, together, within the Council? Will this argument be taken up by the Commission? I

hope so, and I strongly urge you, Mr Barroso, to take it up: I ask you, as guardian of the Treaties, to ensure that the decisions that we take are well and truly applied by the Member States. I note, with regard to the Services Directive, for example, that this is far from being the case. This is a lost opportunity, in terms of growth, which we will no longer be able to allow.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am not an idealist. I do not consider myself naive, but I do believe that the moment of truth has arrived for Europe, and I propose that we rise to these challenges with courage, with a sense of responsibility, just as Europe's founding fathers, those founding fathers of Europe who had no hesitation in taking courageous and visionary decisions – Schuman, De Gasperi, Adenauer and the others – did 60 years ago. We must follow their example: they did not wait; they did not hold a referendum. They seized their political courage with both hands to respond to the crucial issues that arose.

Ladies and gentlemen, the crisis that we are going through may be a good thing if we have the courage to take the right measures, but it may be very serious if we avoid the necessary reforms. We urgently need economic and social governance; we urgently need an adaptation of the rules on taxation. Lastly, we need to guard against creating an artificial gap between the Member States of Europe and the others. European solidarity applies to every one of the 27 countries. I call on you, Members of the Council, to see Europe as it really is. I call on you to carry out studies on what will happen to us if, tomorrow, France and other countries encounter the same difficulties as Greece. What will become of our euro? What will we be able to do for our European citizens?

Thank you for your attention. We share this responsibility jointly, and time will not stand still for us.

President. – I notice that one of our Members, Mr Madlener, has asked to speak under the blue card procedure. However, I already have you on the list of speakers. I have, here, Barry Madlener as a speaker. I will give you the floor in a few minutes. I promise you will be able to speak.

Maria Badia i Cutchet, on behalf of the S&D Group. – (ES) Mr President, first of all allow me to express, on behalf of the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, our complete solidarity with the Greek people following the deaths that have taken place today. I would also like to call for a return to calm and say to the Greek people that we are on their side and that they have our support in the efforts that they are making in this long and difficult trial that they are facing.

I would also especially like to address the Prime Minister, Georgios Papandreou, and encourage him in his firmness and political courage and in all the hard work he is doing to save the future of his country.

In the months and years to come we hope that the European Union will do everything it can to support the reform processes that are necessary. We cannot continue to simply play a monitoring role. The European Union must play a part in the reform and support it. The success of the transformation process must be a joint success for everyone in a united Europe, invoking a common destiny. In order to achieve this, we must ensure that the European and fiscal instruments are adequately mobilised, providing all the help and assistance that we can during this difficult period.

Moreover, beyond the Greek crisis, I think that we can conclude that the last few weeks have been very illuminating. We must use everything that we have learnt to strengthen economic governance and build a European Union that is not only monetary but also truly economic. Something that was inconceivable at the time of Jacques Delors has now become inevitable, and we must measure up to the demands of our times.

In order to achieve all of these ambitious objectives, we must first learn to work together. The Stability and Growth Pact is one of the elements that has most demonstrated the need to coordinate our economic policies. The coordination of our economic policies must be active and effective, and focused on processes of sustainable, strong growth that is shared by all and will guarantee jobs. We hope that the European Commission will soon put forward brief proposals in this respect that go beyond just repressive logic. We must learn to build and grow strong together.

President Barroso, I hope that you understand the urgent need to make maximum use of the role that the Commission can play in this phase.

Secondly, we must equip ourselves with the mechanisms that we need to tackle a crisis. It is high time for the Council to approve the establishment of a European financial stability mechanism, a proposal that was adopted in March by the prime ministers and leaders of the Party of European Socialists. We must condemn the aggressive and speculative attitude of some financial agents, but we must also understand that we have designed a monetary system that is insufficient in times of crisis.

Thirdly, we must develop a new concept of European solidarity. Either we move towards a common destiny, or we must resign ourselves to succumbing to the negative dynamic of national selfishness and destructive competition between ourselves. We cannot say that we want to live together while at the same time saying that in practice we each want to act independently. The current crisis is an acid test, and we must understand its full significance.

Fourthly, we need to attach the necessary importance to the financial sphere. The coming weeks and months will be an opportunity for Parliament to take a position on a series of very important legislative proposals, such as hedge funds and financial supervision.

I call on all the institutions to support us in this responsible approach, in order to guarantee that Europe quickly establishes a solid regulation and monitoring system. We hope that by working together we can also create a tax on financial transactions, so that the financial entities make a fair contribution to the economic effort that every one of us has had to make.

The future of Greece will largely depend on the growth of its neighbours – us – as we are its main economic partners. If we are not capable of tackling the challenges that have already been set in the 2020 strategy, if we are not capable of fleshing out a common political agenda and if our economies are condemned to slow growth, with few employment opportunities, we will not be able to prevent further attacks that could be even more serious and difficult to manage.

The future of our continent is at stake. The future of Europe depends on our intelligence, our solidarity and our firmness.

Guy Verhofstadt, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (FR) Mr President, allow me to start by telling you that I hope, as I believe do all my fellow Members and the President of the Commission, that the system that we have put in place will work. I have had my doubts since the start and have criticised the system of bilateral loans, but that does not mean that I do not hope that it works and stops speculation against the euro.

For, little by little – ladies and gentlemen – there has been speculation against the euro and an attack on the euro, and not only an attack on Greece or an attack linked to the state of the public finances in Greece. This is therefore far more serious and more widespread. I for my part hope that this system, once formalised on 7 May, will be able to fully achieve its objective, for the simple reason that we have no other instrument. We have no other instrument. Therefore, this system has to work, and it has to be supported.

However, it is also important – and this is my second point – to clearly understand that, in the near future, it will not be possible to resort to it at every turn. A structural mechanism will have to be provided as soon as possible; perhaps not for the next few months but certainly for the next few years, because we are going to encounter such situations again. Moreover, if we want to have access to a structural mechanism for the future, we have to bear in mind one thing: lessons need to be learnt from what has taken place over the last five months. We needed five months to put a mechanism in place: three months to decide on its principle, then two months to decide on its conditions. Why? Because this is an intergovernmental system!

Once again, I believe that the first lesson to be learnt for the future is that we must follow the Commission in its Community approach. For the Commission had proposed a European loan: it could have been approved immediately in December or January and could already be having an impact today and stopping this speculation against the euro.

I therefore hope that, on 7 May, the first decision, the first lesson to be learnt from what has happened over the last five months will be that we say – in the hope that this works – that we are now going to ask the Commission to propose a European loan that can stop speculation against the euro immediately. For the European Union's entire credibility and liquidity rests on such a proposal, which is not the case in an intergovernmental system, where 16 countries must say 'yes', 16 parliaments, perhaps, must say 'yes', and so on.

I also hope – although Mr Rehn has already begun to make proposals – that the second lesson that we learn from all this is that we need to introduce a number of structural reforms, namely a preventive chapter in the Stability and Growth Pact – which Mr Rehn has proposed – a European monetary fund, a structural mechanism that can be used straight away and, thirdly, a 2020 strategy that is far more robust than the strategy that is down on paper today.

Then, we also need reform with regard to the rating agencies, even if the latter are like weather forecasts: either they are too flexible and we want them to be slightly more inflexible, or they are too inflexible and we

want them to be slightly more flexible. However, a European-level initiative is definitely a good idea that must be looked into.

Lastly – this is my last point, Mr President – I call on the Spanish Presidency to agree to financial supervision very quickly. I am sorry, Mr López Garrido, but it is not us who are to blame, but the Council! Am I not right in thinking that it was the Council that changed the Commission's proposals? There were some Commission proposals that I even criticised, but they still went much further than those of the Council. We are the ones who are redoing the Commission's work for the moment, and I have a worthy proposal to put to you.

If you want financial supervision and the proposals to be applied within a month, then approve straight away, with the Council and Ecofin, the amendments that Parliament is going to table to you in the next few days. It will take no time at all to approve them, and financial supervision will be applied. I hope that you will be able to relay this information to your Ecofin colleagues, who have merely outlined, in their proposal, a system for avoiding the financial supervision that was established by the Commission.

Daniel Cohn-Bendit, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group.* – (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I am going to continue somewhat along the lines of Mr Verhofstadt's speech. It is clear that we have been drifting for four months. It is clear that we have made mistakes. It is clear that, by drifting, we have given impetus to the markets and to speculation. Those Council Members who are responsible should at least admit it! They should say: 'We are to blame! It is us! It is our fault!' Mrs Merkel, Mr Sarkozy, I do not know what they are called or what they do in life, but everyone could read it in the newspapers: action needed to be taken straight away. That is my first point.

Secondly, I would like one thing to be understood at least, and that is that the task facing the Papandreou government is nigh on impossible. I call on Ecofin, on the Heads of State or Government, to realise that their countries are incapable of implementing reforms. How much time does France need to reform pensions? How much time does Germany need to build up pensions? Now, Mr Papandreou is being asked to change everything in three months. You are completely crazy.

The events currently taking place in Greece prove it. Greece – rather, Mr Papandreou – is not being given the time to achieve a consensus in Greece. No one identifies with the State in Greece. The policy is one of every man for himself, which is regrettable, and decades of political corruption in Greece are also responsible for this situation. What must be created, however, is cohesion. It must be created, it cannot be decreed!

You in Spain will see what happens if you have problems, and those in Portugal will see what happens if they have problems. Mr Barroso knows something about this, since he lost elections in this way. Therefore – no, he never lost an election – what I mean is that we must have a sense of responsibility and that we must not ask for the impossible. I have the impression that, at one time, people would say, people would hear: 'I want my money back'. Now, I have the impression that, at government level, it is a case of: 'I want to make money on the back of Greece'. For that is also the problem: by borrowing at 1.5% or 3% and lending to Greece at 3%, 5% or 6%, money is being made on the back of Greece. That is unacceptable!

Besides, Europe can take initiatives. Mr Verhofstadt is right when he talks about a European monetary fund, about an investment and solidarity fund in order to raise a European loan. The Treaties must be amended. Well, ladies and gentlemen, we in this House have the opportunity to take an initiative to amend the Treaties. Let us not wait for the Council; it is incapable of reaching a decision. Let us take the initiative, a common initiative by this House to amend the Treaties, so that, at last, there is a European monetary fund that can actually combat speculation. We can do it; yes, we can. Let us do it.

Now, I would like to say something about the way in which the events in Greece are being managed. I call on the Commission to involve the Directorate-General for Employment in the management efforts so that we can also gauge what is happening in Greece. I call on the Council to tell the IMF to involve the International Labour Organisation in the management of the events in Greece, because these are human beings we are talking about. There are employment problems, there are employees. I believe that it should not just be finance, but also security and the ILO or the Directorate-General for Employment, that dictates. The latter would counteract the madness that sometimes characterises those who take decisions on the basis of purely financial considerations.

I have one last point. There is a way of shoring up the Greek budget, and it is simple: the European Union should take an initiative aimed at disarmament in the region. In other words, a political initiative between Greece and Turkey aimed at disarmament. In other words, a political initiative to have the Russian troops ... the Greek troops ... the Turkish troops – excuse me – withdraw from Northern Cyprus. Let them disarm.

I will say one thing: people are, nonetheless, hypocritical. In the last few months France has sold six frigates to Greece for EUR 2.5 billion, helicopters for more than EUR 400 million, and some Rafale jets (one Rafale jet costs EUR 100 million). Unfortunately, however, my spying efforts do not allow me to say whether it was 10, 20 or 30 Rafale jets. That comes to almost EUR 3 billion. Then, there is Germany, which has sold six submarines to Greece in recent months for delivery over the next few years. They come to EUR 1 billion.

Yet this is completely hypocritical. We are giving them money to buy our weapons. I call on the Commission to give an account here, in the European Parliament, and at the Council, of all the weapons sold by Europeans to Greece and Turkey over the last few years. Let there be some transparency at least. Let us know! Well, I tell you that, if we are going to act responsibly, we must guarantee Greece its territorial integrity: Greece has 100 000 soldiers, more than 100 000! Germany has 200 000. This is completely absurd: a country with 11 million inhabitants has 100 000 soldiers! Let us put that to Greece. It may well be more effective than cutting the pay of someone who earns EUR 1 000. This is my request to the Commission: be a little fairer.

(Applause)

Derk Jan Eppink, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – (NL) Mr President, as a born anti-revolutionary I shall be speaking with rather less passion than Mr Cohn-Bendit, but I understand now why 1968 was a success for him; I could only follow events on television as a child.

Ladies and gentlemen, I share the concern of the European people about current developments. Savers and pensioners, for example, are asking themselves where this is heading. The question and the concern are both legitimate. A EUR 110 billion package is an enormous amount of money.

We first talked about 35 billion, then 60 billion, and now 110 billion. This is a huge sum, and the austerity package in Greece is also huge; yet we must not forget that Greece has lived on credit for too long, with a retirement age of 53 years. Who would not want that? The question is whether or not Greece will come out the other end. We are now seeing strikes, rebellion, rioting and so on. This makes the Greek problem a European problem, our problem.

The problem in Athens, Mr Cohn-Bendit, affects the Dutch, Flemings, Germans – all of us – and the contamination risk remains. I take the view that Greece should have been thrown out of the euro area once the budget misappropriations were discovered. We should have set a cut-off point, but we failed to do so and now we have to continue and hope against hope for success.

We must also rewrite the rules of the Stability and Growth Pact. It is providing neither stability nor, at present, economic growth. In my opinion, supervision must be strengthened, the European Commission must show more courage and there must be greater monitoring of compliance with the rules. This has been absent in recent years.

As I see it, however, we also need an exit procedure for countries that can no longer cope in the euro area. We have an exit procedure for the European Union but not for the euro area, and I believe we do need this option, so that a country may introduce and devalue its own currency to get itself back onto dry land. Why is there an exit procedure for the European Union itself, via the Treaty of Lisbon, but not for the euro area?

Commissioner Rehn told me last time that a country's departure from the euro area would run counter to the ever closer union, but Greece is currently demonstrating where the limits of this ever closer union lie. Suddenly we have a weak euro and a low growth rate. Ladies and gentlemen, we are held captive by the theory of the ever closer union. We are holding European taxpayers to ransom, and those taxpayers are becoming more uneasy with each passing day; this should not be forgotten.

Lothar Bisky, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, we must, of course, provide assistance to Greece. However, the so-called rescue operation also has some absurd elements. With France and Germany acting like great powers, the process of reaching a decision on the assistance package was very expensive and protracted.

For years, the financial markets have been increasingly deregulated and now everyone is surprised that it is expensive. Who will now pay the price for the political errors? The workers, ordinary citizens? Banks are not being placed under any obligation. No, once again it is the taxpayers who are to pick up the tab and dig deep in their pockets to pay for the profiteering of the banks. Once again, dependent workers are to have to accept pay cuts. With the dictates from the International Monetary Fund, any semblance of a democratic decision-making process has been eliminated.

In the case of the oil slick in the Gulf of Mexico, application of the polluter-pays principle has been called for. I believe that is right. Anyone who digs for money or gold should also be responsible for the damage in cases of doubt. At the moment – at least in Germany – banks do not even have to pay back the debts that they have taken on and with which they are happily speculating against the euro – yes, against the euro. Furthermore, they are still speculating, even though we have been saying for a long time that something needs to be done about this.

Proposals for what could be done are on the table. A ban on trading credit derivatives and on short selling, the introduction of a financial market transaction tax, special levies on bonuses in the financial sector, a legally binding bank and insurance levy – all of these proposals are on the table. Of course, Greece must also do its homework. Like other countries of the European Union, Greece should also tax wealth, combat corruption and reduce its arms expenditure. Mr Cohn-Bendit has already spoken very convincingly about this. I will therefore omit the facts in this regard and endorse what he said in his speech.

I can understand people in Athens going out into the streets and protesting. What I cannot understand is the violence. I agree with everyone who has expressed sympathy for the victims, whose suffering is most regrettable. Violence will achieve the opposite of what the protesters and honest demonstrators want. We must call for an end to the violence.

Nikolaos Salavrakos, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – (EL) Mr President, thank you very much. We are trying to make the numbers look good and it is a well-known fact that, when the numbers look good, the people are unhappy. We need to strike a balance; we need to balance the figures and we need to keep the people happy.

As a result of this unorthodox behaviour, Greece is mourning three victims today, the death of three workers as a result of aggressive protests by other workers. Throughout Europe today, the economic crisis which came at us from the other side of the Atlantic and which is tending to be worse over here, is heaping scorn on politics and politicians.

In Greece, the grassroot sections of society are very badly disposed towards politicians: there are 300 members of parliament in Greece and I hear the beat of Greek society drumming out 'hang all 300 of them'. These are dangerous times. I read about the same things and about the same scorn for politics in other Member States of the European Union; we all know about this, just as we all know that we need to maintain democracy.

This being so and with these thoughts in mind, because I have no time to expand further, what I want to stress is that the leaders of tomorrow will need to move more quickly and in the direction of a more permanent solution for more states. Greece is one of them; it is the tip of the iceberg. However, there are other Member States – both inside and outside the euro area – facing economic problems which will worsen over coming months.

President. – Mr Salavrakos, I did not interrupt you because you are Greek and your words are very important to all of us.

Barry Madlener (NI). – (NL) Mr President, I should like to address in particular Mr Verhofstadt, Mr Daul and Mr Schulz – he is not here at the moment, but I address his group, the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament – as they were partly responsible for the problems. They say solidarity is needed. Let me remind you that Greece has been the largest net beneficiary of European funds for years. This has resulted in the country rigging the game, and you have been only too willing to be taken for a ride, as you are all so Europhile and crave European enlargement so much that you have ceased to be critical altogether, and now we are left holding the baby.

I do not know if you remember that Spain – the country that is next in line – has legalised two million illegal immigrants in the last 15 years. You all thought that was great, but now Spain has 20% unemployment and it, too, is in deep trouble, as is Portugal. These are all countries with socialist governments that you have supported with European funds for years and which have made a mess of things by living beyond their means. Year after year you have looked on, year after year you have approved this, and now we, the citizens, are having to pay the price. You should be thoroughly ashamed.

The only solution – which I have not heard anyone mentioning here – is that we now be tough on Greece. The country must reintroduce the drachma, as its membership of the euro area is untenable. If Spain is next, it simply reintroduces the peseta, and likewise Portugal the escudo, and then they will be able to compete again. This Europe is faulty, and northern European citizens will soon refuse to pay any more for your

mistakes and for the lax socialist governments in these countries. After all, to reiterate, Greece, Spain and Portugal – all socialist countries – have all received European Union funds. Immigration has run riot whilst you have looked on and done nothing.

Stavros Lambrinidis (S&D). – (EL) Mr President, thank you. I should like to comment on something which Mr Salavrakos said earlier about the three people, the three workers, who were killed in Athens today by three other workers. There is absolutely no excuse for this. These people were killed by murderers, by criminals. Workers held a massive peace rally in Athens today. They did not kill anyone. The real criminals were condemned by the Prime Minister, Georgios Papandreou, and all the political parties in Parliament just a short while ago. It is a great mistake and it is dangerous to confuse peaceful protests and criminal acts such as those committed in Athens. They are condemned by everyone, they do not speak for Greek workers and they do not express everyone's conviction that, if we unite as a nation, we shall get the country out of the crisis.

President. – I would not like to get involved in a discussion about this. However, please allow me to say that all of us in this Chamber – all Members of the European Parliament, and I am sure this also includes the President of the Commission and Mr López Garrido on behalf of the Council – would like, once again, to express enormous solidarity with the Greek nation. They are our friends, and we know what great responsibility there is on both sides of the conflict which is taking place in Greece. It is a huge responsibility.

I would like to tell you all that I, too, have experienced that responsibility, and that I have experienced it from both sides. I was a member of a trade union and an activist, and was very active for many years. I have also been the head of a government, and I understand the difficult situation which exists, today, in Greece. We all want to show solidarity and to express our deepest sympathies, above all to the families and friends of the victims. It is natural that we want to do this, and we consider it our duty in the European Parliament. Thank you for the responsible debate which we have had, today, in this Chamber.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) We are experiencing a serious situation. There is an obvious lack of solidarity of the European Union's leaders – Germany's in particular – regarding the agreement on Greece's situation. Above all, they are taking political control of the country, whilst forcing the Greeks to regress decades in social terms. This calls into question all the principles that they have always proclaimed of social and economic cohesion, convergence, solidarity, and the so-called European social model.

As is being well shown by the struggle of the workers and working classes in Greece, it is unacceptable to require the Greek Government to put their fundamental rights at risk. This is being imposed in exchange for a loan at a rate of interest higher than that of the International Monetary Fund itself. It seems there are no limits for the leaders of the euro area. They have gained from Greece's fragility, and now they are imposing their imperial position of absolute domination of the country's internal policies in exchange for a loan on which they will also gain from the interest.

This decision must be changed at the next summit. The leaders must opt for a non-refundable grant from the Union's budget, either on an extraordinary basis, or financed by future Union budgets. The richer countries in the euro area must adopt the principle of economic and social cohesion once and for all.

IN THE CHAIR: MRS DURANT

Vice-President

19. Europe 2020 - new European Strategy for Jobs and Growth (debate)

President. – The next item is the Council and Commission statement on Europe 2020 – new European Strategy for Jobs and Growth.

Diego López Garrido, President-in-Office of the Council. – (ES) Madam President, I am delighted to be tackling a subject that is of the utmost importance to the Council and the Spanish Presidency, which is the Europe 2020 strategy for growth and quality employment.

As has already been said, we are emerging from the worst economic crisis since the 1930s, and we must do everything we can to guarantee the recovery that we are beginning to see in the European Union, according

to the forecasts presented by the Commission today, and at the same time, to mitigate the social consequences of the crisis.

However, as well as this short-term work that is being done by the Member States and the European institutions, we need to look beyond this decade and ensure the sustainability of our social model, the European social model. This is the dual challenge contained in the Europe 2020 strategy.

It is about not returning to a crisis that has not yet completely come to an end, and it is above all about doing so by establishing a strategy for growth, a model for growth that is adapted to the new times. It also needs to be a strategy for growth that is feasible and enforceable, and represents the European Union's major political and economic commitment for the next few years.

As you are well aware, discussions on the Europe 2020 strategy began among the Heads of State or Government on an informal basis on 11 February. The strategy was then discussed in the European Council in March, and was also discussed in many of the formations of the Council being chaired by the Spanish Government during this six-month period.

In March, the European Council gave the go-ahead to the launch of the Europe 2020 strategy, which will take place definitively at the European Council in June, and established the elements, the structure and even the road map for the future development of the strategy.

The strategy is going to be focused on key issues for Europe: knowledge and innovation, the sustainable economy that the European Parliament was requesting, high employment, and social integration.

Of these five key targets, those that have been quantified are employment: 75% for men and women, investing 3% of GDP in research and development and the '20/20/20 targets' for combating climate change. The target for decreasing the education drop-out rate and increasing the proportion of the population with higher education has not yet been quantified, nor has the target been set for promoting social integration, and in particular reducing poverty.

All of this is on the basis of the communication adopted by the Commission, which was a determining factor in the subsequent decision and the conclusions adopted at the March European Council.

Firstly, the structure of the Europe 2020 strategy has some integrated guidelines. The Commission has just put forward its proposal on the focus for these integrated guidelines – the Spanish Presidency has committed to working in all the Council's relevant areas of action so that the Economic and Financial Affairs Council and the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council can inform the European Council in June – and also the employment guidelines that require a European Parliament opinion.

Secondly, we have the main targets, which I referred to before.

Thirdly, there is something new in the new strategy: the national objectives. Every Member State must set its national targets, but they naturally need to be integrated into the European targets and supported by the Commission and the Council.

Fourthly, there has also been talk of what are described as the 'bottlenecks' that shape growth at national level. There is also something new in relation to the Lisbon Strategy: the Spanish Presidency is going to focus above all on those that affect the internal market.

Fifthly, there are the 'flagship initiatives' that are being developed by the Commission. We want the first of these to be realised during the Spanish Presidency: the Digital Agenda, which will be covered in the Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council in May, after a communication that the Commission has undertaken to publish on 18 May.

To conclude, Madam President, I would also like to say that there are going to be specific debates on the new strategy in some of the formations of the Council, and that, as far as possible, we want those debates to be public, for example the next one in the Education, Youth and Culture Council next week.

I would like to emphasise that the work will of course not be finished in June. That is when the Europe 2020 strategy will be launched, but the work will not be finished then. It will have to be implemented and applied through the national reform programmes.

Finally, I would like to say that, from the point of view of the 'governance' of the strategy, the European Council will play an important role. (It has played an important role from the start, and it is an idea that has

repeatedly been supported by both the Spanish Presidency and the President of the European Council, Mr Van Rompuy, who has played a very special role.) The European Council is going to play a very important role and undertake a very important task in developing and guiding this strategy, alongside the European Commission. They will be the two key institutions for implementing this strategy, which already has specific instruments that we all want to use.

José Manuel Barroso, *President of the Commission*. – Madam President, Europe has been presented with a stark choice. We could take a beggar-thy-neighbour approach to the economic and financial crisis, a *sauve qui peut* attitude that would risk everything we have achieved over the last 60 years. Or we could increase European cooperation in an effective way, using all the tools at our disposal.

Events over the last few months – continuing market volatility, the need for further financial market reforms and the need for a determined consolidation of public finances – have only increased the clarity of this choice. We need to stress the importance of the European dimension more than ever and we have an opportunity to do precisely that, with the objectives of Europe 2020.

I have been invited to talk to you now about Europe 2020, but looking in isolation at this package of measures for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth does not really make sense, because one of the key conclusions we can draw from the crisis we are now living is that we have to work together, at all levels and in all areas, to fill the gaps in the framework for regulation and supervision of the financial markets, to restore macroeconomic stability and sound public finances, to launch the structural reforms that can steer Europe to a path of sustainable growth and jobs.

All these three *volets* matter equally – we need to get it right in all three if we are to meet our objectives. So all this demands a holistic approach, financial markets reforms, reinforced economic governance, Europe 2020 for sustainable, inclusive, smart growth and leading global reforms through the G20, because many of these matters have external dimensions. We have to use all the levers at our disposal in an intelligent way, recognising that each one has an impact on all the others. Let me touch briefly on most of them. I will not come back to the financial issues I just mentioned in the previous statement but let me mention the G20 to start with.

The G20 has been instrumental in addressing the financial economic crisis, improving governance on a more global level. The European Union can take a large share of the credit for giving the impetus to the G20 and feeding it with ideas. The Commission has made a particular contribution to this, ensuring that the interests of all 27 Member States are properly reflected in our work. We will work hard to ensure that the European Union maintains its leadership at the Toronto Summit in June and the Seoul Summit in November.

A key objective will be to get a clear message from the G20 on an exit strategy to support recovery – one where all major economies play their part. We have to address globally some of the imbalances that were at the origin of this crisis. We should also ensure that the burden of rebalancing global growth is shared by all G20 members. Raising awareness of our strategy for Europe 2020 and enhanced economic coordination in the EU in general, and in the euro area in particular, will be important in this context. It is important that Europe presents a coordinated approach to the G20.

Another objective will be driving on with financial market reform. We need to keep up pressure on our international partners to deliver the timely and consistent implementation of the existing G20 commitments with a level playing field.

Over and above this, I believe the time is right for the G20 to send a strong signal on how the financial sector can contribute to the financing of bank repair. We should strive for a coordinated and strong approach. A global agreement on bank stability levies, linked to concrete resolution measures, would send a strong signal. As the IMF recently suggested, this could be complemented by a tax on financial activities or profits. It is going to be an extremely difficult debate. I have to tell you, from the preparatory work going on with our partners in the G20, there are many who oppose this idea; nevertheless, I think we should pursue it. The European Union message will certainly be strongest if we speak with one voice and if we can say that the European Union has already done its own homework.

That is why, before Toronto, we should aim to have agreement on the key financial services regulation files that I mentioned earlier this afternoon. That will require flexibility and creative pragmatism from both this House and from the Council.

This brings me to the core of Europe 2020 – now placed in its proper context as part of the holistic approach I talked about at the beginning. As you know, the main elements of the Europe 2020 strategy were adopted

by Heads of State and Government in March. We have had several occasions to debate them in this House. Even before we made a proposal, the Commission consulted you about this. We now have to flesh out the strategy in detail; the urgent need for action is clear to all. More than ever, as was highlighted in some of the statements made in the previous debate, one of the conclusions of this financial crisis and the problems of the euro area is the need to go ahead with structural reform in a coordinated and determined manner.

Better coordination of our economic policies is the centre-piece of Europe 2020. Even before this Greek crisis we were suggesting and proposing more coordination of economic policies. This is clearly necessary in order to avoid future crises. It is essential if we want to exit the crisis successfully, restore growth, translate that growth into more and better jobs, and ultimately ensure a sustainable and inclusive future for Europe.

The five targets proposed by the Commission are now largely consensual; numerical rates have already been fixed concerning targets on employment, R&D and the fight against climate change.

The numerical target for the education objective – reducing school drop-out rates and increasing the share of the population with a tertiary or equivalent education – will be agreed by the European Council in June 2010, taking into account the proposal of the Commission.

I am also strongly committed to getting a numerical target on the fight against poverty and social exclusion. We simply cannot accept the continuing scandal of 80 million people at risk of poverty in the European Union. Work is continuing in the Council on this issue, and I will do all I can to convince the Member States of the importance of this target, knowing that this House shares our determination.

Europe 2020 must be a balanced programme. Of course, you cannot have social equity without a competitive market, but nor are we willing to accept a Europe of economic efficiency without fairness.

The national targets will enable a better and more efficient monitoring of the progress of the Member States, to ensure that we achieve the objectives set at EU level. Member States are in the process of setting these national targets, in cooperation with the Commission. The targets, I hope, will be agreed at the June European Council, so that implementation can start immediately after.

The Commission issued a proposal on the integrated guidelines last week. They reflect the priorities of the Europe 2020 strategy. The number of guidelines is more limited than last time – now we have 10 as opposed to 24 – which will encourage ownership of the instrument by all the different actors. I think this is progress.

The June European Council should give political endorsement to the principles behind these integrated guidelines, but, of course, they will only be adopted after we have discussed them with you – the European Parliament – which I hope can be as soon as possible.

The Europe 2020 strategy is not just inspirational, a list of objectives, it is not just a vision – it is a reform programme. Action will be taken at European level, but equally important is the fact that reforms will have to be made in each of our 27 Member States, in full respect of the principle of subsidiarity. We will make clear what has to be done at European level and what has to be at national level. Implementation will be key, as was said by the distinguished representative of the Council, Mr López Garrido, there is now a much stronger awareness at Member State level of the need for reinforcing European governance. I hope that the Member States have learned with some of the shortcomings of the Lisbon Strategy where, in fact, many, if not all, of the objectives were good and in the right direction but there was not, let us be frank, enough sense of ownership and not enough muscle in the implementation of the programmes. That is why we need to close this delivery gap that prevailed under the Lisbon Strategy. For that, you have a crucial role to play in ensuring the successful implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy.

You, the European Parliament – apart from your role as a co-legislator – can also very effectively mobilise citizens and also – why not? – the national parliaments. What is critically important is the kind of relations, if I may say this to you, that the European Parliament establishes with national parliaments. So that we are sure that these reforms are seen not only as the reforms ‘they’ make in Brussels, or sometimes in Strasbourg, but that we make at all levels in European society. The sense of urgency, the need for reforms must be shared by all key socioeconomic and political players; at all levels of government but also by social partners. I believe it is very important and I welcome all the announcements made by Prime Minister Zapatero regarding the need to involve these social partners. Then we must ensure stronger, joined-up governance by tying all our coordination instruments together: Europe 2020 and Stability and Growth Pact reporting and evaluation, carried out simultaneously, to bring the means and aims together; input from the European Systemic Risk Board to ensure overall financial stability; structural reforms; measures to increase competitiveness;

macroeconomic developments – all coming together to get us out of the crisis and firmly on the road to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

If we want to be serious about economic governance, that is the only way to do it. We cannot speak of serious economic governance at European level and separate the macroeconomics from the microeconomics, separate the internal from the external.

So we need the Member States and the European institutions to look at these matters in a holistic approach and putting all those instruments together – that is the only way to instil some confidence as well in our strategy.

I spoke of a stark choice at the beginning of this speech, and the Commission knows which paths it wants to take. I am confident this House shares that choice – a choice of determination, a choice for Europe – and I count on your input as we continue our work.

Corien Wortmann-Kool, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (NL) Madam President, President Barroso, Mr López Garrido, this debate on the EU 2020 strategy was rightly preceded by a debate on the crisis in the euro area, and the crucial issue in each debate is how to strengthen European governance. You talk of coordination of economic policy, but a major problem is that all of this has been interpreted too much as a free-for-all and Member States have taken no notice of the agreements. This really cannot continue. This goes for the Stability and Growth Pact, and is also the main lesson to be learnt from the Lisbon Strategy. Thus, things must be done differently with the EU 2020 strategy.

Our group, the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), expects to see an ambitious commitment by the Commission to European economic governance before this 2020 strategy. In June, we expect the Council to take resolute decisions and also to commit itself to ambitious objectives for the Member States and to sound European governance. Parliament will challenge you to do so if need be. The budgetary plans for the coming year must be in line with this 2020 strategy, and on other points, too, this House will play its institutional role to the letter, in the interests of sustainable economic growth and of jobs for our citizens.

Madam President, the turbulence in the euro area is further testimony to the importance of sound public finances in terms of the stability of the euro, of financial and economic stability and of preventing us passing burdens on to future generations, to our children. Reform of public finances is an important precondition for a successful EU 2020 strategy and for restoring our competitiveness, therefore. That is why it is so important for you to present proposals next week for strengthening the Stability and Growth Pact, Commissioner Rehn. It is crucial to strengthen its preventive effect and to put sustainable public finances on a sounder footing in the Member States. Therefore, on behalf of our group, I would encourage you to shoulder the responsibility falling to you as the Commission and come forward with ambitious plans. You can count on our support.

We, Parliament, must look at how – together with you – we can challenge the Council to actually agree to strengthening the Stability and Growth Pact. It is to be welcomed that the Council has set up a task force. I do hope, however, that the Council will give its assent to the European Commission proposals by the end of the year.

We must make full use of the opportunities afforded by the Treaty of Lisbon to strengthen European governance in the short term. There is no time to lose.

Pervenche Berès, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (FR) Madam President, President of the Commission, President-in-Office of the Council, the link between the two debates that we have just had is intellectually coherent. Does that link really mean anything in practice? We have some doubts within the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, because we do not see any coherence between the text as it has been presented to us by the Commission and a strategic partnership that you want to establish in July, without Parliament having had the opportunity to give an explicit opinion on the 'employment' guidelines.

How can one think that we would commit ourselves for the next 10 years? Firstly, without taking stock of how the Lisbon strategy has turned out, you tell us, 'Everything has changed: we no longer have 27 guidelines; we now have 10!' Is that change, though, Mr Barroso?

Coherence is about thinking that, if we want to make a success of the 2020 strategy, we have to start from where we are before we look at where we are going. We also have to look at where we want to go. The fact

is, where we are today is in the worst crisis that the European Union as a whole has known since its inception; there have been none more serious than this. We cannot ignore it. We cannot embark on a strategy to come out of the crisis, since that would mean asking the public authorities to shirk their economic responsibilities in order to give free rein to the market.

We cannot consider that strategy without using the tools at our disposal. As you well know, Mr Barroso, we are not as rich as all that. We have a tool, which is called the Stability and Growth Pact; we have another tool, which is called the financial perspective. If they are not clearly linked, we will go nowhere.

Further, when we look at the point of departure, we have some concerns. Firstly, we in the S&D Group demand, as a matter of urgency, that the Member States no longer be subject to speculation on the markets. This is not about Greece, or about any other Member State. This is about a domino effect and about the lack of restrictions on speculation.

That is why we are proposing the introduction of a financial stability mechanism by which to protect the Member States from such speculation, so that they can do what they have to do, which is to get back on the road to recovery and thereby safeguard the social model. For everyone knows, everyone has said during this crisis that our social model is our greatest asset where globalisation is concerned.

If your 2020 strategy results in budgetary consolidation that totally destroys this social model, Europe will be the loser in international competition in the future. Therefore, it will lose its ability to strongly assert this model that we embody, and we will have surrendered our place to other continents, unless we surrender it to market forces alone. This is not our vision of the future.

Lena Ek, on behalf of the ALDE Group. – Madam President, we have known for many months that Greece is in a very difficult position. We know that the euro is depreciating at a rapid rate before our eyes and that government bond spreads are rising. No one can still doubt that Europe is in a serious crisis, just when we thought we were back on our feet again.

We seriously need to address the issues of competitiveness, of productivity and of sustainable economic growth, but still the leaders of Europe are bickering about what action to take. This is not the time. We need real action, and we need it now. Since it is apparent that peer pressure in the Council does not work, we need binding targets and new transparent means to scrutinise the reports about each Member State. We need a fundamental respect for the Stability and Growth Pact and we need reliable and true figures on which we can base our decisions.

To put additional pressure on governments, structural funds and other European support must be tied to governments' ability to provide us with correct figures. Let me make a comparison. When a small farmer makes mistakes on half a hectare he or she loses out on the support for everything he or she does for a number of years. That is the comparison we have to make. That is why we are so tough on governance in parliamentary resolutions.

It is also most embarrassing that the Commission is not putting forward proposals which we have been discussing for years. To create a platform for future growth, the strategic policy agenda must be included in the EU 2020 strategy. Let me take some examples. We negotiated the economic recovery plan. Most of it is not enforced. Parliament asked to have a plan B, so it is included in the results, but the plan B is not yet set into action. We have decided on a set plan, new energy technology. We still do not have 50% of the funding for the set plan, a real strategic tool. The most cost-effective means to reduce greenhouse gases is to move forward with a strategy for energy efficiency. I therefore call on the Commission and the Member States to put energy efficiency at the top of the agenda in action.

The existing legislation must be stepped up because it is not sufficient. We need the promised Energy Efficiency Action Plan, promised for so long. We need energy in infrastructure, the energy equivalent of fast trains, super grids and high-tech smart grids are needed, and we have the money for this.

We need to ensure technical innovation and we also need to encourage and put forward a strategy to combat social exclusion and gender inclusion. In the light of the current crisis, the Commission must step up to its responsibility and finish what we started together. The Council has to be bolder and stop bickering. We will put forward a bold resolution on the second step of the 2020 strategy.

Rebecca Harms, on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group. – (DE) Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, it rather borders on political provocation when this Europe 2020 programme is presented as a great strategy for getting us further out of the crisis. We only need to look at the previous policy for regulating the financial

markets in order to see – if we are reasonably honest – that for months – years in fact – we have been promising to regulate these markets that have run wild, but so far have only managed to make a tiny bit of progress. As regards Greece, we are now being forced to take a look in the mirror.

From the crisis in Greece we can see that what has happened up to now is totally inadequate. Our citizens have heard us declare that we are rescuing the banks. They have gritted their teeth and accepted it. Now they are paying the price. Public finances are already overburdened by these measures. Now we are rescuing Greece, and we need to do it, there is absolutely no doubt about that. It will be yet another challenge for the public finances in many countries of the European Union.

The banks are in the black and yet are applauded when it emerges that they are voluntarily contributing a bit to Greece. Mr Barroso, in the European Union, a market to which 27 States belong, we have no alternative but to actually come up with a financial transaction tax or other instrument that will reduce the hunger of speculators to make profits in this area. We really do need an instrument with which, in a genuinely fair way, we can make those who are profiting from this crisis and speculating against the euro contribute to what we now need to finance. In respect of public finances, we cannot carry on the way we have started.

In the paper that you presented, I still cannot see a vision of what is to happen now. The reference to the fact that this needs to be regulated at a global level is familiar from the climate debate. In that regard, we have not made any progress for many years.

For me, climate is the second major issue. We are by no means out of that crisis either, but are sinking deeper in, because we have not succeeded in taking appropriate measures. I actually find it deplorable that today, shortly before this debate, it became clear that Connie Hedegaard is working as hard as possible in the Commission to try to get the minimum target for the European Union implemented. If we look at the current situation, it is high time we raised our targets to 30%. If we do not raise this target, then we can forget our famous European emissions trading, for example. If CO₂ has no appropriate price because our targets are too weak, then we have had heated debates for years but are still a long way from achieving the target we set ourselves. With regard to the transformation of the European economy to make it more sustainable – as indicated in the headings of the Commission's programme – all of us would say that we want to be involved in that. However, Mr Barroso, with regard to this programme, your Commission has still not said how the targets are to be achieved in the European economy. What instruments and what incentive programmes are to be used to do this?

Mrs Ek mentioned some specific areas. There is a great deal of work to be done on this programme. On the basis of what we currently have in our hand, the European Parliament cannot yet, in my view, say that after Lisbon this is now a successful strategy. This Europe 2020 has, so to speak, been formulated in such a way as to take us from the failure of the Lisbon Strategy into the next failure.

Michał Tomasz Kamiński, *on behalf of the ECR Group.* – (PL) Madam President, I think Mr Barroso really does have, today, a most difficult role. It is one of the most difficult jobs in the European Union that he has to do. He has to divide his time between reasoning with the Left and with the Right – with people who have the best answers to the most difficult problems. Mr Barroso has to manoeuvre artfully between these propositions. I think the best of these is the 2020 Strategy, which has been proposed by the Commission. I am surprised by the proposals which have been made in this Chamber, according to which the way to repair the present, very difficult, situation is to repeat our mistakes.

I would like to say that I spent 18 years of my life in a country which was called the People's Republic of Poland, in which there was a Ministry of Internal Trade and where the shelves in the shops were empty. There was a Ministry of Internal Trade, but there was no internal trade. Today, and for 20 years now, for which I praise God, we do not have a Ministry of Internal Trade in Poland and we do have internal trade.

I would like to say that the remedy for the current crisis certainly is not greater regulation, nor is it higher taxes or more intervention. I am not, of course, a free-market fanatic. I think the role of the state is to correct market mechanisms, but this should be done very carefully. If we want to talk honestly about development in Europe, let us remember how we voted on the Services Directive in the last parliamentary term. Let us remember what happened to the Services Directive in this Chamber. For without the free flow of persons, services and capital, Europe will not be able to compete effectively with the world's other continents.

We are hearing here, today, that we cannot compete with other regions of political and economic integration, but surely it is we ourselves who are forcing our continent's entrepreneurs to go elsewhere by excessive

regulation and placing excessive burdens on businesses. Let us, therefore, ask ourselves what more we could do to support the 2020 strategy, because there is no other, and of course we do have to get out of the crisis.

There is also no doubt that we must help Greece. For us Poles, whom I represent here, the word 'solidarity' has great significance. We must, therefore, show our solidarity with Greece today. I want to emphasise yet again that we must do everything possible for Europe to recover from the economic crisis, because it is not only a problem faced by millions of families, but it is also a problem of faith in our future. I have faith in the future of Europe, I believe in our success.

Gabriele Zimmer, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group.* – (DE) Madam President, if I compare the debate on the last agenda item with the current debate, then we are clearly talking about two parallel worlds. On the one side we have a European Union in which States like Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal find themselves in a deep crisis and other States like Germany and France are taking blocking action, while on the other side we have a European Union for which a strategy has been developed that does not in any way meet these challenges.

With this strategy, we have neither defined a new direction for the development of the European Union nor have we provided answers to the questions relating to instruments that do not work. Similarly, we have not made any attempt to clarify the distribution of competences between Member States and the European Union or the relationship between the euro area and the countries in the European Union that are not part of the euro area. We have not included any of the issues that came up over the last few years in connection with the Lisbon Strategy and we have not given any forward-looking answers. We have provided no clarification with regard to the future development of the European Union. This has, of course, given rise to much of the discord that we can now sense.

With regard to the discussion on European economic governance and the European monetary fund, too, we cannot simply act as if it is possible to continue with this strategy in this way. Before we talk about the implementation of Europe 2020, we urgently need to put the strategy on hold and give ourselves more time for the decision-making process and we need to carry out an analysis of the actual challenges we face. In so doing, we need to involve civil society and, above all, Parliament to a significantly greater extent than has been the case in the past. Otherwise, we will be heading for disaster with our eyes wide open!

Godfrey Bloom, *on behalf of the EFD Group.* – Madam President, it is a shame that Mr Barroso has fled the Chamber. I feel he would have learned so much from me this evening!

I would counsel you all not to worry too much about the EU in 2020 because I rather fancy it will not be here! It will go the same way as the Soviet Union which it so resembles, and for the same reasons: it is centralised; it is corrupt; it is undemocratic and it is incompetent; it is driven by an unholy alliance of big business and fat-cat bureaucrats; it is sponsored by an ecofascist agenda from a platform of perverted junk science referred to as 'climate change'.

Whenever the people of Europe get the chance of a referendum, they reject it. The British, of course, have not been given the chance to have their say, thanks to the deceit of the only three parties with access to television debate in my country, aided and abetted by an EU-corrupted public-service broadcaster known as the BBC.

The EU is already crumbling. The scenes in Greece today will spread through the other Mediterranean countries sooner than we can imagine, and they will eventually reach northern European countries, which are being left to pick up the tab. Our children and our grandchildren will curse us as they are left to pick up the pieces of this wholly avoidable shambles!

Franz Obermayr (NI). – (DE) Madam President, smart, sustainable growth, actionism, reforms, economic governance – many fine words and lofty goals. However, I have a couple of questions in this regard that give me cause for concern. Will the proclaimed new strategy suffer a similar fate to its predecessor? How can we involve the regions and local authorities so that this strategy will actually succeed and, in particular, how can we better encourage and monitor the reorganisation of national budgets? However, with our model solutions we must be very careful to ensure that a centralistic form of European economic governance does not slip in through the back door and erode the last remnants of national sovereignty.

Sovereignty also means taking responsibility, and consequently taking responsibility for the wrong finance policy. It is unacceptable for some Member States to live beyond their means at the cost of the other Member States. We must show solidarity, of course, but it must not be a one-way street. Centralistic economic governance from Brussels dictating the European standard would surely be the wrong way to go.

Gunnar Hökmark (PPE). - Madam President, I think it is important that we talk about good governance in the sense that it is, of course, important that we put pressure on all of us to bring in the reforms that are needed, but let us not forget that the main good governance we have in our own hands is to ensure that the European Union does what the European Union should do.

We have had some shortcomings there; how we have upheld the stability and growth pact is one of those. Let us not forget that before we construct new rules we need to stick to the most fundamental rules, but let me also point to some other things. Regarding financial markets; let us talk about financial markets as a part of the economy, not as a separate sector, because we will never get investments and new jobs if we think this is a separate issue.

I was a little bit disturbed when I noted that the Chair of the Basel II Committee assumed that the new rule for capital requirement will lower economic growth by 1%. That is a rather low level from him. Increasing the capital requirement might lead to less investment and that is really not what we need to do when we want to create a new confidence in the European economy at the same time as we are exiting from the budget deficits we have.

Let me point to one of the things we can do together, and that is to create the knowledge economy. It is a paradox that the more our societies and economies are turning into knowledge economies, the less of an internal market we have because the internal market was legislated for industry and the old-time economy, and less for the service sector, where we need to go further regarding the service directive. Let me also say we should be implementing a reform making European universities more independent and more European, open for students and researchers and creating a dynamic development in the knowledge society.

Let us stick to all the things we can do together at European level. That is the best European good governance we can have.

Marita Ulvskog (S&D). - (SV) Madam President, I come from the same Member State as the previous speaker, but I stand on the political left. This is also evident in the proposals that we Social Democrats are responsible for.

We see the situation in the world. We see the situation in Greece: fighting in the streets, an impending general strike, desperation, anger, anger about the market games with all countries. This has, of course, also been exacerbated by the core euro area countries having failed their fellow Member State, Greece. However, crises can spread. It is a dangerous time for all countries. Few countries can count on remaining safe. For this reason, we all need to focus on overcoming the crisis and coming up with good proposals. However, we need to choose a way that does not merely involve the attainment of short-term solutions and short-term successes and putting out a fire which then flares up again and burns down a considerable amount around it.

Firstly, then, we need to invest in something that will keep demand high. What concerns me ahead of the summit in June is that we are choosing the way that the previous speaker talked about. It is important for the summit to make clear commitments not to put Europe into low-energy mode. It is important to keep demand high and to stimulate investment. We need to get the unemployment rate down for women, men, young people and older people. Personally, I am very disappointed with the equality sham that the last Council presented after its meeting.

Secondly, we need to start changing into climate-smart societies. Clearly, in every crisis there is also an opportunity for development: to change paths, to make a switch. It is incredibly important for the Commission to give Mrs Hedegaard room to actually be a climate politician who can help to make a difference in Europe at the meeting in Cancún.

My third point relates to the financial markets. A few weeks ago in the Special Committee on the Financial, Economic and Social Crisis we had a visit from an American professor, who put it like this: in the United States we say that we cannot regulate the financial market because they are not doing so in Europe. We need to, but we do not have the courage. What do you say in Europe then? Well, you say that you cannot regulate the financial market because they are not doing so in the United States. That is how we go on, throwing the ball into each other's courts in that way. There are winners in this kind of policy, but there are also many losers. That is something we need to have the courage to change in this Europe.

IN THE CHAIR: MR ROUČEK*Vice-President*

Wolf Klinz (ALDE). – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, from my economic experience I know that strategies are only as good as their specific implementation measures and the means of monitoring them. The Commission is yet to provide an answer in this regard. We listen to the goals, with which we can thoroughly identify, we hear the lofty intentions, but we hear next to nothing about how these goals are to be achieved in concrete terms.

I had actually assumed that the financial and economic crisis – the largest we have experienced since the Second World War and which has now deepened on account of the additional problem of the national debt crisis – would have been at the top of the Commission's list of considerations. In my opinion, that should have been the logical starting point, as both crises have changed the situation significantly.

If we do not just stop at lofty intentions but actually want to achieve something in the next ten years then we will have to address a number of points in very concrete terms:

Firstly, we need to review our finances – not only in the EU, but in each Member State, according to uniform criteria – so that we know where we really stand, what our financial leeway is and what we can actually afford to do.

Secondly, we need to develop a crisis resolution mechanism to prevent us being thrown out of kilter again in the future should there be further storms on the markets.

Thirdly, we need to complete the internal market in areas where it is not yet complete – I am expecting a great deal from Mr Monti's report – including for services.

Fourthly, we need to convincingly set out how we are to supplement the common monetary policy with a common, closely interlinked economic and finance policy and even a fiscal policy.

Fifthly, we need to set out very specifically how we can replace the divergence that we have observed between the Member States with increasing convergence by concentrating on economic projects that are truly European in nature. There are very many of these: energy policy, energy interconnections, high-speed rail and road networks, navigation systems and many similar projects.

Emilie Turunen (Verts/ALE). - (DA) Mr President, I should like to start by saying that the work on this EU 2020 strategy is very important, because we need to give some serious consideration to how we shall support ourselves in Europe in future. We need to give serious consideration to what the 23 million unemployed European citizens will do in future. Overall, however, we in the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance feel the strategy lacks any specific objectives in a number of important areas that are intended to make the project of a social Europe into a top priority over the next 10 years.

Firstly, we cannot see any clear target for reducing youth unemployment, which is alarmingly high in all Member States. The first steps here could be to introduce a European youth guarantee, which would give young people a foothold in the labour market. Secondly, we should ensure that we have specific targets for combating poverty. I think it is a disgrace if Europe's Member States in the world's richest region cannot agree on specific targets for reducing poverty. Some people say that they do not like the definition. To these people I would say that they should not let technicalities stand in the way. Others are saying that we do not have a legal basis in the Treaties. To these people I would say that we have the new Treaty of Lisbon.

Thirdly, we must work in a consistent manner on a binding employment plan. We need to link green investments to new jobs. We need to re-educate and train our workforce to be able to take up these jobs. Last of all, the EU's Heads of State or Government must ensure that there is a distinct objective to develop a social Europe, where the same level of ambition is applied to employment and social security and where the focus is not only on the quantity, but also on the quality of the jobs that are created. EU 2020 does not yet deliver on these parameters, so we still have work to do.

Malcolm Harbour (ECR). - Mr President, I want to talk about a lack of ambition that I see in this EU 2020 strategy, for the way in which we can use the instruments which we have now – the single market – to get it to work very effectively and create those new jobs and opportunities: the sort of thing that Mrs Turunen was talking about. It is not good enough – and I say this to President and Council, if the Commissioner is listening – to put the single market and its achievement under this heading: 'Missing links and bottlenecks'.

It is far more important than that, colleagues. And it is simply not good enough to say that the Commission will propose action; it is a shared venture between Commission and Member States.

My committee, the Internal Market Committee, passed a report this week with a huge majority which sets out some really ambitious ideas for joint action to complete the single market. You will receive that next week in conjunction with Professor Monti's report. Let us see some fundamental changes in here, both parties. What we want is a single market act, a set of clear political objectives to complete the single market, and we also want to see public procurement, a massively underused tool to achieve those objectives of innovation and green technology. It is hardly mentioned in this document. For heaven's sake why are we talking about these other targets when we are not actually moving on what we have already?

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL). – (PT) Mr President, this strategy provides no response to the serious problems that we are facing, and even less to the true economic and social disaster that the imposition of free competition policies is bringing about in some Member States with more fragile economies. It is a mistake to insist on policies that are identical to the liberal Lisbon Strategy, which left the objectives announced 10 years ago of full employment and poverty eradication by the wayside, and instead gave priority to the interests of economic and financial groups, which was to their gain but came at the cost of worsening the social and employment situation.

All you have to do is look at the consequences of applying the blind criteria of the Stability Pact, and of the liberalisations and privatisations of strategic public-service sectors, including financial services, energy, transport and postal services. All you have to do is look at what is happening in the field of labour, with decreased job security and increased unemployment, which is currently in excess of 23 million, to which 85 million people in poverty can be added.

In contrast to what they try to make us believe, all indicators show that, if the strategies followed up to now continue, rates of economic growth will be very low and lower than in other parts of the world, meaning that unemployment will get worse, jobs will get less secure and less well paid, and poverty and social exclusion will get worse. Regrettably, the Union budget provides no response to the need for economic and social cohesion, as demonstrated by Greece's situation.

It is, therefore, time to evaluate and admit the consequences of the policies that have been followed. It is time to prioritise social sustainability. It is time to put a stop to financial speculation and the domination of the economy by finance. It is time to bring an end to the Stability Pact and give the European Central Bank other functions, impose effective controls on the financial sector, and prioritise a true pact for progress and social development.

Mario Borghezio (EFD). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the fact that we are here discussing and examining the content of this Europe 2020 strategy, while in Athens workers are dying, and a country, a nation is on the edge of a precipice, paints a rather telling, or, I would go so far as to say, grotesque, picture of European politics.

It is absolutely remarkable that in a situation of this kind, the Commission does not feel that it should take a good, long look at itself, because it is not as though it does not realise that this crisis, which in some respects has now reached, I would say, dramatic proportions, is a consequence of many serious mistakes, as demonstrated by the failure of the Lisbon strategy. Many mistakes and one defendant in the dock: the euro.

You come here saying, in all your statements, that Greece is a one-off, but will you be saying that when – although let us hope not – another similar situation arises, for example in Spain: will that be another one-off? We here are a bit tired of hearing the one-off excuse: the subprime crisis was also a one-off. It is hard to believe and very difficult to accept what the Commission is saying when the European Union has not yet decided to clean up Europe's banks and to tell savers, manufacturers and the real economy how much muck there still is in European banks, in order to develop a strategy.

We must keep these points in mind and remember that a serious strategy must be based on the real economy, on the small and medium-sized enterprise system, and naturally it must give a responsible role to workers, through their participation, too.

Csanád Szegedi (NI). – (HU) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the greatest problem in the EU is, without doubt, unemployment. However, we cannot blame workers, smallholders or entrepreneurs for this situation. The only culprit is that political and economic philosophy which has sided with multinational companies against workers, smallholders and small local entrepreneurs. The rootless, exclusively profit-oriented

multinationals want to grab the lion's share of the profits while contributing as little as possible to public costs.

Any strategic decision that favours local interests is good for Member States of the European Union, and any decision that upholds the hegemony of multinationals is bad. Jobbik would like to put an end to the economic monopoly of the multinationals and return Europe to the smallholders and family businesses, so that with their help we may eliminate unemployment within the European Community.

Herbert Reul (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, President-in-Office of the Council and President of the Commission, the President of the Commission has just said that in times such as these we cannot take a beggar-thy-neighbour approach, but first need good cooperation and decisive action. That is true. We therefore also need a strategy for action. However, my impression is that this 2020 project, and in particular the way in which we are to negotiate and finalise it here, does not involve any genuine strategy. It is more like a reflection put to paper that is now being steamrollered through in a fast-tracked procedure. Whether this is the way to avoid the problems that Mr Barroso has quite rightly described is doubtful. For example, he said that the biggest problem with the Lisbon Strategy was the fact that the parties affected were not involved, that there was no ownership of it and that they therefore did not get involved in its implementation. That is precisely what happened.

However, if that is the case, then for a new strategy we need to take the time to calmly work at getting the parties concerned genuinely involved and then be able to discuss it calmly. I understand that, at this time when the financial crisis and the problem of Greece are presenting us with new problems every day, we cannot handle it in this way. That is not a criticism, either. The criticism that I have is that we in Parliament allow the way in which we deal with the programme to be dictated to us.

At the Conference of Committee Chairs, we have several times expressed the desire to structure the timeline a bit more carefully so as to be able to proceed more thoroughly. Instead of this, the procedure is being expedited and today we are holding a debate and we will have another one at the May part-session, then in June the proposal will go to the Council and that will be that. Please do not be surprised if at the end of all this there is no discernable change with regard to the action taken. This would not surprise me, because we cannot achieve a change in this way. We need a thorough analysis and not the sort of superficial conclusions that the Commissioner for Climate Action has drawn in recent days – which are deduced from the crisis situation and the fact that less CO₂ is emitted now – to the effect that we can now aim for 30% or 40%.

The standard cannot be the crisis! The standard must be a forward-looking perspective. We need to take a careful look at the situation and give thorough consideration to what conclusions we can draw from innovations, economic development, innovation and research. However, we will not actually do it, of course.

Alejandro Cercas (S&D). – (ES) Thank you Mr López Garrido, thank you to someone who can pass the message on to the President of the College of Commissioners.

I hope that your words will be followed up with actions and that in June we will see a very different Council from the one that we saw in the spring. This is because your words, which I support from beginning to end, do not reassure me or take away my fears of seeing a Council that is full of apathy, full of doubts, which sometimes even raises questions that really fill us with dread, for example that the targets, our big political, calculated targets, are not advisable and are not even possible.

Thank you, Mr López Garrido, I hope the Spanish Presidency will help to resolve all of these uncertainties, because I am convinced that these will be seen as momentous times in Europe's history when the time comes. They are very confused times, in which the major challenges are being put on the table as to whether we want more Europe or less Europe.

This is the aim of the Europe 2020 strategy. In 10 years' time will we be more or less united? Will the victory have been won by those who believe that we must work together to resolve economic and social problems or by those who go back to being satisfied with nationalism and destroying even the fundamental elements that have been built over the last 40 years? Will we be more supportive? Will we be prepared to adopt targets of solidarity with each other, to share more equally, to build more wealth and share it more equally, or will we leave it all in the hands of the markets?

I do not, as some of my colleagues have said, believe that this has happened because there has been a lot of Europe, a lot of regulation or a lot of social justice. On the contrary, it is the lack of Europe, the lack of regulation that has brought the crisis on.

I would therefore like to make two requests, Mr López Garrido: keep the targets of fighting poverty and the targets promoting better education, which are in the Commission's text but not in the Council's text, and associate Parliament with the voice of the people, so that the people's agenda can be Europe's agenda, rather than it being the agenda of technocrats or of the so-called 'markets', which is often the agenda of speculators.

Olle Schmidt (ALDE). – (SV) Mr President, what affects Greece affects us all, including those countries outside the euro area. What Europe needs today is to be united and to take forceful action, not further division. Therefore, Commissioner, it is most disappointing that 11 countries will not be present on Friday. It has been said that we have a common destiny in Europe, but unfortunately that is not the case right now.

Of course supervision of the financial markets needs to be increased and of course we need tougher legislation. That is something that, as a Liberal, I, too, can understand and accept, but it must be done in a balanced way and be coordinated at a global level.

Let us take forceful and aggressive action, if that should be necessary, but we must not act out of panic. We need to keep as cool a head as possible so that we do not do further damage to the economic recovery that, in spite of everything and in spite of the situation in Greece, is discernable.

When I heard Mr Bloom, I was really upset. He is not here now, but comparing the European Union with the Soviet Union is an insult to all those who suffered under Soviet tyranny and all those millions who died. I think Mr Bloom should apologise to all those people that he has insulted.

Lajos Bokros (ECR). - Mr President, when the Spanish Prime Minister, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, inaugurated the Spanish Presidency in Strasbourg, he made a speech about Europe 2020 without once mentioning why on earth the Lisbon strategy failed in the first place. I then asked him the question: how can one possibly come up with a new strategy without analysing the failure of a previous one?

Now, I have no choice but to repeat my question, because the new document does not say a word as to why this failure happened. Please, Señor Garrido, can you answer my question: how is it possible to establish a new, very ambitious set of goals without first analysing the reasons for the failure of the Lisbon Strategy?

Cornelis de Jong (GUE/NGL). - (NL) Mr President, I challenge the Commission and the Council to make clear choices. First of all: choose democracy. How does the Council intend to make decisions which will lay down socio-economic policies in Member States for a period of ten years without the voters being able to express their opinions on them during that period, during those ten years? For example, that would mean that an outgoing Dutch Prime Minister would be able to make decisions for ten years, and that is just not acceptable.

Secondly: work has to be paid work. The objective of 75% employment sounds fine, but Europe does not need any more poor workers. How does the Council actually define employment?

Thirdly: choose sound public spending. How can the Commission present a budget for 2011 promising growth of no less than 5.8%, while Europe 2020 places strong emphasis on austerity measures.

Fourthly: choose a social internal market. Do the Commission and the Council agree with the Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection which has proposed that the internal market have a more social ethos and that tender procedures focus more on quality and social justice?

Fifthly: choose poverty reduction. As far as poverty reduction is concerned, the Council is aiming only at economic growth. In recent years, economic growth has mainly led to managers being paid top salaries, but the poor are getting ever poorer. What action will you take to ensure that top earners and banks, and not the poor, foot the bill for the crisis, for example?

Mara Bizzotto (EFD). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, in order to tackle the employment problem constructively, there must be three watchwords for EU action: react, evolve, safeguard.

React: namely, leave behind the celebratory tones of euro-propaganda in order to take practical action on the problems besetting EU citizens, ensuring a direct link between training and market and territorial requirements, and changing young people's perception of manual professions.

Evolve: namely, make the Europe 2020 strategy a positive synthesis of the demands of businesses and those of workers, in support of a labour market where it is the flexicurity of employment contracts that responds to the instability of market demand.

Safeguard: namely, give work to those who have lost it, first and foremost to our citizens: the Member States must therefore determine immigration policies in accordance with actual immigration requirements, and with 23 million unemployed they should consider blocking, for a few years, immigration from outside the EU. I see no other way to protect our jobs, our social system. What we need is pragmatism, courage and decentralisation.

Marian-Jean Marinescu (PPE). – (RO) Sustainable economic growth requires huge, steady investment in the transport sector as well. The transport sector accounts for 10% of the European Union's GDP and provides more than 10 million jobs.

I take this opportunity to call on the European Commission and the Council, when finalising the EU 2020 strategy, to take into account as well the following extremely relevant factors relating to the transport sector: promotion of research, development and innovation in order to achieve green transport; consolidation of the EU objective on the decarbonisation of transport through the use of alternative resources, electric cars, ITS, intelligent traffic management, covering the aviation sector as well; improvement of coordination among infrastructures in order to enhance environmental protection, workers' social conditions and passenger safety and security.

I would like to highlight the following absolutely essential aspects in specific areas: the urgent need to implement the single European sky in the aviation sector, the urgent need to implement interoperability in the railway sector, expanding and improving road infrastructures and safety on European roads in the road transport sector, achieving comodality in inland ports and expanding the 'motorways of the sea' for sea and river transport, and the urgent need for the sustainable development of urban mobility.

The European Commission must take into account all these aspects relating to mobility, which must be one of the key elements in the EU 2020 strategy. The well-coordinated development of the transport sector is crucial to sustainable development and to retaining and creating stable jobs.

Anni Podimata (S&D). – (EL) Mr President, thank you very much. Allow me to start, as a Greek, by expressing my deep regret at the tragic events which occurred in my country and resulted in the death of three citizens trapped in a bank when extremist elements in a large, completely peaceful rally, set fire to it.

I should like to take this tragic opportunity, because I know that all of Europe and all the European media are watching Greece today, to ask all my fellow Members here to demonstrate responsibility, gravitas, solidarity and, most importantly, respect towards a nation going through such a difficult time. I say that, because I fear that, as of tomorrow, certain major European newspapers in certain capitals will maintain, precisely on the basis of these tragic events, that their fears and doubts as to whether Greece can and is determined to implement the very difficult decisions which it has taken on financial reform are justified.

Because, the very day after the agreement last Sunday, the same story started that we have heard since the 11 February, with a series of comments on the inefficacy of the Greek measures and on the prospects for restructuring the Greek debt, with speculation as to whether the country might leave the euro area and, of course, with new attacks by the markets both on Greek bonds and on Portuguese and Spanish bonds.

I wonder, given that we are also debating the prospects of the 2020 strategy, where this will lead. Where are we heading with this absolute dependency of national economies on market crises, on ratings by credit rating agencies which answer to no one and whose ratings, be they right or wrong, about companies or states, especially states in the euro area, have absolutely no consequences and are subject to no form of control?

(Applause)

Ramona Nicole Mănescu (ALDE). – (RO) During the last two years, we have faced the most severe global economic crisis. Consequently, it is vitally important for our efforts to be targeted better in order to provide a fillip to competitiveness, productivity and the potential for economic growth.

The strategy's objectives must be realistic. This is why they must be defined in close correlation with Member States' national objectives, which are themselves defined according to the priorities and specific features of each Member State. As a result, I wish to welcome the notion that the objectives adopted at Community level should be divided into various national objectives.

As part of a Parliament resolution, I asked the Commission to table new measures, such as possible sanctions for Member States which fail to apply the strategy and incentives for those which do. In fact, funding from the European Union should be conditional not only on achieving results, but also on compatibility with the

strategy's objectives. However, we must not ignore the importance of the cohesion policy in achieving the European Union's economic and development objectives.

We must therefore scrutinise the Commission's proposals closely because a proposal like this to automatically suspend the Structural Funds in the case of Member States with a large budget deficit would be an unrealistic measure and completely at variance with the cohesion policy's objectives, specifically those aimed at reducing the disparities between Member States.

Oldřich Vlasák (ECR). – (CS) The European Union represents the largest geopolitical entity in the world in terms of population. Our success to date, which we must approach with great humility in the current crisis period, consists in the ability of our economies to develop their capacities for innovation and exports in particular.

This is especially clear with respect to competitors like the US and Japan, but also China, India and Brazil. In this context I consider it key to retain the strategic focus particularly on economic growth and jobs. Social problems and climate change must not, in this regard, be allowed to distract attention from the main goals.

At the same time, we must bear in mind that an essential precondition for intelligent and sustainable growth in our Member States and their regions and municipalities is sufficient infrastructure, from both a transport and an environmental perspective. This factor is not taken into account sufficiently in the Europe 2020 strategy, and the essential focus on continuing and strengthening investments in the development of infrastructure is therefore entirely lacking, especially in those states and regions where it is insufficiently developed at present.

Joe Higgins (GUE/NGL). – Mr President, the key strategy the EU Commission has for Europe up to 2020 is reliance on neoliberal capitalism and a market system – in other words, the exact same factors that have plunged the world into the current economic chaos and illustrated in the Commission's and EU governments' response to the financial crisis in Greece: a shameful capitulation to the speculation and profiteering by the sharks in the financial markets; demanding that the Greek working class, pensioners and poor should have their services and living standards savaged to feed the insatiable greed of these financial markets, which are not some kind of an all-powerful god, as media commentators would have us believe, but investment banks, hedge-fund operators, bond holders and the like – parasites seeking super profits by deliberately speculating to create financial instability and then exploiting that to bleed working people. Is this the Europe we want for 2020?

It is pathetic to hear Mr Barroso appeal to them for responsibility: ask a shark to give up its taste for blood! The fightback by the Greek working class should be supported by workers all over Europe. We have to break the dictatorship of the market. That will be done not by idiots burning banks, but by sustained and mass mobilisations and strike action of working people and replacing this diseased system with democratic socialism and a real human society to be created by 2020.

Jaroslav Paška (EFD). – (SK) With all due respect to the documents submitted, their similarity to the five-year plans that were supposed to bring prosperity to the Eastern Bloc cannot be overlooked. They even begin by acknowledging that the previous strategy was not, for various reasons, successful.

They then set out bold objectives and try to convince people that everything really will be better this time. It was not better, however. Strategies came and went, and the economy collapsed. Those strategies failed to respect the basic rules of economic life. Europe today is running out of steam despite the fact that it has a higher percentage of educated people than more successful countries such as China or India. Why is this? Because it responds to every new problem in the same way as the European Council or the Commission, by setting up another new institution or another authority. Most educated Europeans then disappear into the bowels of various organisations, and these millions of educated people, who at the same time could be working creatively in other areas, for example on innovations and development in the productive sector, just move bits of paper around in offices and siphon off common resources.

Ladies and gentlemen, if we really want to be more successful, we must above all simplify the rules of coexistence and business and reduce the administrative burden. We must create more space for applying the independence, entrepreneurship and creativity of people, and we must redirect the money we are currently spending on administration towards progress and support for innovation and development in the productive sector.

Othmar Karas (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the community of Europe, a credible political union, sustainable growth, sustainable employment and innovation, social cohesion and sustainable competitiveness are our goals.

Europe 2020 is not our goal. Europe 2020 must be an instrument to enable us to achieve our goals. It must become our Robert Schuman declaration of 2010 and be as tangible as that was on 9 May 1950. Europe 2020 must not degenerate into a collection of unattainable desires for the future or a dustbin full of all of our unresolved issues, problems and frustrations. It must be a tangible, financeable, sustainable instrument that provides an answer to the crisis and it must be a motivating, testable project of the European Union that we are able to sanction. Europe 2020 must set in motion specific projects for growth, employment, research, innovation and sustainable competitiveness.

We need to review our finances in all Member States and in the European Union in order to have an honest starting point for our future plans and also so that we know what we need to finance and what we need the money for. We also need a Europe 2020 suitability check for our national policies on the budget, tax, research, energy, innovation and social affairs. We should give our full support to Mr Rehn's measures.

Europe 2020 must be an expression of the new, common political will and our response to the, sadly, increasing nationalism, egoism and protectionism. Let us complete the internal market and, alongside the monetary union, create a strong economic union that is part of a credible political union. That is what we need, no more and no less.

Sergio Gaetano Cofferati (S&D). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I must confess my concern over the June summit, because I do not see anything new in the debate capable of rectifying the recommendations of the spring Council. Those recommendations were already disappointing because they were not based on the slightest criticism of the limitations of Lisbon and the consequences of the failure to implement some of the most important political and cultural plans which had been made at that time.

They are also disappointing because they ignore the crisis: 10 points are set out in a general fashion, with no logical connection between them; they are the sum of good intentions which do not, however, appear to form a policy. And we are still in the same position. I also fail to see a tangible desire to identify priorities. Europe's problem is its level of competitiveness in the global system. Therefore, it cannot disregard social cohesion, one of the fundamental factors of competitiveness. Without cohesion, no country – let alone a supranational group – is capable of remaining on the world market, since it would have internal conflicts causing it to become less competitive every day.

On the other hand, there is the issue of innovation: it is not enough just to mention it; we must establish specific objectives, which are not set out in the recommendations, on the amount of resources to earmark for innovation, both of products and of processes. Only quality, both in civil life, in work and, on the other hand, in the production of goods and services, can put Europe back on a competitive footing following the extremely serious consequences of this crisis. Lastly, I would add that there is an issue which is never mentioned: we can pursue ambitious goals if we also have political integration. The Member States do not talk about this, they have closed the subject: the appalling management of the Greek crisis is there to prove it.

Ivo Strejček (ECR). – (CS) I come from a Member State where, up to the age of 28 or 29, I lived under a system based on central planning, where life was regulated under five-year plans, and all of the five-year plans were always replaced with new plans, because the previous plans were never fulfilled. Please forgive me, therefore, if I am perhaps sensitive or over-sensitive when it comes to planning how Europe will look in 2020, and if, during this certainly interesting debate, we do not pay regard or we pay less regard to what is happening today not only in Greece, but throughout the euro area. I have been listening very closely to the debate in this Chamber all afternoon and I have been hearing calls for more Europe, more centralisation, more central control. At this moment and in this debate, I would like to respond that we need less centralisation, we need more confidence in the market and we need more of the market and of market mechanisms, because what is actually happening today, not only in the EU and not only in the euro area, but also in the United States and in other countries of this kind, is a story of unbelievable failure of all state intervention.

Pilar del Castillo Vera (PPE). – (ES) Mr President, many fellow Members have wondered why the Lisbon Agenda failed and whether we should start by analysing that failure in order to take the next steps.

In my view, the problem with the Lisbon Agenda was that it was ultimately nothing more than a symbol enclosed in a bubble, which was not implemented at all in practice. In the end we found that on the one hand there was a theory, the Lisbon Agenda, about which we were all talking, and on the other hand there was the practice, which had nothing to do with it.

Therefore, in my view, based on this experience the Europe 2020 strategy must be a new agenda that can only be taken forward if there is a resounding commitment – I would stress, a resounding commitment – from all the institutions: the European political institutions and the national political institutions.

This commitment also needs to be one that can be verified and evaluated; it needs to be one that we have information about and an immediate capacity to correct if the commitments are not being fulfilled when there are failures. This is so that we do not find ourselves in any situation of extreme circumstances. Either we all understand that this joint project needs these instruments in order to move forward, or we will soon be in a similar situation.

Jo Leinen (S&D). – (DE) Mr President, the theme of the Lisbon Strategy was competitiveness and it was a very strongly one-sided economic strategy, which, of course, in part has failed. I am therefore very pleased that the theme of the EU 2020 strategy is now sustainability. That is the right way to go and it also involves a better balance between economic, social and environmental developments and needs.

The disadvantage of sustainability is that it is a very general concept that can also lack substance. We therefore need to make it more specific. In this regard, the Commission's paper is much too vague, as there are too many pieces of the picture missing to allow us to implement it. A resource-efficient Europe is the right approach – we have meagre energy reserves and meagre raw material reserves – but there is a lack of targets and instruments to bring us to this point of resource efficiency in our production and in our consumption. In this regard, I hope that by June we will have something rather more tangible and that we will know precisely what each of us has to do – what the Commission will do, what Parliament will do and what the Member States will have to do.

In relation to this resource-efficient Europe, the environment seems to have been somewhat forgotten, because air, water, land and also ecosystems are resources too. That has been completely lost. I would therefore like to hear more from the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety in respect of what we want to do in this regard. The biodiversity strategy has failed. A new one has, of course, been drawn up to take us to 2020 and this point must be taken into account in this strategy.

Climate protection has certainly been tossed about many times. I believe that we need to increase our reduction target from 20% to 30% and we need mandatory targets for energy efficiency. This is still too vague – we need to make it legally binding.

Mirosław Piotrowski (ECR). – (PL) Mr President, the Europe 2020 strategy we are discussing has, above all, an ideological dimension. It expresses many laudable objectives, such as an increase in labour participation and achievement of tertiary education diplomas by 40% of EU citizens, and also increased expenditure on innovation. It is curious that no sanctions have been foreseen for countries which do not fulfil the obligation to implement such beautiful ideas. One might have the impression that the authors of the strategy are not paying the slightest attention to the serious crisis in Greece, or to what might happen soon in Spain and Portugal – events which might lead not only to disintegration of the euro area, but also to erosion of the European Union.

At such a dramatic moment for Europe, a recommendation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30% is consistently being put forward, for example – something which will stifle the economies of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, including Poland. These countries may also lose out as a result of restrictions placed on cohesion policy. There are many indications that the utopian and socialist 2020 project will share the fate of the Lisbon Strategy. Let us hope that, in the meantime, it does not do any more damage.

Danuta Maria Hübner (PPE). – Mr President, for any strategy to be effective, creating strong links between its objectives and available policy tools is, in my view, essential, and I see four main policy tools as delivery mechanisms for the EU 2020 strategy.

Firstly, the most important is internal market regulation that stimulates competition and economic dynamism and recognises social obligations that result from economic integration; and on that point I would like to strongly support what Malcolm Harbour said.

Secondly, this is capital investment in transport, energy and telecommunications infrastructures. We need capital investment on an unprecedented scale. Both public and private financing must therefore be mobilised; in particular public/private partnerships must be strongly promoted and European financial institutions must be strengthened to overcome growth funding barriers generated by deficit and debt buyers of national budgets.

Thirdly, this is public expenditure through the European budget. As the EU's objectives are primarily horizontal and not sectorial, EU budget expenditure should be based on an integrated approach to development, combined with strengthened financial and engineering instruments, and promote opening of our economies to global competition.

Fourthly, this is the coordination of national budget expenditures in priority areas through the open method of coordination. However, the soft mechanisms of this method – even if improved – can unfortunately take us only some way towards the agreed objectives of EU 2020; hence it can only be a supporting tool.

European coordination must be focused on areas where genuine European value added exists or can develop, and where it will not undermine competition. Available policy tools must be used in a way guaranteeing that the trap of a strong interventionist growth model driven by traditional sectorial industrial policy is avoided. This could undermine investment and business attractiveness of Europe, reducing its growth potential. EU 2020 must be a growth and jobs strategy because there is no other option.

Kader Arif (S&D). – (FR) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the financial, economic and social crisis that we are going through is unprecedented. It is hitting our continent and its peoples hard, it is causing huge social and human difficulties, and Greece, unfortunately, is a harsh and shameful example of this for us.

Unemployment is constantly rising. Already, millions of Europeans are jobless, and the figure is rising from one day to the next. The response must be political, strong, swift and coordinated, and it must take into account the serious environmental crisis that we are going through, which requires a new development model.

These many crises give rise, among our fellow citizens, to a great deal of expectation and to a hope to which the Europe 2020 strategy should have responded. However, in the face of these challenges on an exceptional scale, the response has not materialised, and I regret that. The guidelines laid down in March by the European Council are not up to the task. There is no determination, no ambition, but, unfortunately, that does not surprise me any more.

Everywhere, you Members of the Council and of the Commission, you and your Commissioners boast about the consistency of your policies. However, I have the impression that this is just an umbrella concept to disguise your lack of action. You do not have a consistent strategy combining economic, social, trade, industrial, agricultural or research policies to guarantee sustainable and fair development.

Moreover, the external dimension of European trade-related action is nowhere to be found or is under the auspices of the untouchable liberal 'global Europe' dogma. We want trade to be a proper instrument that helps to create jobs and growth, to combat poverty and to promote development.

However, you are pursuing – not for technical reasons, but for political reasons – a different objective: you are racing to reduce costs and to cut wages, you are racing to conclude bilateral free trade agreements to the detriment of multilateralism, thereby causing social and fiscal dumping. That policy is responsible for too many job losses, too many relocations and too much social damage to carry on as it is.

To conclude, we expect the Commission and the Council to rekindle the European spirit, and to reject national self-interest so as to make Europe a haven not just of prosperity, but of solidarity too. Ensuring that Europe projects a different image of itself not only to its own citizens, but also to the rest of the world: that is what the resolution by the Group of the Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament is all about.

Richard Seeber (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, there is actually little point in commenting on the remarks made by the right and left political fringes in this House, as they are in fact unimportant in this sensible House that is maintained by political forces interested in the development of Europe. However, if the EU 2020 strategy is now being compared with a Communist five-year plan, we would have to tell these people to look up economic policy in a text book and read the history of it. Then they will see the differences.

Those on the far left – not those sensible forces here who sit slightly to the left of us – are now saying that Europe should more or less revert to Communist times. Part of Europe has, regrettably, experienced Communism and we all know what came of that. We can wish for many things, but the important thing is that we enable our citizens to live a life of dignity and prosperity in which they can enjoy education and the other services provided by society.

It is therefore also necessary for us, as a political system, to consider how we can use the existing resources in the best way possible. It is simply a question of carrying out this planning. Every family and every local authority considers what to do with its resources to make sure that it can make headway over a certain time. That is a sensible thing to do.

Up to now, only a market economy – with boundaries, not an unrestrained market – has actually been able to provide these services over the long term. It therefore makes sense for us to consider at European level how we can organise this market economy in Europe. To think purely within national borders is no longer a successful strategy and is destined to fail. We therefore need to consider how we can make this European market serve the people. It is not about competitiveness as such, but about ensuring that Europe is competitive so that services can be provided for the people. It is all about this debate.

Many fellow Members have already gone into the details. I would like to limit myself to these general statements. However, to those on the fringes we will have to say from time to time: consider what you say, but above all read the history books!

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D). – (RO) At the moment, the unemployment rate in the European Union has hit 10%, while the rate of youth unemployment has reached 20%. This year there was no cause for celebration on 1 May, which is International Workers' Day, because there are 23 million unemployed in the European Union.

We must clearly establish the sectors in the EU requiring investment in order to provide jobs. Only education will enable us to provide young people with the skills they need to get a job and make a decent living. Investments in agriculture will also ensure that the European Union can provide the basic necessities for itself in terms of food and biofuels.

Investments in the transport infrastructure are crucial. This year we are reviewing the list of TEN-T priority projects. The EU needs a high-speed rail transport network, which will service all the European Union capitals and Europe's major cities. It also has to modernise the road infrastructure, ports and airports. I believe that the European Union must invest in the development of the transport infrastructure in Eastern Europe as a priority. This is the only way of enabling us to have a really effective internal market. However, all these projects require financial resources amounting to many billions of euros, which will be recouped in the public budgets through taxes and duties and, especially, through the jobs created and the economic development generated.

In addition, the investments in the energy infrastructure, energy efficiency and renewable energy sources will reduce the EU's energy dependency and generate roughly 2.7 million new jobs by 2030. However, instead of investing in the Smart Cities initiative, we notice that more than EUR 150 million from the European Economic Recovery Plan remains unspent. Last but not least, the European Union must invest in research and in the sustainable development of European industry.

Mr President, I would like to end with an appeal to the Commission and the Council to create an instrument similar to the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund in support of the public sector workers who have lost their jobs due to the economic crisis.

Enikő Győri (PPE). – (HU) Ladies and gentlemen, I think we all know what a great task lies ahead of us. We have to formulate a joint strategy for Member States and European Union institutions that will ensure that the after-effects of the crisis will be dealt with, at the same time enabling the Union and all its Member States to be competitive in the global economic environment and to develop in an environmentally sustainable fashion so that all citizens of the Union will promptly feel their standard of living rise even in the short term.

I would like to make two remarks, however, about the new strategy which I believe covers the basics, but it is important to mention two things. First, a certain caution and prudence are justified with respect to quantifiable goals. These have to be ambitious yet realistic and attainable, paying heed to where each Member State started and its capacities. Poverty means one thing in the United Kingdom and another in Bulgaria. Our education systems are different. The question arises, for instance, as to whether increasing the proportion

of people with a university degree to 40% is worthwhile everywhere, or whether we are not simply increasing the number of unemployed university graduates. However, I think the improvement of vocational training should in any case be included among our goals.

My second remark is that the strategy should reinforce the EU's internal cohesion, in other words its convergence. I agree that key sectors should receive assistance because they are the engine of the European economy. At the same time it must be remembered that internal differences among the 27 Member States at various stages of development would only widen if we pursued a one-sided economic development policy that stressed competitiveness without addressing Member States' distinctive features. Without internal cohesion there can be no external competitiveness. Closing the gap with underdeveloped areas would mean wider markets, effective demand and innovative potential for the entire Union while requiring less social care. A framework must be set up for the less developed areas that will enable them to take advantage of the opportunities of the internal market. In time everyone would thus become competitive on their own strength. I hope we will find room for the cohesion policy in the new strategy.

Radvilė Morkūnaitė-Mikulėnienė (PPE). - (LT) Today we are discussing the kind of European Union we would like to see in ten years' time. At present unemployment, especially among young people, is one of the European Union's greatest problems, and, unfortunately, this is forcing us to refer to today's young people as this era's lost generation. We are talking about the creation of new jobs, protection of the environment, we are talking about promoting youth initiatives, about support for the education system, about many other important elements, but mostly we are talking about these as if they were separate things and we are missing the bigger picture. Unfortunately, reading the current proposals on the EU's Europe 2020 strategy, I get the feeling that once again this may simply remain empty words, if we fail to take into account the opinions of those who will have to implement this strategy, in other words, young people. I would like the Europe 2020 strategy to be a link between the economy and ecology that precisely young people would help implement, so that this becomes an opportunity for young people to offer their knowledge and create the European Union's future. Since I myself am a representative of those same young people implementing the strategy, I would like to offer a few concrete proposals. First of all, let us promote the creation of green jobs, that is, let us provide for opportunities to give greater support to businesses creating green jobs and employing young people, whether it be in agriculture, manufacturing or the transport and services sectors. Secondly, let us devote more attention to environmentalism, or to be more precise, to environmental education, both integrating it into education programmes and presenting it as a new discipline. Once we have taken these two steps, we will attract more young people to participate in creating the green economy: young people who have enough knowledge, skills and, I believe, determination. I would really like there to be less scepticism here in the European Parliament and fewer unfounded comparisons, such as we heard yesterday, and there to be more determination, optimism and unity.

Petru Constantin Luhan (PPE). - (RO) I firmly believe that Europe 2020 will create a more economically powerful and more innovative Europe. I am also convinced that we will successfully emerge from the current economic and financial crisis because we have huge potential in terms of an innovative labour market, as well as natural resources. I welcome the efforts made by the Commission to present this communication to us.

However, I feel obliged to raise the cohesion policy for discussion and express my dissatisfaction that the path towards implementing the Lisbon Strategy seems to have changed tack. Achieving economic, social and territorial cohesion involves factors other than those relating to growth which is smart, sustainable and conducive to inclusion. Citizens are saying through us and our elected representatives that they still need investments in infrastructure, access to services and the development of all regions, no matter how isolated they are.

The priorities set for the 2007-2013 period have shown what a great need there is to improve the infrastructure and support economic competitiveness in the convergence areas. Interdependence among economies shows the need for cohesion and ensuring [...]

(The President cut off the speaker)

Sylvana Rapti (S&D). - (EL) Mr President, may I start by expressing my condolences from this tribune of the European Parliament for my three fellow countrymen who were killed today in incidents in Athens. I am honestly sorry that we did not hear condolences from President Barroso on behalf of the Commission. I hope that Mr Rehn, who represents him, will rectify this in his second statement.

The second thing I want to say is that the Commission needs to act now, because the longer you delay in finding a solution to the problems faced by Europe today, and hence the problem of Greece, the more you undermine the 2020 targets. 2020 is based on 2010. The objective of less poverty is based on today. With the measures that it is being forced to take, Greece will not be able to contribute towards this objective.

You need to help Greece, because otherwise, 40%, who are young university graduates, will have no jobs. Think about it and act now.

Elisabeth Schroedter (Verts/ALE). - (DE) Thank you very much Mr President. Mr Barroso talked about measures that we need to take in connection with Europe 2020, but then he left the Chamber. He will now miss one of the most important measures. I am therefore going to address the Spanish Presidency and thank the President-in-Office of the Council for remaining here and following the debate to its conclusion.

One of the most important measures that needs to be taken in the context of Europe 2020 is the employment of sustainable development in order to exploit the potential for green jobs. This requires a comprehensive initiative for these potential green jobs. In this connection, it must be ensured that transformations and workers' rights are also taken into account and that there is an initiative in place for training and further training. I know that the Spanish and Belgian Presidencies are working on this and I would like to expressly encourage you to continue to do so and to present a Council initiative before the end of the year.

John Bufton (EFD). - Mr President, we are discussing Europe 2020 – which will be in 10 years' time – but I think we ought perhaps to reflect on the last 10 hours. It was with great sadness that I learnt of the deaths in Greece; it is very sad. I feel sorry for the families, and my condolences go to the families and friends of those poor people who have died. However, a few weeks back, in Parliament, I did warn of civil unrest over the situation with the eurozone and the problems it now faces.

I think it is time that this Parliament, the Commission and the Council woke up to the fact that the eurozone is flawed: it is not working. We have seen problems in Greece. I feel it will carry on to Spain and, before more lives are lost, is it not time for some honesty here, and that we should really look at the situation regarding the eurozone countries and admit that it is flawed?

Piotr Borys (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, the EU economy continues to be the strongest, but this eldorado will not necessarily last forever. The crisis and the tragic events in Greece have shown us that we must draw some conclusions from the ambitious Europe 2020 strategy, today. In contradistinction to the Lisbon strategy, we need boldness and consistency in the implementation of Europe 2020. Whether we make it possible for future generations to live in a cohesive and wealthy Europe, or whether we leave them in a Europe dominated by a crisis, depends upon us.

Today, 30% of Europeans do not have vocational qualifications. This explains the ambitious plans relating to education: to reduce the number of early school leavers to 10%, and for 16 million people to achieve tertiary qualifications. Therefore, my appeal can be summarised by saying that, today, the great educational challenges must be pursued very conscientiously and quickly. I appeal for coordinated and very consistent action from all EU institutions and Member States.

Monika Flašíková Beňová (S&D). – (SK) It is a pity that the President of the Commission did not stay here, even though he has some important tasks, although in my opinion Europe 2020 is a supremely important strategic document, and I do not know what could be more important for the President at the moment.

It is, however, clear from the debate which has taken place here across the political spectrum that this document has not aroused any great enthusiasm in the European Parliament. It must be stated objectively that the situation in Europe at the time of planning this document is very complicated and that the document has come into being against the background of one of the worst economic crises in living memory. In my opinion, one of the most important things for the strategy to resolve is therefore the protection of the most economically vulnerable people, who were living in difficult conditions before the crisis, who continue to live in such conditions today and who did not cause the crisis.

I therefore think – and this is a concrete suggestion concerning this document – that it would be a good thing if the guideline which applies to the area of poverty and social exclusion were brought into the mainstream, so that it is not a second-class guideline applying just to the area of employment, but a cross-sectional one applying to all of these important areas.

Krisztina Morvai (NI). – (HU) The strategy for the future of Europe is built on the basis of two value systems, and I would like to draw attention to the fact that these two value systems can only be reconciled with great

difficulty, if at all, so we ought to choose between them. The key words for one of the value systems are competitiveness, growth, globalisation, while for the other, the key word is sustainability. We are talking about sustainability in the environmental sense. We know that forced growth and globalisation have dreadful consequences for the environment. There is no question of sustainability. We are talking about sustainability in the social sense. Those people, smallholders, small and medium-sized enterprises, among others, who cannot keep up with the overheated competition and globalisation go under, fall out of competition and become impoverished. This is completely contrary to sustainability in the social sense. My electorate and myself are of the opinion that between the two value systems we have to choose sustainability.

Diego López Garrido, *President-in-Office of the Council*. – (ES) Mr President, I would like to start by answering the direct question put to me by Mr Bokros. This subject was also referred to by Mr Cofferati, who is not currently present, and by Mrs del Castillo, who is also not present. Others have also referred to it.

Why did the Lisbon Strategy fail? This was the direct question asked by Mr Bokros.

I definitely believe that there are many reasons, and it would be a little excessive and arrogant to try to simplify the situation. However, if I had to choose one of those reasons to explain the lack of success of the Lisbon Strategy, I think that the most conclusive one is that the European Union – which adopted the single market at the time, which adopted a single currency – has not taken the necessary step towards economic union. That step has not been taken.

The Treaty of Maastricht talked about economic and monetary union. We have remained in monetary union and have not moved on to economic union.

This is why I believe that the Europe 2020 strategy needs to be part of a new phase for the Union, which is the step towards economic union. This economic union means, most importantly, economic and social governance of the Union.

A fundamental element of that economic union is a strategy for growth and creating high-quality employment, which is essentially the purpose of this debate. It is a debate that I have found to be very interesting and extremely rich in terms of contributions, and it also has new, important dimensions that were not part of the Lisbon Strategy or did not have the same emphasis in it. For example, the technological dimension or the social dimension that Mr Cofferati, Mr Cercas and Mr Arif mentioned, and the dimension of combating climate change, which links to what Mrs Schroedter was saying.

However, it is not possible to achieve economic union simply by having a strategy for growth and creating quality employment. That is not all. This would answer the question from Mrs Harms, who is not currently present.

In addition, we need something that Commissioner Rehn – who is going to speak next – is working on, and which I alluded to earlier. We need coordination of economic policies, employment policies and social policies, which has not happened in Europe and did not happen with the Lisbon Strategy.

It is also something that the Treaty of Lisbon requires us to do. Article 5 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union states that the Member States must, are obliged to – it is not optional – coordinate their economic policies and their employment policies. They could also, if they wanted to – and in my opinion they should – coordinate their social policies.

In addition to a strategy for growth and job creation, and to coordinating economic and employment policies, we need European supervision of the financial markets. This is the supervision package that I was referring to before and on which I had a response from Mr Verhofstadt. I am delighted that he is in favour of the European Parliament adopting its position on the financial supervision package as soon as possible.

In addition to this, something that Mr Barroso particularly emphasised in his speech: we need to have an external dimension. Europe's economic union needs to have an external dimension; a single external position, namely in the G20. I am referring to what Mr Barroso said, which I almost completely agree with.

What we also need for economic union is governance institutions: a European Council that launches the strategic lines, a Commission that monitors and executes the strategy and legislative bodies for the strategy: the Council and the European Parliament.

In addition, we need instruments to incentivise this strategy, such as the authorisation of the Structural Funds and the European funds to guide this strategy, something that did not exactly happen – or at least did not happen to a great extent – during the years of the Lisbon Strategy.

This is what I think is already taking place in the European Union: a step towards the next phase, the phase that the 21st century requires. This phase is that of globalisation, which is economic union. Not just the internal market or monetary union, but also economic union. That is the path we must follow, and we need to do it consistently, with interinstitutional dialogue, such as is happening here this afternoon, and we need to do it as swiftly as possible.

I think this is what the European people are asking of all of us.

IN THE CHAIR: MRS KRATSA-TSAGAROPOULOU

Vice-President

Olli Rehn, *Member of the Commission*. – Madam President, let me thank you for a very rich and responsible debate this evening and let me also correct one claim concerning President Barroso. He did express his condolences on behalf of the Commission. I want to join him and express my condolences to the families and friends of the victims of violence in Athens today. Disagreement in democracy is normal, but recourse to violence is never acceptable.

Sustainable growth and job creation is indeed at the heart of Europe 2020 and I want to say some words about financial stability, which is a necessary condition of returning to sustainable growth and to the goals of Europe 2020. You may call it 'Europe 2010', because we need that in order to succeed as Europe 2020.

The decision of the euro-area Member States last Sunday to activate the mechanism of coordinated and conditional financial assistance for Greece was not an easy decision, but a necessary decision. It was the responsible and right thing to do. The Commission's task now is to ensure that the bilateral launch will be coordinated and that conditionality will be systematically and rigorously applied.

The financial support gives Greece breathing space to restore the sustainability of its public finances, as well as its overall economic competitiveness. This is needed not only for Greece, but in order to safeguard financial stability in Europe, to avoid the bush-fire in Greece turning into a forest fire in Europe. Financial stability is necessary for Europe's ongoing economic recovery for sustainable growth and job creation.

Some of you mentioned the contagion effect and concerns related to other countries of the euro area or of the European Union. No one can deny that there have been tensions in the financial markets in recent days and weeks but, as in all financial markets, there is significant overshooting. All euro-area Member States are taking measures to consolidate their public finances, not least Portugal and Spain.

Greece is a unique and particular case in the euro area, and now the European Union. Specifically, the euro-area Member States, together with the Commission, ECB and IMF, are taking care of the Greek case. I am confident that we will succeed and overcome the formidable challenges.

We must also learn the lessons of the crisis; that is important for economic governance of Europe 2020. The latest developments in the European economy, not least around Greece, have shown that there is a pressing and urgent need to strengthen economic governance in Europe. Next week the Commission will make concrete proposals on how we can reinforce economic policy coordination and Member States budgetary surveillance in the European Union.

In the Economic and Monetary Union the 'M' has been much stronger than the 'E'. It is high time to fill the 'E' with life. This was also the underlying idea of the founding fathers of the Economic and Monetary Union. Our guiding principle is that prevention is always more effective than correction and, therefore, we will build our proposals on the basis of reinforcing prevention, as well as correction also. The main building blocks of our proposals are threefold.

Firstly, we need to reinforce the Stability and Growth Pact, both its preventive and corrective arms. We need a more systematic and rigorous preventive budgetary surveillance, so that cases like the Greek case will never happen again.

Secondly, we must go beyond budgetary surveillance. We need to address macro-economic imbalances and divergences in competitiveness and, therefore, we need to reinforce both export competitiveness, which is urgently needed in many countries, and domestic demand where needed and possible.

The third building block will be a crisis-resolution mechanism. The financial mechanism for Greece serves the immediate need for the current purposes. However, it is clear and necessary that we need to set up a permanent crisis resolution mechanism with strong in-built conditionalities and also disincentives for its

use. As President Barroso said earlier today, it is better to be safe than sorry, and ensure that we are also equipped to face the worst scenarios.

In conclusion, I count on your support. I count on the European Parliament to support reinforcing economic governance in Europe. I also call on the Heads of State and Government of the euro-area Member States on Friday, as well as the European Council more broadly, to support our proposals and proceed rapidly without delay in making these proposals effective and a reality. Why so? Because we have no luxury of time and, instead, I urge everyone to take decisions as soon as possible, so that we can make Europe 2020 a success and create real foundations for sustainable growth and job creation in Europe. That is what our citizens are expecting from us.

President. - The debate is closed.

The vote will take place during the second part-session in May.

(The sitting was suspended for five minutes due to technical issues)

Written statements (Rule 149)

Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D), in writing. – *(LT)* Europe is going through a difficult period caused by the global economic crisis, the recovery is still fragile and Member States are paying a different price to overcome the crisis. The European Union needs a new strategy directed at creating new jobs, investing in education, safeguarding opportunities for lifelong learning and improving living conditions. I would like to draw attention to one of the Commission's most important commitments to reduce poverty in Europe and increase social inclusion. However, I would like to stress that while striving to meet this commitment we must take specific measures, such as the strengthening of compulsory minimum social standards and the minimum wage throughout the EU, and it is also necessary to establish additional measures to ensure protection of the most vulnerable social groups. I would also like to point out that the objectives set out in the new strategy constitute one common goal of Europe as a whole that we must aim for through action at both national and EU level. I therefore call on the Commission to continue the dialogue with the Member States, so that national decisions correspond with the EU's fundamental goals, because only then will the strategy yield concrete results instead of simply being a collection of fine slogans.

Vasîlica Viorica Dăncilă (S&D), in writing. – *(RO)* It is absolutely necessary for both the common agricultural policy and the cohesion policy to support the European strategy for employment and economic growth. I believe that the CAP must offer immediate solutions to the impact which the economic crisis is having on agricultural enterprises, such as the lack of access to credit for farmers, constraints on farming incomes and rising unemployment in rural areas. It must also continue to offer solutions to the threat posed by land abandonment, to rural depopulation and the ageing rural population in the European Union in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of rural communities in the European Union.

I must also mention that in the light of these challenges, after 2013 the CAP must send out strong signals and provide answers to the concerns of both the rural community and wider society through a strong, sustainable, well-funded, credible and multi-functional food policy. I wish to stress the urgent need to attract generations of young people to rural areas and to come up with new, alternative economic opportunities to ensure a sustainable rural population. I also believe that rural unemployment should be resolved by offering opportunities for diversification and for new sources of income.

Ioan Enciu (S&D), in writing. – I want to thank the Commission and the Council for their statements on the new European strategy for jobs and growth. I consider that setting the new energy targets will be a key factor in achieving a more resource-efficient Europe by 2020. I want to stress to the Commission that some Member States will need special support in order to be able to develop and implement renewable technologies to achieve the 20% target for energy produced from renewable sources. I wish to emphasise the positive impact of supporting the Digital Agenda initiatives as part of the flagship initiatives for new skills and jobs, and I would like to see the Commission coming forward with concrete legislative proposals to address the development of the online environment by creating facilities, both financial and administrative, to promote online businesses and e-Commerce. In terms of research and innovation in Europe, I welcome the reply from Commissioner Quinn regarding the need to improve the research infrastructure in the new Member States. Research institutes and scientists are waiting for rapid, coordinated action from the Commission and Council in order to tackle this issue, so as to allow them equal opportunities for participation in Framework Programmes.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL), in writing. – (PT) The profound crisis into which the neoliberalism that dominates Europe has led the continent, has led the authors of the 2020 strategy to try to wrap their objectives in social and environmental rhetoric, propaganda which has been abundantly propagated. Even so, this rhetoric has dropped the goals of 'full employment' and 'poverty eradication' that we found in its predecessor, the Lisbon Strategy. However, what we know of the instruments of the Europe 2020 strategy leaves little room for doubt: this is an old strategy that aims to justify old policies and make them viable, with well-known consequences. In the end, the increased flexibility and deregulation of the labour market, the primacy given to deepening the internal market, the liberalisation and privatisation of even more economic sectors, and the liberalisation and deregulation of international trade were, together, the instruments that brought about the current situation. To persist with those instruments is nothing less than really 'going for broke' and carrying on along the path to economic, social and environmental disaster. The more than 20 million unemployed are being used to impose a further devaluation of the workforce on the remaining workers, making the lack of job security widespread, employment intermittent, and unemployment structural. In the end, all the boasts of a 'social market economy' mean nothing more than the commercialisation of all sectors of social life, nature and natural resources.

Edit Herczog (S&D), in writing. – (HU) In the European Union economic growth is at a standstill and unemployment is above 10%. This means we have to devise a strategy for sustainable growth and job creation that will be able to revitalise the Union. This depends on whether it will be capable of renewal, of placing the economy on new foundations, and whether its citizens will be able to live according to a new mindset. Such a renewal may be brought about in the European Union by innovation and by research and development. In the interest of the future of its citizens, the European Union is working on a 2020 growth strategy based on innovation and research and development, and could guarantee continued economic growth and provide its citizens with new jobs.

Without resources, research and development cannot create the necessary financial background and therefore cannot make full use of innovation opportunities. Innovation is only possible as a result of partnership, of joint support. Resources come from three areas: the EU, Member States and the private sector. Innovation at company level requires appropriate human resources. This can be achieved by high quality education and training, operated through coordination at Member State level. Universities need support in order to produce young researchers who will be able to provide SMEs with continuous opportunities for innovation. In education, the two main trends that comprise innovative opportunities are digitisation and the decrease of energy consumption.

Cătălin Sorin Ivan (S&D), in writing. – (RO) The escalation of the economic crisis in Greece, along with achieving a stable unemployment rate at around 10% in the European Union, makes it immediately necessary to implement the Europe 2020 strategy. The pursuit of these objectives must be based on credible, consolidated action aimed at exiting the crisis, with employment being one of the key items on this agenda. We all agree that the EU must have a highly qualified labour force capable of tackling the challenges it is facing now and in the future, in order to create a more competitive and sustainable economy. However, fine statements are not sufficient to resolve current problems. This is why I would like to remind you that urgent investments need to be made not only in suitable skills, but also in education systems, with a view to bringing them into line with the demands of the market. Member States must be proactive in keeping to the commitments they have assumed within the European Council. They must also take the measures required to help the EU emerge from the current crisis and boost economic growth.

Tunne Kelam (PPE), in writing. – The most important topic in the discussion about the future of the Europe 2020 strategy is the challenge of need and sustainability. Clearly the Lisbon strategy has not delivered and now we have to be realistic if the future Europe 2020 would be able to deliver. In order to make Europe 2020 a success story it is crucial that Member States, EU institutions and all actors in the society work on this together. A top-down and bottom-up approach have to meet each other. Realistic benchmarks have to be set to increase employment, especially youth employability. Education systems in Europe need to become more oriented towards research and innovation; higher investment in education is unavoidable. Better coherence needs to be created between the labour market and education. The concept of life-long and life-wide learning are to be tackled seriously. I strongly advocate better vocational education systems and support the need to work much closer with the private sector on this. In the increasingly competitive world, Europe needs to be ambitious and committed on all levels. Without this we will again have a strategy that resembles more the Soviet Union's five-year plans. A convincing European strategy to create a stronger Europe should take leadership on global level.

Ádám Kósa (PPE), *in writing*. – (HU) Integrated economic and employment guidelines are the nuts and bolts of the EU 2020 strategy. With regard to the draft employment directives, I feel it is important to mention that inclusive growth can only be achieved if the investment is actually made in people. A longer lifespan does not in itself mean a longer productive career. Investment in health is especially relevant in the case of Hungary, where people die at a much earlier age than in Western Europe, while at the same time the birth rate is decreasing. Appropriate abilities must be preserved even at an older age, and this is possible only with a more modern, more accessible health service. In other words, more thought should be given to accessible workplaces for an increasing number of older persons who remain active. This would also benefit younger but disabled people. Health thus merits special priority (for example, improvement of working conditions, more successful rehabilitation, facilitating the preservation of good health, and so on). This is referred to, by the way, in Guideline 8 (investment in human resource development), albeit without special emphasis or concrete details. There are many debates on health care in Europe and around the world, and there is no uniform approach anywhere. Yet we have to realise that in order to ensure Europe's competitiveness in the longer term, the dependency rate must be kept in balance with a healthier and more active population. I ask that the European institutions consider this in their strategy and its implementation.

Iosif Matula (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) I support the Europe 2020 strategy promoting economic growth which is smart (based on knowledge and innovation), environmentally friendly and conducive to social inclusion. I would like this strategy to be implemented through the creation of well-paid jobs and an increase in people's standard of living. If we want to have a strong, well-balanced Europe, we need to focus a great deal of attention on economic development in the regions of the new Member States in order to reduce the existing disparities. It goes without saying that creating a suitable infrastructure must be a priority.

I wish to stress the significance of implementing the symbolic 'Youth on the Move' initiative. We must increase funding for European programmes aimed at ensuring that education constantly keeps up to date at every level and at facilitating the mobility of teachers, students and researchers. The quality of education in European schools and universities must rise in keeping with the labour market's requirements. We must use appropriate policies and finances to encourage the learning of foreign languages, multidisciplinary, double specialisations in universities, which are important in terms of performance in scientific research and innovation, as well as for increasing young people's chances on the labour market. I also welcome the fact that the 2020 strategy is proposing a 'Youth employment framework' at European level.

Rareș-Lucian Niculescu (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) The history of the Lisbon Agenda has proved that fine ideas and principles are not enough: the key action is to implement the measures proposed. Unfortunately, the economic and financial crisis has dovetailed with the end of the Lisbon Agenda. Nevertheless, I believe that it would be wrong of us to lay the entire responsibility for the failure of this programme on the crisis, without attempting to see where the European Union has made mistakes in the implementation process. The lesson learnt will perhaps stand us in good stead for implementing the forthcoming EU 2020 strategy.

I think that we have important Community instruments for implementing new strategies, by which I am referring primarily to the cohesion policy. However, the point must be emphasised that we cannot abandon the objectives of the cohesion policy to redistribute funds in order to achieve the implementation of the EU 2020 strategy. This would be a mistake entailing severe consequences for the Member States which need these funds to bridge the development gaps which separate them from the other states. It would result in the failure of the cohesion principle at European level.

Kristiina Ojuland (ALDE), *in writing*. – (ET) Mr President, it is very much to be welcomed that the Commission has outlined the forward-looking 'Europe 2020: a strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth', because for too many years now, many European countries, in organising their economy and finances, have been following the maxim '*après nous le déluge*'. Despite the Commission's praiseworthy work on drawing up the strategy, it amazes me with its naivety. The Commission's statement on this paints us a picture of a green, equal Europe based on a social market economy, without being clear what kind of resources will be used to achieve this. In the Soviet Union, it was common practice at certain times to promise the arrival of communism after ten years, regardless of the actual reality. I would hope that, after the debacle of the declaratory Lisbon Strategy, the Commission did not want to come out with another empty-worded utopia with which to delude European citizens. What we need today is not dreams, but concrete actions to save the European economy from decline. It is high time that we began serious structural reforms in Europe, especially in the area of social policy, because the current type of social welfare model is no longer sustainable.

Rovana Plumb (S&D), *in writing*. – (RO) Achieving a minimum 25% reduction in the EU poverty level by 2020 is closely linked to increasing the employment rate to 75%. Having a quantitative target for reducing

poverty is problematic. Poverty includes economic, social, cultural and educational aspects, which means that qualitative targets are needed more for achieving the proposed objective rather than quantitative ones.

In Romania the official data published in March 2010 indicates an employment level far below the minimum level envisaged by the EU 2020 strategy (50% as opposed to 75%), with the downward spiral continuing due to the current economic climate. Women, people aged over 45 and young people continue to have the most difficulty in finding work. It is hard to believe that Romania will be able to achieve this target by 2020.

We need to find answers to questions relating to the contribution of the whole potential labour force and to our knowledge about the various groups in society: women and men, young people, the elderly and migrants on the labour market. Other questions relate to how we can reduce unemployment among young people and how we can effectively increase the participation of women in the labour market by widening their involvement in every business sector. If we fail to provide a clear answer to these questions, the two targets relating to employment growth and the reduction in the poverty level will meet the same fate as the Lisbon Agenda.

Georgios Stavrakakis (S&D), *in writing*. – (EL) I should like to express my satisfaction with the conclusions of the March Council, because they acknowledge the importance of cohesion policy within the framework of Europe 2020 and thus plug the significant gap which existed in the Commission's initial text, which made no reference at all to cohesion policy. Also, both Mr Barroso and Commissioner Hahn have acknowledged the vital importance of the contribution of cohesion policy towards achieving this strategy. Cohesion policy has made a decisive contribution to strengthening competitiveness and employment, especially through 'earmarking' and we must make use of everything that has been achieved within this framework. However, this does not mean that cohesion policy will be reduced to a simple tool for implementing Europe 2020. Its potential is far greater. As a real expression of the principle of solidarity at local and regional level, it guarantees the viability of development initiatives and it guarantees that Europe 2020 will serve the EU's general objective of strengthening cohesion in all three dimensions, namely economic, social and territorial, and will not be confined to unilateral economic development. Finally, we need to use the potential of cohesion policy in order to avoid overlapping targets and funding between various European policies.

Csaba Sándor Tabajdi (S&D), *in writing*. – (HU) The EU 2020 strategy must foster a 'green revolution' in the European economy, an energy-saving, environmentally friendly and sustainable economic restructuring and green innovation. Development, however, must not mean merely aiding those European regions that already perform above average. We should, instead, focus the major part of development on supporting the most underdeveloped and disadvantaged regions. There are still enormous differences between Eastern and Western Europe in terms of economic efficiency. In Bulgaria, for example, three times more energy is needed to produce a unit of GDP than in Germany, so that if energy prices rise, the country's competitiveness will keep declining.

While promoting the green restructuring of the economy, the European Union should not forget about the tried and tested community policies already in place, such as the common agricultural policy and the cohesion policy. The common agricultural policy will also be needed for reaching the targets set out for environmental protection and in the fight against climate change. The best stewards of the European countryside are the agricultural producers themselves. The EU 2020 strategy cannot succeed without the cohesion policy, either. The cohesion policy furnishes the entire set of tools and the flexibility needed for the EU's economic development policy. With the tools of the cohesion policy we are able to help reach goals in any specific field. For example, we can further the development of renewable energy sources, improve energy and resource efficiency, and support the green innovation.

Nuno Teixeira (PPE), *in writing*. – (PT) Ten years have passed since the Lisbon Strategy was adopted and the majority of its objectives remain unfulfilled. I am most concerned by the weak economic growth, because it is decisive for the other goals, and by the fact that in only two of the strategy's ten years of life did growth exceed 3%.

The Lisbon Strategy was strong on ambition, but it lacked strength of action, having been based on soft law and the open method of coordination. As well as employment objectives, the new Europe 2020 Strategy incorporates goals relating to education, the environment, fighting poverty, and investment in innovation. Both the new objectives and the instruments for achieving them belong to the Member States so, in this context of crisis and commitment to stability and growth plans (SGPs), we need better governance mechanisms and real economic and budgetary coordination between countries. This programme is arriving at a time of economic uncertainty and high unemployment, the reduction of which is an immediate priority. The

Commission must take the driving seat and lead this process. Strong economic growth will be crucial to keeping to SGPs and could be stimulated through the reforms and investment that underlie the Europe 2020 Strategy.

Iuliu Winkler (PPE), in writing. – (HU) It is my belief that we have to dream bold dreams: the Europe 2020 document must extend to all areas of cooperation within the European Union and become a medium and long-term strategy for Europe. But for it to succeed there must be solidarity among the citizens of Europe. According to the Treaty of Lisbon, the new strategy is being prepared with contributions from the 27 members of the enlarged European Union, so that our citizens can feel they are sharing in a common European effort. The Hungarian voters in Romania expect the EU to express that solidarity by finding a rapid solution to bringing the South and East Central European regions up to par. The strategy has to address such topics as the longer range development of our countries, the internal market, the advancement of agriculture and SMEs, but also such sensitive issues as the social network, demographic challenges, equal opportunities on the job market, the intertwining of European systems and networks in all aspects of life. The Europe 2020 strategy should be a strategy for catching up and convergence.

Artur Zasada (PPE), in writing. – (PL) During the debate on the Europe 2020 strategy we must not neglect a matter so important and significant as transport. The transport sector generates about 10% of the European Union's GDP and provides over 10 million jobs. It also plays a significant role in the context of the European internal market and the right to free movement of persons and goods. In my opinion, the matter of rail transport should be tackled decisively and quickly. I am sure that we can enlarge the trans-European railway corridor network by 2020. I think that starting from 2014 all new rolling stock and new rail transport connections should be equipped with systems which are compatible with the European Rail Traffic Management System.

20. Accession agreement of the European Union to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (debate)

President. – The sitting is resumed.

The next item is the Council and Commission statements on the Accession agreement of the EU to the European Convention on Human Rights (2010/2647(RSP)).

Diego López Garrido, President-in-Office of the Council. – (ES) Madam President, today, in Athens, three people lost their first human right: the right to life. It was the result of violent acts that we absolutely and categorically condemn. The Spanish Presidency of the Council would like to express, on behalf of the Council, its condolences and sympathy to the families, and therefore echoes the statement made by the President of Parliament.

We are talking about human rights, about adhering to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which as I said include the right to life and physical wellbeing.

The European Union is based on human rights and freedoms, and throughout its life there have been constant references in the texts that have been adopted to rights and fundamental freedoms. The culmination of this is in the Treaty of Lisbon.

Firstly, for the first time in the history of Europe the Treaty of Lisbon incorporates a legally binding Charter of Fundamental Rights of the citizens of the Union. It also says to the institutions that the Union will be party to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights.

We are therefore witnessing the culmination of the Union's political, cultural and legal journey on human rights, which the Union places at the centre of its policies, its actions and its personality.

In this respect, we think it is of the utmost importance for the European Union to have already begun the process, in order to be able to sign the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms when the time comes. This means, among other things, accepting the jurisdiction of the Strasbourg Court of Human Rights, and increasing the guarantees for citizens. It also means, so to speak, that in some way the different legislation on human rights and freedoms that coexists in Europe will be brought closer together: the national legislation – the guarantees that exist in each of the European countries, which are democratic countries that respect and defend human rights – the European Union legislation and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights, which is another piece of

legislation that not only the Member States of the European Union, but other European countries are parties too, even if they are not part of the Union.

We are therefore seeing a process of convergence of these pieces of legislation and the expression of this will be the European Union signing the Convention.

On 17 March the Commission presented a recommendation to enter into negotiations for the Union to sign up to the Convention. From that time, the Council has done everything possible to speed up the debates on the negotiation mandate. There is a working group in the Council which is conducting the debates in close partnership with the European Commission.

The Council has very much taken into consideration all the mandates in Protocol 8, which is the legal point of reference in this respect, for example: the Union's possible participation in the control bodies of the European Convention and the need to respect the competences of the Union and the powers of the institutions. It has also considered the need to appoint a European Union judge to the Court, the participation of this Parliament in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and the participation of the Union in the Committee of Ministers when it exercises functions relating to the application of the European Convention on Human Rights.

The Council has also very closely followed the debates and hearings held by Parliament in March of this year, and is very much taking into account the opinions expressed by Parliament in the draft report drawn up by Ramón Jáuregui Atondo, Kinga Gál and Cristian Dan Preda. The Spanish Presidency's prediction, and the Council's position, is that the mandate to negotiate with the European Council, which will take time and is technical and complex in nature, will be adopted before the end of the first half of 2010.

Viviane Reding, *Vice-President of the Commission*. – Madam President, my colleague Olli Rehn has already expressed the position and the condolences of the Commission concerning the Greek disaster, so let me just look at how we can advance with our work because this will be of the utmost importance for completing the system of protection of fundamental rights within the Union, and the accession of the EU to the European Convention on Human Rights, which is enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty, is not an option. It is a destination, as the Presidency so well expressed it just now, but this accession is only one of the four elements of a very ambitious and comprehensive fundamental rights policy at the level of the European Union.

First of all, with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the Charter of Fundamental Rights is legally binding, and this legally binding charter is the most modern qualification of fundamental rights in the world in terms of political commitment for fundamental rights, of legibility and of legal certainty, and it entrenches all the rights found in the Convention. The meaning and scope of these rights are the same as those laid down by the Convention, but the Charter goes further. In it we find, for example, the so-called third generation of fundamental rights: data protection, guarantees on bioethics, on good and transparent administration. The level of protection provided by the Charter must always be at least as high as that of the Convention. In many cases it goes beyond.

Secondly, there is the promotion of fundamental rights as a priority of the Stockholm Programme, setting the strategic guidelines for developing an area of freedom, security and justice in Europe.

Thirdly, there is the creation of a new portfolio – justice, fundamental rights and citizenship – which shows how much importance the Commission attaches to strengthening the action of the Commission in this area.

Then, fourthly, the accession of the EU to the Convention. It will guarantee that any person claiming to be a victim of a violation of the Convention by an institution or by a body of the Union is able to bring a complaint against the Union before the Strasbourg Court under the same conditions as those applying to complaints brought against Member States. In political terms accession means that the European Union reaffirms the pivotal role played by the Convention's system for the protection of human rights in Europe – in an enlarged Europe, not only in the European Union – but by acceding to this Convention the European Union puts its weight behind the Strasbourg system, and this is a system of external judicial control in the area of fundamental rights because now we are submitting our legal order fully and formally to that control. This, of course, will enhance the credibility both internally and externally of the EU's very strong commitment to fundamental rights.

By mid-March the Commission had proposed a negotiation mandate to the Council. Protocol 8 of the Lisbon Treaty requires a certain number of substantive guarantees to be provided for in an agreement relating to accession because we have to preserve the specific characteristics of Union law and the Commission's recommendation to the Council takes full account of these requirements. I just want to mention two of them.

It is clear that the Union's competence and powers, as defined in the Treaties, may not be affected by the accession, and the provision in the accession agreement will have to make this very clear. Likewise, the accession of the European Union may not affect either the situation of individual Member States in relation to the European Court of Human Rights or the protocols there or the reservations. The negotiations should therefore ensure that the accession agreement creates obligations under the substantive provisions of the Conventions only with regard to acts and measures adopted by the institutions or by the bodies of the Union.

Now the Commission is seeking a smooth insertion of the European Union into the system of the Convention. The accession should therefore preserve the substantive and procedural features of that system. However, the accession must meet two requirements. First, as I said already, the specific characteristics of the law of the European Union have to be preserved; safeguarding the Court of Justice and its prerogatives following accession is an important issue. There are interesting proposals on the table which aim at involving the Court of Justice in situations where the compatibility of a legal act of the Union is at stake before the Strasbourg Court, without a preliminary reference having been made. These proposals can probably be designed in such a way as not to require a Treaty amendment and they deserve careful analysis and discussion in the Council working party. I know that the Spanish Presidency is doing everything in order to bring these discussions forward.

Second, it is important to deal with the specific situation of the Union as a distinct legal entity, vested with autonomous powers, which will become a contracting party side-by-side with the Member States to a mechanism which was not, initially, designed for this purpose – but it was designed for the Member States – and therefore a limited number of technical and procedural adaptations to the Conventions are necessary with regard to the specific nature of Union law. Among these is the so-called 'co-respondent mechanism'.

It is of particular importance to take account of the decentralised implementation of Union law by Member States. By that mechanism the Union will receive the right to join the proceedings as a co-respondent in cases brought against a Member State when Union law is at stake.

From an institutional point of view I would also like to stress the Commission's position that representatives of the European Union should participate in the bodies of the Convention on an equal footing with the representatives of other contracting parties. That means, for instance, that a judge elected for each contracting party is one of the founding principles of the Convention. This principle ensures that each legal system is represented within the Court; it is also a reflection of the collective guarantee system established by the Convention in which each contracting party is required to participate, and that means that we need a permanent full judge elected by the Union who enjoys the same status and has the same duties as his peers and who intervenes potentially in all cases.

An ad hoc judge who intervenes only in cases brought against the Union or involving Union law would not be sufficient. As for the method of electing this judge, the normal procedure provided for in the Convention should also apply here. This means that the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe elects such a judge from a list of three candidates presented by the European Union. We believe that an appropriate number of Members of the European Parliament should be allowed to participate in sessions of the Parliamentary Assembly when it elects the judges of the Strasbourg Court.

I would like to thank the rapporteurs of the AFCO and LIBE Committees, Mr Jáuregui and Mrs Gál, for their excellent cooperation on the file, and the hearing which was organised by the AFCO Committee on 18 March was really of great use. I am also happy that the Spanish Presidency of the Council gave high priority to this file. I am therefore confident that we will be able to start the negotiations on accession after the summer. I will ensure that the Commission, as the Union's negotiator, will keep Parliament fully informed throughout the negotiation process.

Madam President, I do not believe that it is necessary on such a day to underline once more how important fundamental rights are for Europe and how important they are for all the acts we are proposing. I am sure the Union will not find it difficult to meet the standards of the Convention, but adhering to the Convention will certainly enhance the protection of fundamental rights in Europe, and by this I mean of each and every single human being who lives in Europe.

Marietta Giannakou, *on behalf of the PPE Group.* – (EL) Madam President, I absolutely endorse the statements made by Mr López Garrido on behalf of the Spanish Presidency and by Mrs Reding and I wish to congratulate Mr Jáuregui Atondo and Mrs Gál on their reports and on the work they have done.

The accession of the EU to the European Convention of the Council of Europe and its protocols is in application of the Treaty of Lisbon and broadens protection in the field of human rights for its citizens. This will provide a pan-European system of protection for fundamental freedoms and human rights covered by the case law of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. At the same time, in addition to external protection, the European Union is acquiring an international external protection agency, thereby enhancing its credibility towards third countries, from which it often demands respect for the European Convention on Human Rights within the framework of bilateral relations.

Madam President, the debate on human rights and fundamental freedoms coincides today with the murder of three citizens, three workers, by extremist and marginal elements in my country, in Athens, during demonstrations against government measures in response to the economic crisis. I should like, in addition to my contrition and pain and on behalf of my colleagues in the main opposition in Greece, to point out that our political faction is determined to make a decisive contribution towards safeguarding democracy and the smooth functioning of the institutions.

We respect the money which is being given to us at this critical time by our partners and the International Monetary Fund and we are firmly committed to helping with the necessary reforms, in order to come out of this crisis. As a responsible party, we shall contribute towards efforts to maintain calm and protect the unity of the Greek people by removing the extremist elements undermining our democracy.

Ramón Jáuregui Atondo, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (ES) Madam President, if I had to reduce what we are talking about today down to a single idea, I would say loud and clear to the European public that for the first time they are going to have a court that guarantees their human rights and fundamental freedoms in relation to the European Union and their own countries, when they are implementing Union law.

The essential idea is that there is a new court for the European people, the Strasbourg Court, to guarantee Union law and that its application in each Member State fulfils the minimum guarantees that are at the heart of the European idea. These minimum guarantees are part of the umbilical cord, the historical process of European integration. This process is a civilising one of integration based on the idea of human dignity – the dignity of people – and it takes shape in the form of democracy, the rule of law, the welfare state based on the rule of law and human rights.

The Treaty of Lisbon has given us the opportunity for the European Union to formalise the Charter, which as Mrs Reding said, is the most complete charter on fundamental rights that has been established in this field, and requires us to become part of the Strasbourg Court.

This is what we are going to adopt now. I know that there are a large number of technical problems, but I just want to highlight how important it has been that the Commission has done quick, efficient work, establishing a specific mandate enabling us to move forward in these negotiations.

I would like to congratulate you, Mrs Reding, on your work, which I will say once again has been quick and efficient, and I would also like to congratulate the Spanish Presidency. I would like to announce that in the next part-session we will adopt Parliament's report in this respect, and I would like to ask you for monitoring, information and support in negotiations that are complex, but very important for Europe.

Cecilia Wikström, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – (SV) Madam President, the EU's accession to the European Convention has been on the agenda for a long time. Now there is a legal basis for the accession becoming a reality. We can all be pleased about that. The EU's accession to the European Convention will mean that the protection of fundamental rights will be supplemented and strengthened, that citizens in our Member States will have better protection in relation to the EU's activities and that legal practice in the area of human rights will be harmonised better in the two European courts, in The Hague and Strasbourg.

With its accession to the European Convention, the EU's institutions will be subject to the administration of justice by the European Court of Human Rights. This will guarantee the independent external monitoring of the EU's respect for people's fundamental rights and freedoms.

It is a very important step. It is very easy to be lulled into the belief that we in Europe are free of the sort of violations of human rights that are committed in other parts of the world. As Member States of the European Union we have laws, statutes and deeply rooted European values that safeguard our rights. Based on the text at the beginning of the Treaty of Lisbon, freedom of expression, freedom of the press and freedom of religion are European freedoms that are to be respected everywhere in the Union without exception. Unfortunately,

this is not always the case, as there are Member States that violate fundamental rights in the EU. Regrettably, it is also the case that we in this House stand by and allow this to happen.

With the EU's accession to the European Convention with a view to strengthening and supplementing citizens' freedoms and rights it will be important that we in Parliament legislate and act in accordance with the Convention. The fact is that there remains a great deal to be done in our Member States to sweep our own backyard and make the fine words that constitute our common values a reality.

Heidi Hautala, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group.* – (FI) Madam President, it is very important that we think of human rights as having intrinsic value, although they also have instrumental value, which I realise when I speak to representatives of third countries in my capacity as Chair of the Subcommittee on Human Rights.

Just today I spoke to some Moroccan Members of Parliament. It is excellent that I can tell them that the European Union also stresses the importance of human rights in its own activities and does not merely try to teach others how important human rights are. In this way we can explain to the representatives of third countries that the European Union's accession to the European Convention on Human Rights really does mean that our activities are subject to external scrutiny, as has been explained here. I can also say that for the first time we have a commissioner who is specifically responsible for these matters in the context of legal issues.

I would like to mention that the European Union's accession to the European Convention on Human Rights obviously will not resolve the problem of the European Court of Human Rights being completely overloaded with work. We should consider how we might resolve this problem, which has come about because of a backlog of cases to deal with.

I would also like to suggest strongly that the Union should also decide to align itself with these various useful additional protocols that relate to such issues as opposition to torture or the fight against racism, as well as more effective laws.

Zbigniew Ziobro, *on behalf of the ECR Group.* – (PL) Madam President, the effects of signing the accession agreement of the European Union to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms will be limited, it would seem, because the Convention has been accepted as a measure of the standard of protection of human rights in Europe for a long time. It has achieved this status both in European law and in policy sectors in individual Member States.

However, it is also necessary to point to certain problems which may result from competition between the European Court of Justice and the European Court of Human Rights in the area of judicial decisions which may be made. The matter should, therefore, be very thoroughly analysed, so that mistakes will not be made later which will then need to be corrected.

Furthermore, it may be supposed that decisions made by the European Court of Justice and its interpretation of EU law will become the subject of evaluation by the European Court of Human Rights. In this way, the European Court of Human Rights will gain significant jurisdiction over EU institutions. In view of this, all the legal consequences of such a decision should be considered, to avoid acting rashly. At the same time, the question of reforming the operation of both important European courts should be considered.

Krisztina Morvai (NI). – (HU) As a lawyer working with human rights issues, I cannot understand what the added value would be for the protection of the human rights of Europe's citizens if the European Union joined the same human rights convention that every single European country has already joined. Please allow me to clarify a few connections, because as I see it, our non-lawyer colleagues have been considerably misled. The situation is as follows. There is a human rights instrument that is indeed very important, known as the European Convention on Human Rights. This Convention is not one entered into by the European Union but by its quasi-twin, the Council of Europe.

If a country violates its citizen's rights as set out in and provided by the Convention, then that citizen has the right to approach the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg and seek legal redress or enforcement of his or her rights against that country. This opportunity, as everyone knows, is available now to all citizens of the European Union. I doubt there is a single Member amongst us who is not familiar with a case where someone in their country threatened to go all the way to Strasbourg, and eventually did so and won the case against his or her Member State. What, then, is new, what is the added value, apart from someone from the European Union network receiving a well-paid job as a judge in Strasbourg?

Kinga Gál (PPE). – (HU) Madam President, Minister, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, our debate today is one of the momentous occasions in the life of the European Union. We are discussing here today something that years ago seemed an insurmountable obstacle: the mandate of the Commission when negotiating the EU's accession to the European Convention on Human Rights. That Convention was ratified 60 years ago this year, and over these 60 years it has given many citizens faith that justice could be found even against their own state. What Commissioner Reding has already mentioned is closely related to this debate, and therefore should be emphasised again and again, namely that since December the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union has become legally binding. This document is among the most progressive documents in the field of fundamental rights.

The Convention reinforces the Charter and the Charter supplements the Convention. Since December, the Treaty of Lisbon commits the EU to join the Convention on Human Rights. Therefore our objective must be to ensure that implementation is as successful as possible. The most important question here is what added value joining the Convention will bring to the life of EU citizens. My report on joining the Convention had been prepared with this in mind, and was unanimously ratified by the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs. Therefore I would like to ask the Council and the Commission to do all they can during the negotiations to ensure that joining the Convention really delivers value, an added value for the citizens of the EU, without raising exaggerated expectations.

At the same time, several questions need to be clarified during the negotiations. One of these substantial issues is the relationship between the courts. It is also a precondition that internal legal remedies be fully exhausted first. At the same time I believe it is important to take into account during the negotiations that the reform of the operation of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg will coincide with the accession of the EU to the Convention. The EU's accession to the Convention will be a unique experiment, but this must not threaten anything that is already functioning with regard to the enforcement of human rights. Accession to the Convention can be successful only if it truly reinforces the already functioning institutions and allows citizens access to them. We should take care not to endanger this process and make sure that in our surge of enthusiasm we do not throw the baby out with the bathwater, as the Hungarian saying so aptly puts it. I believe that this is a very important moment and that we are on the right path. I would ask the Commission and the Council to define their mandate and conduct the forthcoming negotiations reinforcing the above.

IN THE CHAIR: MR MARTÍNEZ MARTÍNEZ

Vice-President

Mrs Gál, I would like to say that you are the first Hungarian Member that I have seen since we heard the news that our fellow Member and friend, Mr Pál Schmitt, has been elected President of the Hungarian Parliament. I would like to say that we are definitely going to miss our friend Mr Schmitt, but I ask you to formally pass on our congratulations to him, and I am sure that he will do a magnificent job leading his country's Parliament.

Monika Flašíková Beňová (S&D). – (SK) Even though all Member States are signatories to the Convention, the accession of the EU as a whole will represent not just a new dimension for human rights protection in the EU, but also – I would like to stress – a legal and political signal for a strengthening of relations between the EU and Europe. I would also like to support the idea that, along with the EU's accession to the Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, serious consideration should also be given to the wide-scale adoption of legislation setting out the area of social rights – the adoption of a revised European Social Charter at a Europe-wide level for the Union as a whole, for example, would clearly be a welcome step.

The EU's accession to the Convention also opens up the question of the political representation of the Union in the bodies of the Council of Europe. At the same time, people are saying that the European Parliament should also play an active role in this process. I agree in principle with this view, Commissioner, but I fear that the process, including its individual components, will not be at all easy. Even though I currently share your enthusiasm – and of course the Council also deserves thanks for its very good work – we must prepare ourselves for the fact that the process will be very complicated and that we still have a lot of work to do in this direction.

Marek Henryk Migalski (ECR). – (PL) Mr President, the European Union is founded upon respect for human rights. It is, in fact, one of the finest aspects of the institution. It is just that I have the impression we are building these human rights exclusively for our own citizens. Mrs Beňová and Mrs Wikström have spoken

about this. However, I have the impression that we are neglecting what Mrs Hautala spoke about, and by that I mean efforts to propagate human rights outside the EU. It is my conviction that the European Union lacks commitment in this area.

It is with hope that I welcome the European Union's accession to the Convention, because this gives the opportunity for a certain consistency of the system of rights and the protection of human rights in the European Union. It should be borne in mind that when creating new rights, other freedoms should not be curtailed. This is, of course, a subject for philosophers and theoreticians of law, but this tension between rights and freedoms does exist. In view of this, both legislators and, later, the judges who enforce the law should be aware of this.

Angelika Werthmann (NI). – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, Article 6 of the Treaty of Lisbon states that the EU shall accede to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which represents a strengthening of the system of fundamental rights within the EU. The European Convention on Human Rights is extremely important for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Europe. Our affiliation to this legal system would strengthen the fundamental rights of EU citizens, as they would gain an additional means of legal remedy in the event that they considered their fundamental rights violated.

I view the accession of the EU to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms as a very positive step, as it will also raise awareness of the importance of fundamental rights in the EU and ideally increase the credibility of the EU with regard to its external relations.

Rafał Trzaskowski (PPE). - Mr President, first of all let me thank both our rapporteurs – Kinga Gál and Ramón Jáuregui Atondo – and also the Commission and the Presidency.

(ES) Thank you very much for the very hard but necessary work that you have done.

When we were talking about the EU's accession to the European Convention on Human Rights – and we have been talking about it in the European Union for the past 10 years, I think – there were quite a lot of worries that there would be competition between the European Court of Human Rights and the European Court of Justice, that we would have problems when it came to jurisdiction, that the autonomy of the European Court of Justice might be questioned.

But I think that what we have achieved in our work is that we are coming to a situation in which those two courts can be complementary. We were trying to do everything to avoid hierarchical thinking, but actually we have cross-fertilisation between those two systems of human rights protection. In the light of recent trends, where the ECJ follows the case-law of the Strasbourg court and vice versa, I think that the two systems coexist and actually there is no competition, and most of those fears have been dissipated.

In the recent *Bosphorus* judgment that we all know very well, the European Court of Human Rights said that there was no need to re-examine the case because the EU, as such, offers an adequate level of protection of human rights. So then the question arises: why do we need accession to the Convention? This question has been posed by our colleagues here and, yes, we do need it. Why do we need it? Not only because of the symbolic meaning, which is important, but because the whole system of protecting human rights in the European Union will gain credibility in the eyes of citizens who will enjoy the protection from the actions of the EU, not only of the Member States as is the case now. When there is no effective judicial review either at national or at Community level – when, for example, the applicant is denied standing or the EU body concerned cannot be sued, those are the situations where we will have added value.

We are acceding to the Convention for the sake of greater coherence of the system of human rights protection, not to undermine the credibility of that system. We need loyalty, and that is why we postulate that inter-State applications should not be brought concerning an alleged failure of compliance when the act falls within the scope of Union law. We postulate this and we should do our utmost to put it into law.

Finally, I would like to thank very much the Commission for setting up a DG on Human Rights. I remember as a student reading Joseph Weiler's articles about the protection of human rights. He came to the conclusion that you can do whatever you like in terms of applying for and acceding to the Convention on Human Rights, but if there is no implementation and follow-up in the Commission then it will be fruitless.

So finally, thanks to you, we have it. Hopefully we will go forward and have better protection of human rights in the European Union than we have now.

Csaba Sógor (PPE). – (HU) I am very pleased that by signing up to the most fundamental European human rights document, the European Union is taking another step towards developing a truly unified Europe and is enhancing its credibility when it intervenes against human rights violations in third countries. However, we must not forget that in terms of the protection of human rights, the Council of Europe is in many ways ahead of the European Union. This is why I urge the Commission to examine the possibility of signing up to other Council of Europe conventions and prepare an inventory of those international treaties concluded within the Council of Europe which would help us enhance the quality of the EU's human rights legislation, if we were to accede to them.

I believe that in order for Europe to truly become a region of freedom, security and law, it will be necessary to cooperate with the Council of Europe and adopt its existing achievements in the area of human rights. Amongst these achievements special attention should be given to the Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, which set out the minimum requirements for issues concerning indigenous national minorities, based on European values, respect for diversity and the rights set out in the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The Member States of the European Union are all members of the Council of Europe, and most of them have signed and ratified the documents mentioned. It would be natural for the extension of the Union's legislation into this domain to be carried out with the inclusion of the widely ratified conventions.

Elena Băsescu (PPE). – (RO) The entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon has ensured the European Union's accession to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. In fact, the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg will protect fundamental rights and liberties against EU actions. This fact is all the more important as Member States have transferred important powers to the European Union. I should emphasise that accession will not affect the principle of autonomy of EU law, as the Court of Justice in Luxembourg will remain the sole supreme court for all issues concerning EU law.

Romania signed the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in 1993. It is important to point out that Article 20 of the Romanian Constitution stipulates that international regulations governing fundamental human rights which Romania is party to take precedence over national laws.

Csaba Sándor Tabajdi (S&D). – (HU) Commissioner, it is very important that the Council of Europe has a mechanism that was developed and has been functioning for decades, monitored by the European Court of Human Rights, and that the European Union will share it. I have been saying for a long time that as far as the protection of human rights and minorities in Europe is concerned, it is of great concern that it is the Council of Europe which has a functioning system for the protection of human rights and minorities, while the real political weight in Europe lies with the Union. I would like to draw attention to the excellent report by the rapporteur, Kinga Gál, in which she points out that the relevant law of precedent or case law frequently provides a significant support for the protection of minority rights, which the European Union cannot offer. I would also reinforce what Mr Sógor mentioned. This could be a precedent for the European Union to join the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, since 8.5% of the Union's population belong to minorities and the Union has no system at all for the protection of minorities.

Izaskun Bilbao Barandica (ALDE). – (ES) Mr President, I would like to congratulate Mr Jáuregui on the very serious work that he has done.

This report clarifies institutional and operational aspects arising from the European Union signing up to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

It was three decades ago now that the European Commission and Parliament adopted both resolutions requesting that the Union sign up to the Convention. Now, with a more complex Union, with 27 Member States, no one is questioning whether this should happen. Agreement on these principles is the basis for the political cohesion and the identity of the European Union, and when these things go into crisis there are political and also economic problems.

Defending all human rights and fundamental freedoms in any circumstances and without hesitation means working to strengthen democracy and for progress, and it means completely excluding any expression of violence, imposition or totalitarianism. This, let us not forget, was the main direction of the European Union project. This is the course that we need to take, and I ask the Commission and the Council to work towards it.

Also, Mr President, I would like to send my regards and condolences to the families of the victims in Greece.

Jacek Olgierd Kurski (ECR). – (PL) The European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms is one of the foundations of the European theory of values, which defends the rights of the individual and human rights. This lay at the basis of the establishment of the European Union in terms of values.

For many years, the European Court of Human Rights has fulfilled its role very well, defending the weak and the persecuted. Recently, however, there have been several rulings which call into question the ECHR's understanding of the principle of freedom of the individual. Last year, the whole of Europe was swept by a wave of discussion and opposition to a verdict which prohibited the display of a cross in a public place.

I think the European Union, acceding to the Convention under the provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon, should at the same time begin discussion and debate in the sense of profound reflection, so that this kind of distortion of individual freedom and falsely understood human rights does not happen again in the future.

Jarosław Kalinowski (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, the European Parliament has many times adopted resolutions condemning cases of breaches of human rights and freedoms in different parts of the world. It should, however, be said that as the European Union we are unable to cope with obvious violations of these fundamental rights in Member States of the European Union.

I would like to give a very relevant example. Recently, the Chief Official Ethics Commission of Lithuania penalised Mr Tomaševski, leader of the Polish minority and a Member of the European Parliament, for putting a question to Mr Barroso about respect for the rights of minorities. This is a bizarre and downright scandalous situation. I would like to ask the following question: will accession to the Framework Convention change anything? The European Union should develop standards on these matters which are very much higher than those adopted in the Framework Convention. It is time such cases of discrimination did not take place in Member States of the European Union.

Georgios Papanikolaou (PPE). – (EL) Mr President, firstly I too should like to express my deep regret at the loss of three Greek citizens in Greece today, during the course of peaceful rallies by Greek citizens demonstrating for a better future. Certain persons, acting on the margins, certain persons acting anti-democratically, so wrongly deprived these people of their lives.

It truly is a tragic irony that we are today debating the strengthening and deepening of the fabric of protection for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of European citizens with our accession to the European Convention on Human Rights.

However effectively the Court in Strasbourg worked, we must know that, in order to strengthen the idea of Europe, a Europe of values, an anthropocentric Europe, what must take precedence over everything is solidarity: solidarity between Member States, solidarity between nations, the solidarity that we need so badly in Greece right now.

Diego López Garrido, *President-in-Office of the Council.* – (ES) Mr President, almost all the Members who have spoken have expressed their support for the European Union signing up to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and we are fully in agreement with them.

I would like to refer to the two speeches that seemed to express reticence or opposition to this, considering it either a threat to the competences of the Union, in the case of Mr Ziobro, or unnecessary, in the case of Mrs Morvai.

I would like to refer to both of these speeches and answer them both specifically. With regard to Mr Ziobro's argument, there is no problem with the Strasbourg Court interfering in the Union's competences. That is not its objective and, moreover, this is stated in Protocol 8 of the Treaty of Lisbon. It is clear that it does not change the competences or powers of the Union's institutions. There is no problem.

In addition to the issue of the 'co-respondent' mechanism – in other words, the European Union along with a Member State – when there is an appeal against a Member State before the Strasbourg Court, one of the subjects that is being dealt with in a working group on this matter is that of exhausting the judicial remedies of the Luxembourg Court first, before going to the European Court of Human Rights.

This is one of the subjects that are being worked on from a technical point of view in the working group, so that there will not be any doubt that the European Court of Human Rights does not impinge on the competences of the Union; it simply establishes whether or not there has been an infringement of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights.

The second argument is that of Mrs Morvai, who says, 'I can go against a decision by an authority of my country and I can go to the European Court of Human Rights, so why do I need the European Union to sign up?' I think that this is quite clear: the European Union has competences that the Member States do not have. The European Union not only has competences, but what is more, it has increased them.

The European Union has become an institution that takes decisions through directives, regulations and decisions from a legal point of view, which could infringe the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights. That is why the European Union's journey towards an increasingly powerful institution means that as well as the Member States signing the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and submitting to the jurisdiction of Strasbourg, the European Union therefore also needs to submit to the jurisdiction of Strasbourg; that is why the Treaty of Lisbon establishes that this is the case.

In addition, the history of the European Court of Human rights and its case law has been highly positive for human rights in Europe. The European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights, which is the text that the Court applies, is quite old – it dates back to 1950 – and, like the Treaty of Rome, it was also signed in Rome. Protocols have since been added to it over time. It is old, but nevertheless there has been a wealth of case law that has become the case law of the constitutional courts and supreme courts of the Member States. It has formed a sort of common doctrine, which is essentially the doctrine that the Luxembourg Court and the Strasbourg Court together are seeking to establish for the future in the interpretation of human rights.

We therefore feel it is entirely justified for the European Union to sign this Convention. Moreover, we feel that it is going to protect not only the people of the Member States, but also people who come from outside the European Union and have the status of a foreign resident, because the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights protects anyone who is under the jurisdiction of a Member State and in the future anyone who is under jurisdiction that is affected by the decisions taken by the European Union. It is therefore not only nationals of the Member States, but also those who are not nationals of the Member States who will be protected by this Convention if the Union signs it.

I would like to say that we are pleased that there is a consensus with regard to the importance of moving forward with the development of the mandate presented by the European Commission and that there is going to be a Parliament sitting on this, as announced by Mr Jauregui and I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate him and the other rapporteurs of this report, Mrs Gál and Mr Preda. I would also like to say that it is the intention of the Spanish Presidency that this mandate – based on the text sent by the Commission, which we understand has to be responsible for negotiating it with the European Council – should be adopted by the Council of Ministers, the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Council, on 4 June.

Viviane Reding, *Vice-President of the Commission*. – Mr President, let me start by saying how much I agree with what the Spanish Presidency has just given as answers to some of the questions of the parliamentarians. I will not repeat it because I would say exactly the same.

Permit me just to thank the parliamentarians who have intervened in a very positive way in order to underline the importance of fundamental rights, which are the basis of our Union. To reinforce those fundamental rights for each single citizen can only be an advancement of what we think as being the real values of our Europe.

I would like to thank specifically the two rapporteurs, who have done very important work in order to bring Parliament towards agreeing to the basic mandate, but the basic mandate, as has also been said in this House, is only the beginning, because we have to negotiate. These negotiations will certainly take a long time, and when we have finished the negotiations, the ratification process has to start.

So, Mr President, I foresee that I will have to come back very often – with pleasure, of course – to this House in order to report on how we stand, how we are advancing, what the problems are and what the solutions are. I am very confident that the parliamentarians will help us in order to achieve the common goal, which is a Europe of values and of rights.

President. – The debate is closed.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Philip Claeys (NI), *in writing*. – (NL) As the European Parliament, we have to make sure that the EU's accession to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) does not reinforce the current trend of judges of the European Court of Justice and of the European Court of Human Rights overruling decisions taken

democratically by Member States, in the areas of asylum and immigration, for example. I could cite quite a few recent examples of that. Judges who are not elected and who therefore do not have to account to anyone, are increasingly interfering with the legislative and executive powers of Member States. That is a pernicious development and one that reinforces the European Union's democratic deficit.

Lidia Joanna Geringer de Oedenberg (S&D), *in writing*. – (PL) Accession of the European Union to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms is a proposal which has been on the European Parliament's agenda for a long time. The Treaty of Lisbon, which provides a legal basis in this matter, allows for negotiations to be started. This is a very important step, which enables more effective enforcement of the fundamental rights of European Union citizens.

We must, however, be aware that we have a great deal of work ahead of us before the Union becomes a party to the Convention. Many questions of a legal nature arise, which will have to be answered during the negotiations. The following questions are among them. Should the Union accede only to the Convention itself, or should it also become a party to the protocols? How should the matter of representation of the Union in the bodies of the Council of Europe be solved? Finally, and most importantly, what relations should be adopted between the two courts – the Court of Justice in Luxembourg and the Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg?

Let us remember that a fundamental principle of the European Union's legal system is the exclusive jurisdiction of the ECJ to interpret EU law. I am pleased that the newly constituted Commission has treated the matter of accession to the Convention as a priority and has prepared a recommendation to begin negotiations. The most important matter now is for Member States to reach an understanding on fundamental matters, so that the negotiations can proceed smoothly.

Andreas Mölzer (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) With the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR) the EU is creating a few problems for itself. I am thinking, for example, about the alleged contravention of the Convention in connection with Italy's forced repatriation of African refugees. In that case, the cudgel of the Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees was swung, although the protection of refugees expressly relates to persecution on political or religious grounds, among others. Today, these are mainly economic migrants. Are we trying to stipulate their reception via a circuitous route?

In general, our failed integration policy of the last few decades is rebounding on us. The European Court of Human Rights in the EU will perhaps impose minarets and burkas on Europe, and some proceedings are already under way; is, conversely, the crucifix to disappear from school walls and perhaps subsequently from first-aid boxes, seals, coats of arms and national flags? In actual fact, freedom of religion was intended to be applied against a State that prohibits the practice of religion in public. It must not be the case that the indigenous population has to deny its Western heritage for the sake of the rights of a few individuals to feel good. In particular, the retention of data will probably be incompatible with the ECHR, too. The question arises as to whether the current plan to block child pornography on the Internet would comply with the Convention, especially as Internet blocks by the entertainment industry are used as an opportunity to install copyright filters, and the majority of the sites originate in the US and therefore are not subject to EU law, so the root of the problem of misuse is not tackled.

Cristian Dan Preda (PPE), *in writing*. – (RO) As rapporteur for the Committee on Foreign Affairs with regard to the EU's accession to the European Convention on Human Rights, I asked myself, as other colleagues have also done, what such a decision actually provides. I believe that the answer to this is as follows. Accession provides an additional external check at EU level in terms of respecting rights. This helps strengthen public order in Europe, based as we all know, on human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Finally, accession provides the EU with additional credibility in its foreign relations.

On the other hand, we must be aware that there are a number of questions expecting an answer. Which area is covered by accession? Just the Convention or its additional protocols as well? What forms of representation will the EU use in the Convention's bodies? What role will Parliament play in appointing the EU judge to the ECHR? I firmly believe that all these questions will be answered soon.

Joanna Senyszyn (S&D), *in writing*. – (PL) Europe still does not have an effective system for the protection of human rights. The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) is the most important instrument for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Europe. It is of particular significance to the citizens of my country, which Right-wing governments have deprived of the ability to protect the fundamental rights guaranteed by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. The European Court of Human Rights in

Strasbourg, which upholds the Convention, has dealt with over 100 000 cases since being established. The number of cases increases significantly from year to year. In 2009, almost 60 000 complaints were submitted to the Court, which represents a growth of 20% compared to 2008. The Member States are not in a hurry to recognise the judgments of the Court. If they did this quickly and effectively, there would be a decided reduction in complaints. Accession of the Union to the ECHR will be an additional goad to encourage efficient implementation of the decisions of the Court – an institution which upholds citizens' rights and makes it possible for them to seek justice. Conformity of legal acts with the text of the Convention will come under the supervision of the Court. In relation to this, the decisions of the Court should also find expression in EU policy. Perhaps thanks to this the Polish Right will understand, among other things, that the state should ensure confessional neutrality in state educational establishments, where presence at lessons is required regardless of religious confession (from the judgment of the Court on the case of *Lautsi v Italy*).

21. Electric cars (debate)

President. – The next item is the Council and Commission statements on electric cars.

Diego López Garrido, President-in-Office of the Council. – (ES) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, Commissioner, Vice-President of the Commission, Mr Tajani, as you know, European industry as a whole has been seriously affected by the global economic and financial crisis, and in this extremely tough climate for all sectors of the economy and also for industry, we believe that Europe's utmost priority is to restore growth and employment.

Today we have heard good news in the Commission's forecasts regarding the recovery that is taking place in the whole of the European Union. Although the recovery is small, ultimately it is recovery, and in particular it must mean industrial activity.

We believe that industry – and on this I am certain that I am in agreement with the Vice-President of the Commission, because we recently spoke about this matter and he agrees with us – is and must be an irreplaceable driving force behind growth and recovery for the European economy. We therefore need to back European industry.

European industry – I repeat – can play a driving role in the economy and in order for this to be the case we firstly need to protect our industrial fabric from the tough economic climate that we are experiencing, and secondly we need to improve the competitiveness of European industry. In other words, European industry needs to return to leadership and competitiveness in the global market; it needs to back innovation and the development of new technologies. In this respect, as in many other things, it is very important for the response to these challenges to have a European perspective and a European focus.

Within the industrial sector we need to place special emphasis on the sectors with the greatest capacity for impact and growth. One of those is undoubtedly the vehicle sector, with its great capacity for transferring technology to other activities, its impact on employment, its export capacity and its potential for growth. It is therefore important that we focus on the vehicle sector, which according to the Commission's own figures is a sector that in Europe employs 12 million people directly or indirectly and is the main private investor in research, development and innovation, investing EUR 20 billion per year.

Within the European vehicle fleet, which could amount to 270 million vehicles by 2030, there is a type of vehicle that must become a focus of attention for achieving the objectives that I was referring to before. We are talking about electric cars, which are one of the prime examples of the innovative strategies that must be considered in this sector.

The Spanish Presidency has therefore included developing electric cars as a priority on its agenda, as a preferred alternative mode of transport in order to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels derived from oil in the transport sector, and therefore make a clear and decisive move towards an energy-efficient and environmentally sustainable transport system. In order to do this the Council believes that we need a global strategy to develop the technologies, including, in this case, electric technology.

The Council is therefore promoting the debate on possible measures to adopt in order to promote the production of electric cars by the European industry, so on 8 and 9 February we took the debate to the informal Competitiveness Council meeting in San Sebastián. It was a really intense debate in which three central areas for work were identified: firstly, promoting a leading European market in the production of electric vehicles and their batteries; secondly, supporting the adoption and acceptance of electric cars as a

mode of transport similar to conventional cars, putting them at the same level or seeking to achieve that in the future, as at the moment they are not at the same level and it will take some time for them to get there; and thirdly, creating the conditions for a single market in electric cars.

It was therefore agreed to invite the European Commission to draw up an action plan. In response to this invitation, the Commission – as Mr Tajani will mention later – has published its European strategy on clean and energy-efficient vehicles, a communication produced on 27 April that talks about electric technologies, other alternative technologies in this field and other matters. We would like there to be some conclusions in the Competitiveness Council in May on the Commission communication presented on 27 April, and this is our intention.

In short, we believe that we must pursue the objectives of this strategy and, within it, the objectives of the 2010-2012 action plan, so that the broad areas for action are translated into 15 specific actions, which were also proposed by the Commission, in order to lay the groundwork for introducing electric vehicles.

Antonio Tajani, *Vice-President of the Commission*. – (IT) Mr President, Mr López Garrido, as the Spanish Presidency has just said, last week the Commission, ladies and gentlemen, adopted a communication on clean and energy-efficient vehicles, and I had the pleasure of presenting this text as a priority issue to the members of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy themselves during my hearing last Wednesday.

The communication consists of two main pillars: a first part on the improvement of traditional combustion engines, and a second part aimed at establishing a road map for promoting and facilitating the widespread use of advanced technologies in relation to ultra-low-carbon vehicles, hydrogen vehicles, biofuel vehicles, hybrid vehicles and 100% electric vehicles. Electric cars are, precisely, the subject of this evening's debate and of the resolution on which this Parliament is preparing to vote tomorrow.

Anyone who has paid close attention to the developments affecting the car industry will agree with me that an unprecedented consensus has been reached in favour of electric vehicles. Decisive moments have been the meeting of the Council of Ministers in San Sebastián, under the Spanish Presidency, the announcements of national programmes for electric mobility and the motor shows, not only in Europe, but also in Detroit and Beijing.

We now know that European car manufacturers will launch the first fully electric vehicles and rechargeable hybrid vehicles onto the market in 2011, while continuing at the same time to produce more up-to-date, highly energy-efficient conventional vehicles. More important still is the fact that these clean cars are not only an object of curiosity in the showrooms of dealerships, but they are also eagerly awaited by European consumers, who have clearly indicated their preference for smaller and more environmentally friendly vehicles.

I wish to briefly illustrate in this House the content of the Commission's strategy: the strategy includes more than 40 concrete measures, and I would like to take this opportunity to illustrate to you the three that have been identified by the interested parties as the main priorities that the Commission must address, namely standardisation, financial incentives and research.

Standardising electric vehicles is fundamentally important for the purposes of ensuring that European citizens can recharge their vehicles when they cross borders; so-called interoperability is an essential requirement if consumers are to wholeheartedly embrace new technology and, hence, the uptake of electric vehicles on the mass market is to be guaranteed.

That is why it is anticipated in the communication that the Commission will work with the European standardisation bodies, on the basis of the consolidated standardisation process, to adopt a single solution for interoperability, to address safety risks and to consider a smart charging system for electric vehicle chargers. The standard must incorporate the existing technical solutions and, of course, guarantee safety and an affordable price for consumers.

I am convinced that we must harness the current momentum in order to opt for a genuine single European solution, based on our internal market principles. If we let slip this opportunity, we could find ourselves in a fragmented market for many years; not only would this be negative for consumers and European businesses, it would also be unwise given the numerous competing international initiatives.

As regards financial incentives, on the other hand, ladies and gentlemen, they have already been introduced by various Member States. In some cases the incentives relate explicitly to electric vehicles, while in other cases they are linked to low CO₂ emissions. The Commission does not intend, of course, to force the Member

States to offer incentives, but it does wish to coordinate the exchange of information and to propose a set of guidelines on this subject in order to prevent, precisely, fragmentation of the market.

The third element is research: the Commission intends to strive to ensure that European research achieves the objective of having clean and highly energy-efficient transport. It will support research in all these technological sectors, while at the same time streamlining and simplifying the procedures for obtaining European subsidies.

I shall conclude by emphasising the impact that this strategy will have; it goes far beyond the car industry. I share the Spanish Presidency's view: we are here to examine a strategy, that is, the one contained in the Europe 2020 document proposed by the Commission and approved by the Council, which places industrial and enterprise policy at the heart of the strategy for emerging from the crisis and for creating prosperity and promoting development in our society in the years to come. The measures taken on behalf of the car industry, to ensure that it can definitely innovate but that it can also compete on the international market, are part of this strategy to safeguard industry but also all those small and medium-sized enterprises that revolve around major European industry, which actually represents one of the pillars of major industry.

Therefore, I believe that this work that we are doing to open up future prospects for the car industry is a commendable initiative, and I was delighted to hear the words of the Spanish Presidency, which welcomed the communication by the Commission. The Commission wants, together with Parliament and the Council, to examine a strategy that will enable our European industry, our European entrepreneurial system, to evolve, because, as the Treaty of Lisbon states and as we are all convinced, a strong market is the best vehicle for creating sound social policy.

Without business and without industry we cannot conceive of protecting jobs, or of safeguarding the right to work of our fellow citizens.

Pilar del Castillo Vera, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (ES) Mr President, Commissioner, Mr López Garrido, this is a debate on an issue on which there is generally a great deal of agreement, so it is not one of those debates in which there are radically different positions, but rather the positions are different in simple terms. We heard this in the speech by Mr López Garrido, and in the speech by the Commissioner, and it is reflected in the resolution that will be put to the vote tomorrow in Parliament with the support of all the political groups.

Having said this, there are a series of problems to resolve before electric cars can be fully efficient, and the task that we now have in front of us is to focus on seeing how we can resolve these problems as soon as possible so that electric cars can also become part of the whole project of having more sustainable and efficient energy consumption.

In this respect I would like to highlight one of the issues that has been mentioned, which is also in the resolution, which is the issue of research. There are still a series of fundamental problems linked to the efficiency of the batteries and recharging, as well as the problems of standardisation, interoperability, and so on, which have a long way to go.

In order for this ground to be covered as soon as possible, I think that it is essential, as in so many other aspects linked to energy and other issues, that efforts are focused on research. This does require an enormous effort from a financial point of view, both from the European institutions and from the national institutions.

Teresa Riera Madurell, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (ES) Mr President, first of all, I would like to congratulate the Spanish Presidency on behalf of my group for rightly including electric cars among its priorities and also the Commission, and Mr Tajani, for taking up the challenge.

This is because, ladies and gentlemen, the capacity to enter the sector swiftly with quality, standardised products will determine the future leaders in a highly competitive market.

We agree, Mr Tajani, that in order to be successful it is essential that there is standardisation of infrastructures and charging methods. However, how are you going to speed up this standardisation in order to prevent this issue from delaying the introduction of electric cars in the European Union? We agree that it is essential to support research and development in order to reduce costs and improve efficiency, as we already have significant external technological dependence. We are also concerned to know what measures are going to be taken at European level to promote research, especially into batteries.

I shall end with a question to Mr Tajani. The Commission tends to refer to cleanly propelled vehicles generically. However electric propulsion technology is the most developed. The manufacturers have a large variety of models, and they are soon going to begin marketing them. Do you not think that electric cars can be introduced in Europe much sooner than other forms of clean propulsion? Do you not think that it is realistic to think that electric cars will be widespread in Europe by 2015-2020?

Jorgo Chatzimarkakis, *on behalf of the ALDE Group.* – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner thank you for your statement. I am very grateful for the initiative by the Spanish Presidency – and this is a very Spanish event as far as I can see – in adopting this series of proposals and leading the way in this regard.

Electromobility must play a key role in future. However, as we all know, we are still a long way from achieving comprehensive electromobility. For that reason, we should also not make the mistake of allowing electric-car hype to arise, the claims of which we are not able to fulfil in political terms. Therefore, we should not abandon our focus on improving conventional means of locomotion, as crude oil will probably continue to fuel our mobility for a long time yet.

The following points are crucial, however.

Firstly, as you and all of the other speakers have said, we need a European strategy for the development of standards. The United States and China are working jointly on conductive charge couplers. We must not lag behind in this regard. We ought to lead the way and should not allow European vanity to take hold. Are the French quicker, or the Germans or the Spaniards? We should all pull together and the Commission should certainly take the lead in this. We need to develop cost-effective, high-performance batteries.

Secondly, we need to extend network-infrastructure coverage to all areas. For us, that means that we have to focus our subsidy options on this in a more targeted way in the area of cohesion, in the regions and also in the development of rural areas. Citizens must be able to use electromobility across borders, otherwise they will not use this form of transport.

Thirdly, we must also take electric cars into account in our CO₂ emissions calculations. Car manufacturers that are currently carrying out fleet calculations cannot yet include electric cars. We need to be able to take these into account in future.

Fourthly, we must provide tax relief on electric cars throughout Europe. This applies to batteries in particular, which are still the most expensive part. We need to carry out research in this regard, but we also need to harmonise our taxes.

Michael Cramer, *on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group.* – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, traffic in Europe is responsible for around 30% of CO₂ emissions, with road transport accounting for the greatest part of that. Avoiding, switching and improving are therefore the order of the day. We need to find the most environmentally friendly propulsion technology for vehicles. Electric vehicles include trains, trams, buses, cars and bicycles. The prerequisite for this, however, is that there must be no revival of the hazardous nuclear energy, which is why the production of renewable energy is the *conditio sine qua non*. In addition, the result of the whole cycle from production via use through to waste and recycling must be a positive one. Only then shall we in the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance be able to support electromobility.

Replacing the current car fleet with electric cars will neither resolve the problem of congestion nor protect the climate. There are five disadvantages of car transport: the noise, the pollutants, the accident figures, the costs and the land use. At most, electric cars solve the emissions problem. The area of land used alone is immense. For this reason, Germany, for example, has undertaken to limit the amount of land sealed under concrete and asphalt each day to 30 hectares from 2020. It is currently 117 hectares a day. Therefore, the number of cars must be reduced. For the remaining cars and also for trains, buses, trams and electric bikes we need the most environmentally friendly technology. If that turns out to be electromobility, we shall need European and international standardisation.

The Greens will vote in favour of this resolution.

Edvard Kožušník, *on behalf of the ECR Group.* – (CS) I have spent a long time looking into the problem of regulation and bureaucracy in my own country. Most of you probably know me only thanks to my journey by bicycle from Prague to the European Parliament in Strasbourg, which was 866 km long. However, most of you do not know that in Prague I ride an electric bicycle. I am not an environmental extremist. I use it for

practical reasons, because it pays off for me, as it is quicker in the Prague traffic and I can ride it wearing a suit. In my opinion, this is how we should approach the issue of standardising electric vehicles.

I have the honour here of being the rapporteur from the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection for the EP report on standardisation and normalisation. We will organise a hearing on this in June with the participation of Commissioner Tajani, and I am delighted that he considers it an important matter. There will certainly be more room for discussion there. More than at other times, Europe today needs to be competitive and needs innovation. However, standards are only one of the instruments for helping industry. Personally, I agree with the representatives of industry that the Brussels regulations on the introduction of electric vehicles are a death-knell. Pressure for innovation should come not from regulations but from demand. If they are developed to order, then the vehicles will be unacceptably expensive and nobody will buy them. By the way, the electric bicycle I ride was made in China.

Marisa Matias, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (PT) Mr President, Commissioner, Mr López Garrido, I believe that it is really important that we think about this question of electric vehicles and debate it thoroughly. Many of the issues that I wanted to mention have already been raised here. Nevertheless, I wish to say that it is important because we must, from the outset, think about this question within the development model that we currently have, and the electric car issue is fundamental to allowing us to rethink that model, whether in terms of reducing dependency on fossil fuels, or in terms of reducing carbon dioxide emissions, as has already been mentioned, or in terms of greater energy efficiency and enhancement of the potential of using energy from non-renewable sources.

There are, however, two points that appear to be absolutely fundamental to me. We cannot consider any of these strategies unless, first of all, it is integrated within a broader mobility strategy that goes beyond the automotive sector and includes other modes of transport. It has to be much more extensive; otherwise we will not solve the problem. A second point, which is also quite important, is that we have to take into account the crisis that we are experiencing. In such a context of crisis, we must take this opportunity to convert and retrain the labour market, so as to avoid negative social impacts. We can no longer take any more negative social impacts, so I was calling for this strategy to be taken and seen in an integrated way, as we are trying to do in the motion for a resolution that we are submitting to Parliament as a group tomorrow.

Laurence J.A.J. Stassen (NI). – (NL) Mr President, when Mr Ford produced his first car, he said: "My car is available in any colour as long as it is black." Nothing much has changed since then. A car is available in any model as long as it is environmentally friendly. I have nothing against environmental friendliness, but these days the environment has been rendered unaffordable by leftist politicians. The consumer is paying over the odds and that is being obscured by all sorts of government grants, but the environment would be very expensive and uneconomical if all the subsidies paid by the taxpayer were taken away. We now want a standardised electric car in the European Union.

The Dutch Party for Freedom does not think that this is something the European Union should be concerning itself with, rather it is the concern of industry. Besides, an electric car is useless at the moment. The batteries and their life are still far too limited and contain extremely harmful substances. If millions of people are soon to start plugging in their electric cars in the evening in order to recharge them, all the fuses will blow straight away and the lights will go out, quite literally, because our grids will not be able to cope with the load. What is more, all that extra power for electric cars will need to be generated by additional power stations.

In short, therefore, the electric car is unaffordable and polluting, it places too heavy a burden on network capacity and it does not generally look like much either, whether it is black or not. We therefore do not want any European standardisation of the electric car, not now, not ever.

Ivo Belet (PPE). – (NL) Mr President, President-in-Office of the Council, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, first and foremost I would ask that you pay no attention to the incredibly stupid comments made by the previous speaker. Having said that, I would like to point out that, as the President has already said, the automotive industry is the most important industrial sector in the European Union and will remain incredibly important for employers, for employees and for jobs. I think that we should switch to the electric car as soon as possible, as the Commissioner has already said. That is why we now have to implement the action plan which you, Commissioner, tabled a week ago.

I will single out three priorities from your action plan. First of all, the employees themselves. They obviously need to be given training so that they can work with the new technologies and that is something we have heavily emphasised in our resolution. I stress this particular issue to you. We are asking for a major effort to be made with regard to training, particularly through the European Social Fund.

Secondly, Commissioner and President, the vehicles of the future and, in particular, electric batteries. This issue has already been mentioned here, but it cannot be overstated. We, as the European Union, have the ambition of taking the global lead and, if nothing else, keeping pace with the Chinese. If we are to achieve that, battery technology must be an absolute priority in the seventh and eighth Framework Programmes for Research and Development. There is some reshuffling to be done there and we need to place an emphasis on this.

Thirdly, the charging infrastructure. Contrary to what the previous speaker has said, we have to come up with a European standard by the end of next year, and that is included in your plan. Otherwise, we will get bogged down in a fragmented market. Commissioner, President, ladies and gentlemen, we have here a unique opportunity to provide a strong impetus to job growth in Europe and to avoid being flooded by products and parts made in China. It is not too late to avoid that.

Judith A. Merkies (S&D). - (NL) Mr President, Commissioner and Secretary of State, I have a few points: technology, neutrality, standardisation, smart metering and raw materials. May I first of all compliment the Commission on having adopted a technology-neutral approach. I give my backing to that because energy efficiency in cars must be regulated through ambitious CO₂ emissions legislation and we have to choose a green technology. The technology will choose itself. It is the norm in Parliament to hand out compliments and I am quite happy to do that but, with your permission President, I will reserve my praise for next time because I think that the Commission is quite late with its standardisation of electric vehicles. You have talked about charging interfaces but, on the whole, no actual mention has been made of batteries. The standards will be available only in 2012 and will perhaps begin to apply as late as 2013. Might I suggest that you do your best to speed that up?

You have not mentioned smart meters in cars at all and yet you *have* talked about smart charging. May I ask you to ensure that smart meters are included in your next communication, because that is the only possible way of managing mobility and of levying tax on energy, if need be. Now, over to raw materials, you have talked about all sorts of possibilities but, quite frankly, lithium is not available on a large scale. May I therefore ask that you increase your efforts and that you carry out more research in order to find alternatives for this scarce material.

Bogdan Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz (PPE). - (PL) Mr President, the European Union needs coordination of research, innovative action and aggregation of investments to stimulate the development of fuel technologies in electric vehicles. The European market is going to have to speed up construction of the infrastructure for recharging batteries and also ensure that there are financial incentives for consumers to purchase electric cars.

Standardisation of vehicles and ensuring their universal operability in the European market is essential. In its priorities, and particularly at the meeting in San Sebastian in February this year, the Spanish Presidency clearly suggested the need to develop a uniform position both in Europe and worldwide. I hope European constructors will contribute to making the ideas of the 2020 strategy a reality, creating modern solutions for connecting electric vehicles to smart electricity networks.

Nevertheless, we must not forget that the changes which are before us should be introduced in a balanced way, with appropriate measures for harmonisation and using sources of energy which are already in use in the motor industry, such as propane, butane and natural gas, all of which have ecological benefits. Electric cars, their significance for the continued process of decarbonisation and their efficiency must be scrupulously analysed from the point of view of carbon dioxide emissions.

IN THE CHAIR: MR VIDAL-QUADRAS

Vice-President

Mario Pirillo (S&D). - (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the European Union is taking steps to devise a new alternative to traditional vehicles: that of electric cars. I am grateful to the Spanish Presidency for this, that is, for having included this important matter in its political agenda. I am also grateful to Commissioner Tajani for the points he made.

Many Member States are investing in and pushing for this type of clean technology, but Europe clearly must rethink the infrastructure, the definition of safety standards, the recharging systems and interoperability. A great deal of progress has already been made in terms of reducing the CO₂ emissions of cars, and I hope that,

with the aid of innovation, electric cars will soon become an affordable method of transport for the general public.

It is particularly important to support new technologies, when the challenge is to have a low-carbon economy. Any concessions must not, however, penalise the traditional car industry, which has done and continues to do a great deal to promote sustainable mobility.

Maria Da Graça Carvalho (PPE). – (PT) Mr President, I welcome the recent communication on clean and efficient vehicles. The arrival of electric cars on the market could represent a competitive advantage for European industry. We must not, however, forget that Europe is currently the world leader in the automotive sector, and we cannot put this competitive advantage at risk.

I therefore call on the Commission and the Member States to develop the conditions necessary to create an internal market of electric vehicles. I would also warn of the need to harmonise the standards for batteries and compatible charge points in the various Member States. It is also important that tax incentives be created, with appropriate electricity prices for consumers. Another essential factor will be the modernisation of electricity grids. I call for greater investment in research and development into smart grids and battery technology, in order to make more efficient use of the primary materials in the batteries. I ask, therefore, that all efforts be made to maintain Europe's world leadership in the automotive industry.

Bernd Lange (S&D). – (DE) Mr President, President-in-Office of the Council, Commissioner, I, too, would like to thank the Spanish Presidency and also the Commission for bringing the subject of electromobility to the fore. I also believe that we can use electromobility to revitalise the mobility economy in Europe, and we need to do that in order to create value and to safeguard jobs.

However – to use another metaphor – we need to step on the accelerator, because the issue of electromobility affects many policy areas. There is, of course, the issue of standardisation, technology, but also the question of the integration of electromobility into the whole transport system, because we may need new forms of mobility, particularly in urban areas. Energy must be renewable and we need raw materials, so trade is also affected. Therefore, I would ask you, Commissioner, to perhaps integrate electromobility further in the follow-on from Cars 21.

Lambert van Nistelrooij (PPE). – (NL) Mr President, Commissioner, yesterday this Chamber was full of mayors who signed up to the Covenant of Mayors in order to make a real commitment to a low-CO₂ economy. What I was struck by, throughout the debate, was that they are prepared to take concrete action for the benefit of our citizens and to follow through on that commitment. Now, the electric car is a fine flagship. Europe has a tradition and a reputation when it comes to quality. However, from a global perspective, and here I would ask that you look at the electric car figures for China, we really have to move up a gear, as the Commission's communication states.

These mayors came up with the idea of smart cities. It is possible to see that there is scope for a major leap forward for the electric car, and for transport in general, especially in cities. In that context, the standardisation of batteries, charging points etc. is indeed of major importance. My country, the Netherlands, has made a choice. We have said 'yes' to a German plug. Now, that is European thinking and together we are going ahead with Mennekes' six-pole plug. We actually need to follow that line of thinking and link up our best technologies.

I have two more points. First of all, we lack a proper communications strategy. From the very outset, this project has been an excellent means to bring Europe closer to its citizens and Europe can generate a greater profile for it. People will not be turning up for the elections, and what can Europe do about that?

In fact, this is something worthy of an E (European) designation: European Electric. We should take that forward because it will generate greater visibility for projects of this kind and we will be making ourselves E-proof in the process. We are working on a European project, on keeping jobs and on taking the lead, so perhaps that could come through a little clearer in the communication.

Antonio Cancian (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, Mr López Garrido, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your report, Mr Tajani. The electric car project dates back to 2006: all the institutions agree that it is a valid project. The European Parliament already gave its verdict to that effect in 2008, the Commission issued a communication on intelligent cars back in 2006 and, today, our Commissioner is making serious and practical efforts to launch these cars in the near future. I heard Prime Minister Zapatero, when he presented his programme, literally cite electric cars as a key priority of the Spanish Presidency's six-month term.

I wished to repeat that such receptiveness must be matched by practicality: practicality, in terms of propulsion, practicality, in terms of equipment, and practicality, in terms of recharging systems, which are the elements needed for electric cars to work now and in the future. Electric vehicles have the advantage of being able to thread in and out of traffic easily and of not requiring any major infrastructure for their manufacture, which is why I believe that this issue is of strategic importance. Bear in mind also – bear this in mind, Commissioner – the existence of hydrogen fuel cell prototypes, which are equally important.

Today, there are already hybrid cars on the market, and the hybrid model works for both electric and hydrogen vehicles: hydrogen with methane, and the others with traditional diesel or petrol components. Alternative-fuel vehicles are a winning idea; the fact that their market share almost doubled in 2008 proves it. However, they still account for only 1.3% of all vehicles registered. We are on the right track, but time is running out for innovation to help the environment and the labour market.

Artur Zasada (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, Mr Tajani, in the context of today's debate, I would like to draw attention to a new danger which has arisen with the spread of electric and hybrid vehicles. Put briefly, in urban conditions these vehicles are too quiet.

Paradoxically, the low noise level, which might be considered an advantage, can be a real hazard for children and the elderly and, in particular, for blind people. Therefore, we should already be thinking about how to avoid accidents involving hybrid cars, because the only noise they make is the sound of their tyres running on the asphalt. We need, then, to answer the following questions as quickly as possible: should these cars make a noise, and if so, what kind of noise and how loud should it be? Should we not already be putting an obligation on producers to develop systems which warn that a vehicle is approaching and to install them as standard?

President. – We shall now move on to the catch-the-eye procedure and I shall explain the criteria I shall follow so that nobody can be vexed or angry with me later.

We still have a large number of items on the agenda. Therefore, I shall give the floor to five Members this time and I shall give preference to those of you who have not already spoken today on this item. Obviously I will be even-handed in my treatment of the different political groups.

Alfredo Pallone (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I will be really very brief, not least because I completely agree with what both Mr Tajani and Mr López Garrido said. In fact, I am going to completely abandon the speech I had prepared because, Mr López Garrido, you have started a debate that ought to be developed within the European Union.

Let me explain myself better. I am also going to leave to one side the environmental issues relating to electric cars, in order to talk about employment problems: you, together with Mr Tajani, refer to the fact that, if Europe wants to protect itself from the emerging countries and if it wants to become the point of reference at international level, then it cannot overlook research and innovation.

The real issue, today, which must be debated by the European Parliament, is knowing what kind of Europe and what kind of relationship between the Member States we want. When I see, especially in my committee, the tendency among the Member States to compete with one another by lowering the tax burden, I say that we have doubtless completely failed to understand what Europe should stand for. Thank you, Mr López Garrido, thank you, Mr Tajani: research and innovation really can make the European Union the nerve centre of the global economy.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D). – (RO) Road transport is responsible for 28% of the pollutant emissions generated by non-ETS sectors. According to current legislative provisions, car manufacturers must only produce, by no later than 2020, vehicles whose pollutant emissions level is below 120g CO₂/km. In addition, vehicle manufacturers can give price reductions to buyers when they replace old, less green cars with a vehicle which has a lower level of pollutant emissions.

As a result, in the European Union in 2009, a 7% increase was seen in demand for hybrid or electric vehicles. These vehicles are particularly suited to urban driving. The large-scale use of electric or hybrid vehicles depends on the extent of the coverage provided by the infrastructure for supplying them with power. In this respect, standardisation of electric vehicles becomes vital.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL). – (PT) Mr President, the limitations associated with electric vehicles – such as, amongst other things, the pollution associated with producing the batteries, the difficulties of supplying

strategic elements such as lithium, and the limited range of the vehicles – make it inadvisable to take commercial or advertising risks.

These vehicles are, however, an important alternative that must be given due consideration, despite these problems. Nevertheless, they will never come close to replacing all the current, fossil fuel-powered vehicles.

The car-based society as we know it today has thus been given a suspended sentence. That is why there is a pressing need, starting now, to increase the use of all types of public, collective transport and make them accessible to all, especially electric-powered forms: surface and underground railways, heavy and light vehicles, fast trams, trolleybuses, and so on. In the medium and the long term, automobiles – even electric ones – will have to take on a supplementary and complementary role to meet families' specific needs.

Jaroslav Paška (EFD). – (SK) Electric vehicles are considered to be one way to fulfil strict environmental protection standards, since they do not produce any emissions.

Many car companies in both Europe and Asia have already completed the development of these vehicles and are ready to launch them onto the market. However, the broader distribution of these vehicles is prevented by the lack of standards defining the parameters for universal charging stations, and the hardware and software that would enable vehicles imported into Europe by different producers to be charged efficiently and rapidly in a network of these stations that is as dense as possible. While the European Commission investigates, ponders and makes preparations, our Japanese friends are hard at work. In Tokyo, a federation of electric vehicle producers has been established, which is already drawing up common standards for these vehicles and is also offering to cooperate with European producers.

In the interests of creating a space for electric vehicles as quickly as possible, I therefore call on the Commission to join forces with the Japanese producers as soon as possible and to contribute actively to the introduction of global standards for using electric vehicles.

Izaskun Bilbao Barandica (ALDE). – (ES) Mr President, Europe 2020 and the electric car. Innovation and competitiveness are in themselves knowledge. There are many regions in advance of the states they are part of in terms of the drive and effectiveness of their innovation policies.

As a Basque, I am proud to be able to inform you that, five years ago now, we started to build an automotive intelligence centre. Today it has more than 50 companies involved in research, development and innovation in electric mobility for the whole of Europe.

In the Basque country there is also a consortium whose representatives have reported on their experience to this House: *Hiriko*, a modular electric car designed for urban travel. This all came about from a public-private partnership and regional support, which meant that Spain, which had not been involved in this effort until the last moment, could include these achievements in its programme and organise its innovation summit in the Basque country.

Regions and their knowledge should, once and for all, be of central importance if we are to construct a more participative and effective Europe. Then, the challenges which we are posing for the future in this resolution – which we support – will be easier to achieve.

Diego López Garrido, President-in-Office of the Council. – (ES) Mr President, I would like to thank the honourable Members who have applauded the initiative of the Spanish Presidency of the Council in making support for electric vehicles a priority in the Presidency's programme.

I would also like to thank the rapporteurs who have contributed to the motion for a resolution which will be voted on tomorrow in this House, some of whom have taken the opportunity to speak. They include Mrs Riera, Mrs del Castillo, Mr Cramer and Mrs Matias. I am very grateful for their speeches which, along with others, make it clear that this is a strategic objective of the European Union, although they have also warned of the difficulties still involved in the manufacture and widespread, mass development of electric vehicles, and also of the need to be able to count on the support of all political and economic stakeholders. Mrs Bilbao has just referred to the regions as a key element in the development of electric vehicles.

I am convinced that the European Union has to take all these factors into consideration in the future.

That is why I should like to point out some of what I see as the arguments in favour of electric vehicles. However, I shall also refer at the end to the difficulties or obstacles which I believe we have to overcome.

Speaking of advantages, I believe that there are two key aspects of electric vehicles which offer considerable advantages. One is technology and the other energy.

As far as technology goes, electric vehicle technology already exists. It is working now. Indeed, there are already more than 90 different models of electric vehicles advertised by vehicle manufacturers to be launched on the market in the relatively near future.

And it is also the case that, at the same time, we must accept that some of these technologies need to be fully developed as they still have some limitations at the present time, as is the case with batteries, recharging or the warning which Mr Zasada gave us about the absence of noise and the dangers that can involve for pedestrians. I think that it is very important to take his views into account.

What is more, the technology used by electric vehicles is the most efficient and best for the environment. The efficiency of electric vehicle technology can reach 60%, whereas traditional motors have an efficiency of 20%.

Furthermore, as far as energy is concerned, electric vehicles objectively help us reach those goals which we spoke about this very afternoon when we talked about Europe 2020 and the fight against climate change, known as the 20/20/20 objectives. With their storage capacity, electric vehicles have technology that helps to mitigate one of the problems, negative points or weak spots of renewable energies. Electric vehicles help renewable energies, which have a weak spot: they are irregular. Electric vehicles compensate for this irregularity through their own special features.

Furthermore, they also contribute as far as energy security is concerned. For example, there are many countries in Europe which do not have oil reserves, and electric vehicles could compensate for this lack, and make a contribution to something that is also a strategic objective of the Union: the struggle for energy security which, as we have seen, sometimes makes our societies extremely vulnerable.

Finally, in spite of that, in spite of those advantages, electric vehicles will clearly require us to change many of our manufacturing systems, and also many of the technologies that I mentioned earlier, people's habits and power distribution networks, and it will also even make it necessary to move towards a new communications strategy, as Mr van Nistelrooij quite rightly pointed out.

In other words, electric vehicles have a great deal of advantages but there are also obstacles and difficulties, and that clearly means that we must approach it from a positively European perspective; it means that the governments of Europe, the Commission and this Parliament, which will vote tomorrow on a series of resolutions, must pay particular attention to it. That is why it is so important that these three institutions of the Union – the Council, the Commission and the European Parliament – should work together on the strategic line they should adopt in relation to electric vehicles.

Antonio Tajani, *Vice-President of the Commission*. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, I believe that the Spanish Presidency has correctly situated the electric car strategy in a broad – broader – context that relates not only to electric cars but also to the development and protection of the car industry, in the context of European industrial policy. In this way it is considering how industry, industrial development and job creation will look in the decades to come.

Therefore, this decision, which the Commission supports, targets – through a two-pronged strategy, which certainly does not rule out a serious effort to reduce CO₂ emissions from traditional vehicles – two areas: combustion-engine cars, which must be improved, and technology and research, because, as Mrs Bilbao Barandica and Mr Pallone were saying, it is only right that we focus on technology and research if we want to overcome the challenge on the global market. We cannot conceive of having a competitive European car industry if strong action is not taken in the fields of innovation and research: any initiatives and support from Parliament in this area are therefore very welcome.

Choosing an electric car does not mean excluding other options: I say this to Mr Cancian, who stressed the importance of hybrid cars, of hydrogen cars. Electric cars are an important resource that have already gained broad support and obtained positive results. Many Member States, in fact, are choosing them. However, I repeat – because I have also heard some MEPs oppose the principle of electric cars, which are the subject of this evening's debate – that electric cars are an extraordinary opportunity but are not the only opportunity, because our objective is to have a European industry that is more competitive on the international markets and to reduce pollution and CO₂ emissions in the transport system, including in the urban transport system.

I would point out to Mr van Nistelrooij that, during the last parliamentary term, the European Commission presented the urban action plan, which accords huge importance to electric transport in this context.

Of course, it takes a great deal of work to produce a competitive electric car. Someone raised the issue of standardisation: in the Commission document the Union's standardisation bodies have already been given the task, in 2010, of developing a harmonised European standard for electric vehicle recharging systems by next year. We have already responded to these concerns, just as we have also responded, in the document approved by the College, to the concerns expressed by Mrs Merkies about the issue of raw materials. She raised the issue of lithium, along with other MEPs who have spoken about batteries during this debate. Precisely because it recognises the problem, the Commission has decided to include in its work programme – and we also spoke about this during a recent meeting with Mrs Merkies – a communication on the problem of raw materials, which is a priority for us.

Some MEPs – Mr Belet, Mrs Matias – mentioned the problem of employment, but many other MEPs also spoke about the retraining of workers, because if we are to have an industrial system in the car industry which is highly innovative, which is focused not only on electric vehicles but also on the development of a transformed combustion engine – less-polluting combustion engines but all the other opportunities too – then we must focus on retraining workers as well, because our aim is to comply with the Treaty of Lisbon, which regards the market as the best vehicle for creating social policy.

However, the concerns that have been raised by some Members are already addressed in the text of the Commission communication, in which it is explicitly stated that the Commission is willing to allocate resources from the European Social Fund to specific initiatives to retrain and provide vocational refresher training for workers, precisely so that they too can be instrumental in achieving this innovation, which should make European industry more competitive.

I believe that Europe has a strategy. Mrs Stassen is opposed to electric cars: they are an opportunity, but it is ultimately up to the market to decide. There is also the option not to buy electric cars; no one is forcing Europeans to buy them. However, Mr Zasada presented another problem, which concerns the safety of transport: without doubt, when it comes to marketing, we will have to assess in every way possible the future problems in relation to both noise pollution and polluting substances, as well as the full impact of car manufacturing and scrapping on the environment. We have explained this problem clearly and, in fact, we are convinced that having electric cars will enable us to make progress, including in the area of safety. However, we must provide the manufacturers in the sector with specific guidelines, so that it really is possible to have a non-polluting electric car.

I have tried to answer almost all of the questions that have been put by the MEPs, and I shall also reply to Mr Lange, who mentioned CARS 21. In the communication that was approved by the Commission and subsequently presented to Parliament and the Council, it is expressly stated, on the final few pages, that we are anxious to revive the CARS 21 high-level group. The latter was an extraordinary opportunity to work with the stakeholders and it must remain as such, especially since we believe – in unison with the Spanish Presidency and with the vast majority of the MEPs, Mr President, who have spoken during this debate – that the car industry is an extraordinary asset, which must certainly be adapted and in some cases restructured, which will certainly have to be modernised, but which has extraordinary potential and which is the jewel in the crown of the European industrial and entrepreneurial system.

For this reason we are all committed to ensuring – and this evening's debate proves it – that this industrial sector can become more competitive. We are more competitive if we focus on innovation and research. I believe that choosing to commit ourselves to electric cars, too, is a good way of ensuring that European industry can compete on the global market.

President. – To conclude the debate I have received one motion for a resolution ⁽¹⁾ from six political groups, pursuant to Rule 115(5) of the Rules of Procedure.

The debate is closed.

The vote will take place tomorrow.

Written statements (Rule 149)

(1) See Minutes.

Elena Băsescu (PPE), in writing. – (RO) Against the backdrop of climate change, green vehicles offer an effective way of reducing carbon emissions. However, their development must be included as part of a future policy on sustainable mobility. Romania would like to introduce electric cars gradually on its domestic market. With this in mind, Prime Minister Emil Boc decided recently to set up an interministerial group to devise a national strategy for manufacturing electric cars. In countries like Denmark or Israel, charging stations, which will be officially launched by the end of 2011, are being installed and tested. Furthermore, the French, Spanish and Irish Governments are awarding grants to anyone wishing to purchase vehicles of this kind. At the moment, the cost of an electric car is high, as it is basically determined by the cost of the battery.

With the aim of supporting electric car production in the European Union, the charging infrastructures and technologies need to be standardised to facilitate cross-border electric mobility. In this respect, the Commission must provide financial support to Member States. Green cars offer significant benefits. They help combat climate change, reduce Europe's dependency on oil and help achieve the Europe 2020 strategy's objectives. This is why I believe that we must encourage the use of electric cars.

Sergio Berlato (PPE), in writing. – (IT) In April the Commission issued the communication on clean and energy-efficient vehicles, which is to say on the European strategy for encouraging the development and eventual widespread use of vehicles that are 'clean and efficient' in terms of low emissions of carbon dioxide and pollutants.

According to recent estimates, in 2020 electric vehicles will account for 1-2% of the market; in other words, they will make up less than 4% of all vehicles: clearly, the majority of the vehicles of the future will continue to be powered by internal combustion engines, and they must be supported rather than penalised as they undergo improvements. I believe, therefore, that attention should be paid to certain factors of interest to the European branch of the industry: spearheading the infrastructure standardisation process, especially in terms of timescales in relation to our competitors – China, the United States, Japan, Korea – and preventing the proliferation of measures aimed at providing incentives for electric cars in the areas of available funds, urban access and public procurement.

In fact, by exclusively promoting electric cars, we are liable to decrease the widespread use of traditional or alternative (methane or biogas) combustion vehicles, thereby distorting the internal market and curbing the competitiveness of the car industry.

António Fernando Correia De Campos (S&D), in writing. – (PT) The Commission has just submitted a communication on clean and energy-efficient vehicles that sets out a neutral opinion as regards electric vehicles, giving no particular priority to any of the available options, whether they are electric, hybrid or hydrogen-fuelled vehicles. Nevertheless, at the informal meeting of the Council in San Sebastian in February it was agreed that the EU must lead a common strategy regarding electric vehicles. This means that the Commission has to prioritise solving the problems that still afflict electric vehicle production, such as the cost of the batteries, the need for more research and development to improve features, and, most important, the harmonisation of electric vehicles and charge points, both globally and across Europe, in order to ensure a high level of competitiveness in the market, so that electric vehicles can compete with traditional internal-combustion engines on a level playing field. I would remind the Commission of the need to prioritise the financial resources for this purpose, especially because of the simple fact that electric vehicles have the additional benefit of having an excellent energy storage capacity, which the other options do not have and which is so necessary for our energy independence.

Petru Constantin Luhan (PPE), in writing. – (RO) Using electric vehicles offers a number of major benefits for sustainable mobility. We can mention among them: the reduction in carbon dioxide emissions and improvement of air quality, the reduction in dependence on imported fossil fuels and electric cars' increased efficiency compared to the other transport technologies.

On a global scale, the EU's competitors are investing in the research and development of new technologies for reducing carbon emissions and are launching programmes supporting the transition to green road transport. In order to enable Europe's car industry to retain its global competitiveness and to ensure it plays an important role in green technologies, the European Union must create a suitable framework for promoting innovative technologies, encouraging research and developing the infrastructure required to support the transition to an efficient economy based on low carbon resources and emissions.

I support the European Commission's measures on this and I welcome the publication of the plan aimed at promoting the establishment of a European network of rapid charging stations for electric cars by 2011, as well as common technical and safety standards to apply to it.

Marian-Jean Marinescu (PPE), in writing. – (RO) The transition to a sustainable, energy-efficient transport system has become a priority for the EU against the backdrop of climate change and fluctuating fuel prices. Developing electric vehicles across Europe to replace conventional vehicles is a viable solution, with increased market potential. To achieve this, Member States must coordinate their actions so that they can decide on a European standard, for example, for the systems used for charging and storing energy, including smart grids and on-board metering systems and interoperability. The EU must also give stronger backing to research and innovation, with the particular aim of improving battery and engine technology, as well as in terms of offering incentives for the manufacture of electric vehicles. I call on the European Commission to take specific measures to anticipate the changes in the car sector and supply chain and to support harmonisation of national policies in this area. It is time for the EU to boost competitiveness in the mobility industry by cutting development costs for manufacturers and gradually reducing the CO₂ levels generated by road transport.

Daciana Octavia Sârbu (S&D), in writing. – I welcome the Commission's recent strategy on clean and energy-efficient vehicles, and especially the new focus on electric cars instead of biofuels as part of the shift to greener transport. However, just as biofuels are controversial and not without problems, there are significant challenges with electric cars which must be overcome before they become a realistic option for European citizens, and before they deliver real environmental benefits. The additional demand for electric power for transport must be met by low-carbon sources if these cars are to realise their full environmental potential. I am concerned that the EU's development of these sources will not be sufficient to match the demand which will arise from increased use of electric transport. This needs to be considered as part of the EU's energy strategy as we move towards a low-carbon economy and reduced dependence on oil supplies from third countries. A network of standardised charging points must also be put in place, and I encourage the Commission and Member States to work towards this standardised infrastructure to make electric cars viable for consumers and car manufacturers alike. If these key challenges can be overcome, we can look forward to low-carbon, low-pollutant transport and all the associated benefits to the environment and human health.

22. One-minute speeches on matters of political importance

President. – The next item is one-minute speeches under Rule 150.

Tiziano Motti (PPE). – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, today, 5 May, is the Fight against Paedophilia and Child Pornography Day in Italy.

It is a moment of important reflection, introduced by Act 41 of 2009, on what is, unfortunately, a widespread and increasingly serious phenomenon, because today paedophiles are not old men who trick children in parks but people who circulate within an internationally organised structure and who use the most modern forms of technology, such as the Internet. Therefore, today, young people, boys and girls, are not even safe within their own homes any more.

That is why I hope that the European Union, too, will see fit to dedicate a day to this important subject, and it is also why I have submitted a written statement calling for the introduction of an early warning system to enable the police forces of the individual Member States to work in an organised manner and exchange a rapid flow of information. I hope that this initiative will be welcomed by the majority of this House.

Gabriel Mato Adrover (PPE). – (ES) Mr President, last week Europe missed a great opportunity: the opportunity to be the world leader in astrophysical research for the next twenty years. The European Southern Observatory decided, on the basis of reports which were far from transparent, that the European Very Large Telescope would be located in Chile and not in the Canaries.

This is a time to congratulate Chile, but also to reflect on whether in Europe everything possible was done to have a European installation, decided on by a European institution, with European funding involving an investment of more than EUR 1 billion, located in Europe rather than in the Americas.

The European Parliament was unanimous in its support for locating it in La Palma and I am grateful for that, but what did the Council do? What did the Spanish Presidency do? Did it hold any meetings with the Observatory? Did it hold any meetings with any of those Member States responsible for deciding on the location of the telescope? Did it really support the European bid?

Europeans from La Palma, the Canaries and the rest of Europe are waiting for answers on this. At the moment they are left with the conviction that not everything was done that could have been done.

Daciana Octavia Sârbu (S&D). – (RO) We have proposed a resolution intended to ban the use of cyanide technologies in mining as it is our duty to take every safety measure to protect people and the environment from ecological disasters. If we are able to make historic commitments on cutting emissions and set the tone for the whole world in terms of environmental protection, why can we not make a basic gesture in support of a clean environment and abolish this harmful practice from the European Union?

The Baia Mare accident, which occurred in Romania 10 years ago, is regarded in the same way as Chernobyl, affecting three countries and destroying the ecosystems in the affected rivers over hundreds of kilometres. Now, again in Romania, they are intending to construct a new mining operation in Roşia Montană using cyanide technologies.

This is why today, even more than ever, I wish to thank you for voting against the use of cyanide technologies in mining. The regions affected by this must be helped by the European Union to develop on a sustainable basis, utilising their full potential.

Cristian Silviu Buşoi (ALDE). – (RO) The extremely difficult situation which Greece is in, not to mention the deeply concerning information about other European Union Member States with serious problems, highlights to us that the economic crisis has not run its course and that, in spite of some progress made by the European Union's older countries, there is still the risk of major imbalances.

Unfortunately, in the situation where some countries are facing dwindling budget revenues, the immediate temptation is to raise taxes and duties. This is exactly what is in the process of happening in Romania too. The government is discussing at the moment increasing the flat income tax rate and VAT. It is wrong to believe that a sudden increase in taxes and duties will bring in more money for the budget. The impact of such measures is extremely damaging to the economy in the medium and long term.

Regrettably, the European Union is finding it difficult to develop a common strategy against the economic crisis. However, I think that better communication and cooperation are required between the countries which have emerged from the crisis using proactive, incentive measures, rather than by raising taxes, and those facing major problems, which are in the process, out of desperation, of raising taxes and duties, thereby running the risk of sinking even deeper into crisis.

João Ferreira (GUE/NGL). – (PT) Mr President, the attacks of financial speculators on the euro area's most vulnerable and dependent economies are getting worse. It is the same financial capital that has received trillions of euros from the Member States that is now speculating on the fragility of the public accounts created by these transfers and by the economic dependency of the peripheral economies. This dependency is caused by a monetary and exchange policy driven by the European Central Bank that is, with its sham independence, in the service of big capital and the major European powers, and is worsened by the liberalisation of the markets and by free competition in international trade.

Against this backdrop, the Member States and the European Union have just made it quite clear what European solidarity means: sweeping the continued looting of financial capital under the carpet and, if necessary, transferring the costs of the theft onto the workers and ordinary people through measures of true social terrorism. However, workers and ordinary people will not be forced down the route that they are being told is inevitable, but is not. Their struggle is there to demonstrate this. We here salute the courage and determination of those in Greece, in Portugal and in several other countries.

Trevor Colman (EFD). – Mr President, it has now become clear on this tragic of days that draconian austerity measures will be imposed on Greece to preserve the euro. This cannot be right. It simply penalises the ordinary, hard-working Greek people for the profligacy of their politicians and the desire of those same politicians to prop up the doomed currency union.

We in the UK remember our exit in September 1992 from the Exchange Rate Mechanism, the ERM, or, as the British politician Norman Tebbit called it, the 'eternal recession mechanism', membership of which had been disastrous for Britain. We escaped thanks to the Bundesbank's refusal to prop up sterling.

Tough love does work. Whilst it remains in the eurozone, Greece has no way out. Free the Greeks from the shackles of the euro. Let the IMF do its work and watch how quickly Greece recovers, as we in Britain did on leaving the ERM. Do not make the Greek people pay the price for the unattainable ambition of an EU superstate!

Angelika Werthmann (NI). – (DE) Mr President, I would like to talk today about the subject of air safety. This topic has occupied us a great deal in the last few weeks and it has affected us all.

Human life is more important than any economic gain. This is precisely why I am in favour of a flight ban if there is an external risk, an ash cloud for example, to the safety of passengers, as it would be irresponsible to put lives at risk. I would remind you of the two near-disasters in 1982 and 1989 and the fighter jet in which glass fragments caused by the ash cloud were found.

Test flights have been undertaken, but the evaluation is taking time. Experts have been consulted, but their responses do not point conclusively in any particular direction. The fact remains that lives are precious and should not be put at risk, and efficient and affordable alternatives to aviation ought to be implemented.

Vasilica Viorica Dăncilă (S&D). – (RO) I believe that in order to improve the operation of the food supply chain in Europe and achieve optimum transparency, a uniform legal framework is required at Community level with the task of defining the deadlines used in commercial relations between food product suppliers and retailers and more effective ways of protecting suppliers against anti-competitive agreements and practices, as well as the payment method and deadline.

I also think it would be useful to tighten compliance with competition regulations and ensure that they are subject to a standard interpretation in all Member States. Taking into account the current state of commercial relations between suppliers and retailers, I think that the provisions of the competition regulations need to be assessed, which will establish a balance between the European Union's common agricultural policy and competition policies. Monitoring the market could include effective transparency with regard to setting prices and, in particular, profit margins in the food chain.

Jarosław Kalinowski (PPE). – (PL) Mr President, many times in this Chamber we have raised the matter of discrimination against the Polish minority in Lithuania, where the Poles who live there are not allowed to write their surnames using the original spelling, school classes which use Polish as the medium of instruction are being closed and land seized during the Soviet era is not being returned to its rightful owners just because they are Poles.

Recently, the Chief Official Ethics Commission of Lithuania penalised Mr Tomaševski, leader of the Polish minority and a Member of the European Parliament, for putting a question – here, in this Chamber – to Mr Barroso about respect for the rights of minorities in Lithuania. These scandalous measures are intensifying. Several days ago, the Lithuanian Language Inspectorate imposed further high fines on the director of the Salcininkai local authority for using bilingual signs. Eighty per cent of the region's population are Poles.

Mr President, it is high time the European Parliament put an end to these scandalous actions of the Lithuanian Government. We take pride in the fact that human rights are the foundation of the Union. It is a poor foundation if we are unable to enforce these rights in Member States.

Charalampos Angourakis (GUE/NGL). – (EL) Mr President, millions of workers have gone on strike and are demonstrating today, with the Hellenic Workers Front, against the barbaric measures imposed by capital, the Greek Government, the European Union and the IMF.

These measures are neither new nor temporary. They are a blatant application of capitalist development which leads to crisis. They aim to safeguard the profits of the Greek and European plutocracy and to pursue the application of the Treaty of Maastricht. They are included in the Lisbon Strategy and the Europe 2020 strategy, which is why they lead to a dead end.

However, we say that this is not a one-way street and that there is a solution. The solution is to re-constitute the workers' movement and to support development based on the needs of those that produce the wealth. The solution is to nationalise the monopolies and give power to the people. Neither provocateurs nor the blackmailers of the Greek Government can stop this movement, and nor can the murderous acts which were committed in Athens today and which have shocked us all.

We believe that the Greek people will win their fight.

Chrysoula Paliadeli (S&D). – Mr President, some hours ago I would have said that, in spite of the tasteless distortion of cultural emblems and despite articles of ambiguous objectivity referring to outdated stereotypes, although the Council failed to apprehend the Greek economic crisis as a major European issue and the Commission failed to use it as a crash test for European cohesion, the Greek people were ready to support their new Socialist government in their struggle for economic and social recovery.

Now, in light of the tragic events of the last few hours in Athens, where three people died because of the violence which arose due to the hard economic measures, I recall Mr Rasmussen's recent words: the downgrading of Greece's sovereign credit to junk status is an indictment of the policy of prevarication. I think that it is most urgent for the Members of the European Parliament to strengthen their struggle for cohesion.

I hope that what happened to Greece today just a few hours ago will not be contagious, and I hope that this may mark, on the contrary, the beginning of a unanimous effort for the formation of the European identity through solidarity and through partnership.

Ilda Figueiredo (GUE/NGL). – (PT) Mr President, a few days ago it was the 120th anniversary of 1 May as International Workers Day.

They have been 120 years of incessant, hard and heroic struggle by workers worldwide for their rights and for the emancipation of labour, for a society in which labour, finally free of exploitation, constitutes the full realisation of human beings' creative abilities. They have been 120 years of brilliant advances, of painful setbacks and of tenacious resistance by workers. The first of May and its universal watchwords were historically built on the most violent repression at the cost of innumerable struggles, sacrifices and lives lost. It was consolidated at every step taken by the people in winning freedom, and it has suffered and still suffers setbacks every time that the circumstances of history allow big capital to go on the offensive. That is currently being experienced in the European Union, and it is being seen in Greece, Portugal and so many other countries.

Consideration must be given to these struggles and the worsening of exploitation must stop. It is time to respect the dignity of those who work and create wealth.

Alan Kelly (S&D). – Mr President, I wish to draw the House's attention to a matter of very serious urgency. A young Irishman and EU citizen, Michael Dwyer, was shot dead in Bolivia just over a year ago. Many observers believe he was murdered. As yet, Michael's family, who are present in the House with us here tonight, have no answers as to how and why he died.

The only official information which has been given out is that he died as a result of being involved in a supposed plot to assassinate the President of Bolivia. This is very much out of character for someone who came from a loving, caring and apolitical family. However, the real issue here is that the information coming from the Bolivian authorities cannot be trusted. Their versions of events totally contradict each other, whether it is in forensic evidence, ballistic evidence or the very arguments that they put forward.

So I urge this House and the EU's new High Commissioner for Foreign Affairs, Catherine Ashton, to support the Irish Government's efforts to have an independent investigation established immediately. I do so with the support of Irish MEPs across parties, who will be writing to her in the near future.

Kristian Vigenin (S&D). – (BG) I must draw your attention to a problem in my country. Bulgaria is being governed by an incompetent, but populist government, which is using methods typical of the 1930s.

Indicative of this is the fact that the most popular politicians at the moment are the Interior Minister, followed by the former Chief Secretary of this ministry, who is now prime minister. In the wake of the elections, hundreds of representatives of the opposition were sacked for political reasons. Pressure has been exerted on the main media. Politicians are being arrested in a brutal and blatant manner or ridiculous charges are being made.

Prosecutors are publicly flouting the presumption of innocence, while ministers are exerting pressure on courts and pronouncing sentences from the TV. A new law permits sentence to be passed solely on the basis of information obtained by phone-tapping and evidence provided by an anonymous witness. Arrangements are being made to set up an extraordinary court, officially called a 'specialised court'. Fear is spreading.

For years on end Bulgaria was required to make greater efforts in the fight against crime. At present, efforts are being made, but the fight against crime is spilling over into a battle against democracy. The European Parliament is sensitive to the violation of democracy, freedom and human rights around the world. It also needs to be just as sensitive when this is happening in Member States.

Csanád Szegedi (NI). – (HU) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the financial crisis, unemployment and the growing State budget deficit and debt constitute the greatest challenges to the nations of Europe today. I would, however, like to call attention to the corruption that is typical of Central European countries but in Hungary is of particularly serious scope, and which has further aggravated the crisis and thrown our country

into even greater debt as a result of the additional loans it has taken out. The outgoing Hungarian socialist government placed the Hungarian economy in an untenable situation, since no public investment or state contract was free of corruption, whether for motorways, bridge renovations, parking, health care, domestic financing or EU tenders. Jobbik calls upon the newly elected Hungarian government to adopt and implement strict anti-corruption legislation and, in light of the crisis, we urge every EU Member State to do likewise. Jobbik believes that it is possible to rid political life of corruption.

Alexander Mirsky (S&D). – (LV) Thank you, Mr President. On 8 May, Europe celebrates victory over Nazism. However, ladies and gentlemen, I have some unpleasant news. This year in Latvia, on 16 March, with the tacit approval of the authorities, Waffen SS veterans staged a march with flags in Riga in commemoration of the day on which the Latvian SS legion was founded. For 20 years now, we in the opposition have not been able to do anything about it. The leaders of European states pretend that nothing is going on. In Latvia, SS punishment battalions destroyed 130 villages and killed more than 150 000 people in Latvia, Belarus, Poland and Russia. Today, however, they are commemorated as heroes in Latvia. This timorous silence in European Union Member States is a crime against the millions of people who perished during the Second World War. This is extremely important. Thank you.

Iuliu Winkler (PPE). - Mr President, history has shown us that crises can generate progress. Under pressure, new ideas can emerge, creating innovative mechanisms in order to induce development and avoid the errors that led to the crisis.

I would like to highlight two such ideas that could result in meaningful instruments. If we want the EU to remain a relevant global player, a European monetary fund and a European rating agency should be created. Despite the major institutional effort needed, it is still an exercise worth undertaking if we consider our long-term interest. We can all bet on the fact that the future will bring new crises.

The European social market economy and the common currency are cornerstones of the world economy and the global financial system. The establishment of a 'European IMF' could enforce the Stability and Growth Pact, and the European rating agency would make its assessments based upon a true understanding of European economies. Both ideas should be debated seriously, and, in my opinion, the positive decision would be the wise one.

Corina Crețu (S&D). – (RO) We have witnessed recently the alarming rise of the extreme right and the adoption of more radical xenophobic and racist attitudes. The regional elections in Italy and France, as well as the general elections in Hungary have confirmed the growing success of extremist movements spreading a dangerous nationalist, anti-European and aggressive message, targeted either at national minorities or neighbouring states. This is not what we wanted for a united Europe, nor do I believe that this is the solution to its citizens' problems.

I wish to express my alarm about the hostile messages being spread about Eastern Europeans, and Romanians in particular, in the foreign media, which has taken the form up until now of extremist rhetoric. French television insults Romanians in a general manner, while a candidate from the Spanish People's Party promoted his electoral campaign during the Barcelona municipal elections under the slogan 'We don't want Romanians'.

I wish to take this opportunity to issue an appeal to all responsible political groups in the European Parliament to join forces and tackle this dangerous phenomenon in the European Union.

Kriton Arsenis (S&D). – (EL) First of all, I should like to express my condolences to the families of the victims of today's attacks in Athens.

To come back to the subject of climate change, the 35 000 representatives of the world peoples who met in Cochabamba in Bolivia did not beat about the bush. They want us to agree at the Mexico conference to legally binding reductions in our emissions. They are right. We cannot put off this decision any longer.

The European Union must immediately and officially commit to a 30% reduction in emissions by 2020. This will change the dynamic in the negotiations which, it is true, have become bogged down, with the risk that the decision on reducing emissions will be postponed until after Mexico, with no specific date and with no specific timetable.

We can also do much more in Parliament. A 30% reduction in the European Parliament's footprint by 2020 has already been agreed. We need to set an example to the Member States by reducing our footprint by 50%.

We all know that there are large margins for energy savings in our daily workplace and for reducing our environmental footprint and we can and we must do so.

Elisabeth Köstinger (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, the European Parliament has today granted discharge to the Commission for 2008, and that is a good thing. The irregularity rate for the EU funds paid out has never been as low as in this year.

In the last three years it has been possible to halve the areas in which the irregularity rate was above 5% and therefore above the tolerance limit. The area of cohesion alone leaves a great deal to be desired. More effort needs to be made particularly in this area in the future. The area of agriculture and natural resources needs to be highlighted in particular. The irregularity rate in this area was below 2% and was therefore very clearly in the green zone. The monitoring and control systems are effective.

In this context, however, I would also like to mention the pre-accession aid for Turkey referred to in the discharge report. An increase in the funds for Turkey is highly questionable in view of the lack of measurable criteria. It is unacceptable to give EU funds to third countries without any established indicators. Direct control of the payments and how the funds are used is essential. Only then can the aid actually have the desired effect.

Krisztina Morvai (NI). – (HU) Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights defines the right to engage in trade union activities as a human right. In direct contravention of this legal provision, the Hungarian Military Court passed a severe sentence last week on Judit Szima, the leader of a union representing ten thousand police officers, for activity which, whether from a lay perspective or from the professional point of view of a lawyer, was exclusively a defence of employee rights and the pursuit of trade union activity. I emphasise that this happened not in some sort of developing world banana republic, but in one of the Member States of the European Union. In this House as well as in the various committees, we are constantly talking about the fact that with the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, the European Union's commitment to human rights has increased and the defence of rights has become more effective. I ask that the case of Judit Szima be made a test case, a case study, and we should all follow attentively how, by the enforcement of the European human rights legislation, this brave woman might be vindicated and regain the dignity and livelihood she has lost.

Adam Gierek (S&D). – (PL) Mr President, a camouflaged form of human trafficking is flourishing in Poland. This is happening because of the absolute priority of the liberal, anti-humanitarian law of the market. In recent years, numerous flats and entire residential blocks belonging to state-owned companies have been sold together with their tenants as part of privatisation of the assets of the former People's Republic of Poland.

The tenants are most often elderly people, often also ill, who were not given the opportunity of pre-emptive purchase. Under pressure from rocketing rents, they fall into debt and are often evicted. Fundamental human rights are being violated. What is needed are appropriate legal and executive instruments which allow the authorities of EU Member States to act effectively to ensure protection of the tenants of privatised flats which formerly belonged to state-owned companies. Urgent aid from public funds is also necessary to help the victims of anti-humanitarian privatisation.

Dimitar Stoyanov (NI). – (BG) Thank you, Mr President. I am taking the floor so that I can expose an injustice.

Fellow Members, let us not delude ourselves that ordinary Greeks are totally blameless for what has happened in Greece. The reason for what has happened there, and contributed to the financial crisis, is the 14th, 15th and 16th month salary, along with pensions and privileges which do not exist anywhere else in the European Union, and are just completely unknown.

Greece has been lying to the European Central Bank for the last 10 years about the state of its economy. However, now, at this precise juncture, European leaders have voted to give Greece a EUR 110 billion reward for all these lies and this deception. At the same time, countries which have managed their finances in exemplary fashion, like Bulgaria and Estonia, will be punished for this crisis which has occurred, resulting more than likely in the postponement of their entry into the euro area.

This is the application of double standards, which is not worthy of either the euro area or the European Union. It is fair that the guilty are punished and the leaders of the euro area must ask Greece to leave it.

President. That concludes this item.

23. Motor Vehicle Block Exemption Regulation (debate)

President. – The next item is the debate on:

- the oral question to the Commission on the protection of consumer interests in competition rules for the motor vehicle sector in the internal market, by Malcolm Harbour, Andreas Schwab, Evelyne Gebhardt, Cristian Silviu Buşoi, Adam Bielan, Heide Rühle and Kyriacos Triantaphyllides, on behalf of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection (O-0044/201 – B7-0209/2010); and

- the oral question to the Commission on the Motor Vehicle Block Exemption Regulation, by Sharon Bowles, on behalf of the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs (O-0047/2010 – B7-0210/2010).

Theodor Dumitru Stolojan, *deputising for the author.* – Mr President, the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs has put forward this question because it has followed with interest the review procedure of the Motor Vehicle Block Exemption Regulation, and some careful thinking has to be done.

As you know, block exemption regulations are very important instruments to the business community. This Regulation was adopted in 2002. At that time the Commission considered that there was an oligopolistic situation in the European car market, the six largest manufacturers in Europe having together a market share of 75%. Against this background, the Commission considers that the motor vehicle sector should not be brought within the General Vertical Block Exemption Regulation, and therefore adopted a specific regulation.

This Regulation will expire on 31 May 2010. The Commission now considers that the markets for new vehicles sales are highly competitive and that concentration levels have been declining. As a consequence of this assessment, the Commission proposes that a specific block exemption is no longer needed for the sale of new cars and commercial vehicles. It proposes to adopt a special block exemption regulation only for repair and maintenance services, as well as for the spare-parts distribution.

Parliament is concerned about this reform. As you know, the EU is currently facing an exceptional financial and economic crisis, and unemployment rates are high. The European automotive industry is a key sector of the European economy, contributing to employment, innovation and the competitiveness of the whole economy. We believe that it is necessary to establish general conditions to make this sector sustainable and enable it to remain economically efficient and green.

There is also a need to ensure that the small and medium-sized players in this market enjoy favourable conditions. We cannot forget the importance of SMEs as job providers and as suppliers of proximity. However, several motor vehicle dealers and repair businesses have expressed serious concerns about the new regulatory framework, arguing that it will lead to a further deterioration of the power balance between manufacturers and the rest of the automotive value chain.

Therefore, Commissioner Almunia, the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs would like to ask you, firstly: which results of market analysis led the Commission to conclude that the primary market is currently competitive and the after-sales market is still problematic?

Secondly, how does the Commission evaluate the balance of power between car manufacturers and car dealers under the current Motor Vehicle Block Exemption Regulation, and under the proposed legislative framework? Are there players with a simple or collective dominant position?

Thirdly, how does the Commission intend to monitor the evolution of market power in the primary and after-sales markets? Which measure does the Commission envisage, should it appear that the competitive conditions, in particular in the primary market, have significantly worsened?

Fourthly, what is the expected impact of the new legislative framework on consumers, in particular as regards prices and conditions offered?

Fifthly, which comments received from stakeholders, namely during the consultation, does the Commission intend to incorporate in the final legislative framework?

Finally, does the Commission agree to consider proposing harmonising legislation in the area of distribution, for instance by amending the Commercial Agency Directive, in order to ensure that all dealers benefit from the same high level of contractual protection in every EU Member State?

Malcolm Harbour, *author*. – Mr President, on behalf of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection, I am very pleased to be here this evening to present our aspect of the question, and I particularly want to thank our colleagues on the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs, who of course have leadership on competition issues, for working closely with us, because clearly this is an element of competition policy which also has fundamental interests for consumers, and we have been ensuring from our side that some of those consumer elements are very well represented.

First of all, I think that the elements of the Commission's proposal relating to the sales, service and repair market are very much aligned with the consumer interests which we have raised in our committee – not specifically on issues related to DG Competition, but for example particularly in the areas related to information on service and repair where we worked, in this instance, with the Environment Committee on the provisions concerning technical information linked to environmental standards for motor vehicles. I think that those elements, which have been reinforced in the new proposal, are extremely welcome as regards sustaining competition between independent repairers and market access for spare parts with equivalent quality markings: the opening up of that market is very welcome.

I think the one reservation which we would draw to your attention, which is contained in the resolution on which we will vote tomorrow, concerns the issues about the availability of information. We are not convinced – you may wish to convince us, but we are not convinced – that the guidelines you published are necessarily sufficiently strong or enforceable to ensure that this technical information is available, particularly because it will be possible for car manufacturers to make that information available in an electronic format, which, without appropriate software and searching capability, may not be so valuable to the service repairer as we would expect it to be.

Having said that, I now want to turn to the issue of sales, which we just heard eloquently addressed by the Vice-Chair of the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee. I think on sales we are much less convinced that the Commission has really taken on board the concerns of consumers. The Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee held a very important hearing where we heard from both dealers and consumer representatives about their very real concerns that the safeguards which have been put in place to ensure competition in the sales market, which were put there clearly in 2002 – many of them, I have to say, in response to concerns raised by this Parliament – have simply been swept away by what seems to us to be rather excessive zeal on your part to simplify issues and make life rather easier for you, as an administration, to deal with it.

There may be problems with that, but I would suggest to you – and I would like you to look at the evidence which was placed before us in our hearing – that dealers and consumers do have serious concerns about bringing automotive distribution straight away into the general block exemption. There were clear safeguards built in back in 2002 – not that long ago in the cycle of car distribution – to redress the balance of power between independent dealers and manufacturers. I think the dealers would say that this has actually worked rather well over that time. Indeed, if you look at what has happened in the marketplace, they would feel that that was the case.

Perhaps I might also remind you, Commissioner, because I think you were not around at the time, that there was a lot of lobbying by the car manufacturers that these provisions were excessive, but the dealers were in favour of them. What do we have now? We have the dealers saying to us: these provisions are too weak and the manufacturers saying: we like them very much.

I think you need to look at this. I am not saying that we should stop this process – I think it is the right thing to do now, given that we are now only a few days away from implementing these – but what we are saying to you in the resolution tomorrow is: please look at the up-to-date data, look at the information. I would also say that, within the Commission, Commissioner Barnier is about to produce a report about competition in the retail supply chain. The automotive sector should be part of that, and you need to look at that because we need some consistent policy from the Commission.

Secondly, the papers which I have seen from your services say: do you think this is a preparation for the new generation of green cars, electric vehicles, and low-emission vehicles? There is nothing in your analysis whatsoever that has picked up any of that.

We now have Mr Tajani's paper. Can I ask you, within the next year, to look at Mr Tajani's paper, look at Mr Barnier's paper and assure us that this is the right thing to do? I think that if you do that you will restore some credibility here, because I think that we remain unconvinced on that side about what you are planning to do.

Joaquín Almunia, *Vice-President of the Commission*. – Mr President, the current Motor Vehicle Block Exemption Regulation expires on 1 June this year, and we need to adopt a new regulation before that date. The College of Commissioners has placed this issue on the agenda of our meeting of 26 May.

The proposal that is now being discussed within our services and, in a few days, with our cabinets – preparing the collegial discussions – is the result of an in-depth analysis of the sector. The public consultation process started in June 2006. Three and a half years later, in December last year, the Commission published the draft block exemption and guidelines. Throughout this process, stakeholders, the European Parliament and the Member States have all been closely involved, and a lot of arguments have been taken into consideration. A number of debates, workshops and initiatives have also taken place, including here in Parliament. The latest took place on 12 April this year at the ECON Committee. What are the main conclusions of this long consultation process?

First, we learned something positive: that consumers in Europe enjoy vigorous competition in the car sales market. In our annual car price reports we have been reporting on 80 car models from around 25 manufacturers – and prices are not the only factor which tells us that competition is healthy. There is also more choice than there was 10 years ago, with more brands available for each type of car. In these circumstances it would be difficult to suggest that any carmaker would be able to exercise a dominant position, be it individually or collectively.

The current regimes contain sector-specific rules that made sense at that time (in 2002) when a wave of consolidation was expected in the vehicle sector. This consolidation period did not materialise, and instead what we have today is a very competitive market. By allowing more flexibility for the distribution of vehicles, the proposed changes will restore manufacturers' incentives to reduce the cost of selling cars. Allow me to recall that distribution costs make up, on average, 30% of the price of a new car. By reducing those costs, manufacturers will improve their competitive position, with resulting benefits for consumers.

I am perfectly aware that there are some concerns about proposed changes relating to multi-brand sales and contractual protection for dealers, and both of you have mentioned these concerns. Let me stress that multi-branding exists – and will continue to exist – where market reality calls for it. This is the case in countries with very large dealers that have the capacity to distribute several brands – for example in the UK – and it is also the case in sparsely-populated areas, where it makes economic sense for the dealers to sell different brands from the same site.

This was the reality before the current block exemption was adopted in 2002, and it remains the reality eight years later, but then, as now, single branding was the most common distribution model. What we have observed is that carmakers have increasingly resorted to other forms of distribution, including manufacturer-owned outlets.

The evolution of distribution in Germany, for instance, is symptomatic of this trend, with 67% of cars sold through dealer networks, as opposed to 90% before the Regulation came into effect in 2002. Nonetheless, we have responded to concerns expressed during the consultations, including the consultations that took place here in the Parliament, and a number of safeguards have been introduced with regard to multi-brand dealerships.

Let me also underline that we propose a transitional phase, during which the current regulation will be in force until the end of 2013 for the car distribution market, to allow sufficient time for dealers who invested in multi-branding to amortise their investments.

Concerning the reason why we are proposing to do away with clauses granting contractual protection to dealers, it is simply because competition law is not the appropriate instrument to address eventual imbalances between contractual parties. These issues, as was discussed when we were preparing Regulation (EC) No 1/2003, belong to the sphere of commercial law.

In a competitive market such as the car market, competition law should not interfere with the balance of powers between the different contracting parties. To do so would be intrusive. We have to be proportionate when we interfere in how markets work.

In the process of consultation we also learned some other, maybe less positive things: unlike car prices, the cost of the average repair job has actually risen over the past years. Repair and maintenance is very important for consumers: not only for reasons of safety and reliability, but also because repair bills account for 40% of the total cost of owning a car. Unfortunately, the ability of independent garages to compete with authorised repairers is still impaired by a number of restrictions, including limited access to spare parts and to technical

information. Therefore, our reform intends to allow independent garages better access to spare parts and technical information and to prevent them from being shut out of the market by other, newer practices. This will result in better-quality repair services and lower prices.

To conclude, I strongly believe the new framework will be more favourable to consumers. Our main priority is to increase competition in the after-sales market – in repairs and servicing – where it is most lacking. Although vehicle manufacturers may be in a strong commercial position vis-à-vis dealers, they compete fiercely with each other, and today there is no need to deviate, to preserve competition on these kind of agreements, from the Block Exemption Regulation for Vertical Agreements, which was adopted recently by the Commission and will also come into force at the end of this month. Indeed, the Commission, and in particular my services, DG Competition, will monitor the sector very carefully, and there should be no doubt about the Commission's determination to enforce competition rules and take necessary steps if any serious breaches or shortcomings are identified.

Othmar Karas, *on behalf of the PPE Group*. – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, we have now heard a great deal. With this oral question and resolution we wanted to give car dealers and the small and medium-sized enterprises a voice, because the Commission has not paid sufficient attention to this voice in recent years. During the hearing, concerns and anxieties were expressed above all on the part of car dealers on account of unequal treatment in relation to manufacturers. Legal uncertainty was brought up, as was a reduction in competition as a result of problems experienced by small car dealers. However, we have not received a response.

I appeal to you – at one minute to 12 – to utilise the 21 days up to 26 May to incorporate the resolution to be adopted tomorrow by Parliament into your Regulation in order to meet car dealers half way without jeopardising the direction the Commission wishes to take. Please take Parliament and the concerns of the car dealers seriously and incorporate their concerns and those of the small and medium-sized enterprises into the Regulation.

Olle Ludvigsson, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (SV) Mr President, I should like to highlight four issues in this debate. Firstly, there is an unfortunate tendency to put small and large companies in the automobile industry up against each other. To a certain extent they have different interests, but what we primarily need to focus on is creating a system of regulations that enables them to work effectively together.

Secondly, it is a very positive sign that competition on the new-car market has improved over the last year. This is a good example of the fact that no market is impossible and that, in the long term, it is possible to achieve a great deal by means of measures to strengthen competition. Hopefully, we shall in future see an equally positive development on the after-sales market.

Thirdly, it is important for the Commission to very actively follow developments with regard to competition on the new-car market. This should be continually monitored. All interested parties should receive definitive information as early as possible regarding the rules that will apply from June 2013.

Fourthly, we ought to intensify our discussions on how we are going to go about switching to green, more environmentally friendly cars. It is an absolutely essential process. On one hand, competition rules will need to be flexible in relation to the subsidies needed to enable electric cars and other environmentally friendly alternatives to get established on the market and, on the other hand, the rules must ensure that environmentally friendly cars are not placed at a disadvantage in the retail sector or on the after-sales market.

Cristian Silviu Buşoi, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – Mr President, the purchase and maintenance of a car is considered to be one of the most important costs for households. The very aim of competition policy is to ensure consumers' freedom of choice and access to products at lower and more affordable prices.

As a Member of this House, and consequently a representative of EU citizens who are also consumers in the car market, I am deeply concerned about the review of the Motor Vehicle Block Exemption Regulation and its impact on consumers. The Commission – and I listened very carefully and attentively to the arguments from the Commissioner – argues that this sector's specific regulation is no longer needed for the sales market, since there is evidence that the competition objectives have been achieved and a proper level of competition has been reached.

In principle I would not be against the removal of the specific sector block exemption if there were no risk for consumers. We should use the three-year transitional period to assess the impact of the decision to exclude sales from the motor vehicle block exemption regulation. There is an undeniable phenomenon of

predominance of large car manufacturers. I would like to hear the views of the Commission on the ways to ensure that they will not take advantage of their market share, and limit the choice that consumers should have on their market.

I would also like to express my support for the proposal to maintain the specific block exemption for repair and maintenance, which proved to be less competitive than the sales market. My concern regarding the after-market is particularly related to those cases where consumers are unnecessarily tied to a specific operator for repairing their car. This can either be because independent repairers do not have proper access to the necessary technical information or because car manufacturers interpret warranty terms in an abusive way.

This is an unacceptable limitation of the choice consumers ought to have, and I expect the Commission to bring solutions to change this type of situation. I therefore invite the Commission to bring some clarification concerning the measures it intends to take in order to avoid this situation, which is detrimental to consumers.

Konrad Szymański, *on behalf of the ECR Group*. – (PL) Mr President, Mr Almunia, 80% of the components of every new car are manufactured by independent producers. On the other hand, the producers of the cars themselves have an enormous commercial advantage over the producers of components and independent service stations.

We must do everything, today, so that the European motor market does not start to resemble an oligopoly again. Our citizens must be guaranteed the right to choose both car parts and independent service stations. Guarantees of access to technical information are needed. We must take action to counter the abuse of guarantees by producers. Authorised service stations, too, must have the right to buy parts from independent producers, as well as the tools and equipment used in their workshops. Without a clearly defined guarantee in the new regulation, the right of choice for European clients, which is fundamental for the market, will continue to be a fiction.

Bernd Lange (S&D). – (DE) Mr President, in the opinion of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy, it is, of course, also important to protect small and medium-sized enterprises. Competition is not an end in itself.

If we look at the situation of small dealerships and small workshops, we need to increase their economic ability to act, otherwise one day we will only have large dealerships and large workshop chains. This includes, firstly, genuine authorisation for multi-branding. It includes allowing workshops and dealerships to have unrestricted access to information on vehicles and repair options. Thirdly, it includes providing the necessary opportunities for gaining qualifications. We talked earlier about electromobility. They also need to be in a position to maintain electric cars. Fourthly, they need investment security, in other words contractual protection and no more revisions. They need to be able to make safe investments over a long period.

Frank Engel (PPE). – (FR) Mr President, Commissioner, let us talk about the reality of car dealers. Car dealers, in my country as in others, are worried about the glaring discrepancy between their scope for action and that of manufacturers. Regulation (EC) No 1400/2002 reduced this discrepancy. Without it, the car distribution sector, which has already suffered as a result of the crisis, would face growing uncertainty as regards its investments and its commercial objectives.

The demands made on dealers by manufacturers will become quite simply unbearable and unmanageable for a large number of modest garage owners. In any case, Commissioner, it is not competition that is at stake here. Competition would increase between car manufacturers and not between dealers or between dealers and manufacturers. Local garage owners cannot pose a threat to free competition in Europe.

You talk about market domination, potential domination. Let us talk about it, then! This domination does not exist in the case of competing manufacturers. It does not exist in respect of other producers. It exists between car manufacturers and distributors, and that is a reality that has been proven throughout the European Union.

The Commission is adopting a scientific position based on large companies to deal with a huge number of minor players, who want only one thing: a bit of freedom and a bit of security in their dealings with car manufacturers, whose practices with regard to their dealers are becoming frankly appalling in some cases. It is David versus Goliath, except that, this time, the Commission seems to want to ensure that it is definitely Goliath who wins.

The position and the reasoning behind the abolition of the exemption regulation are misguided. They are wrong; they are aimed at the wrong people. Reducing the scope for action, legal certainty and willingness

to invest of garage owners will not further the internal market, and it certainly will not further consumers' interests.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D). – (RO) The automotive industry in the European Union, including both car manufacturers and car part manufacturers, must remain economically efficient and innovative.

Given that road safety is influenced by the competitive conditions in the automotive sector's spare parts market, we urge the Commission to promote efficient competition on the spare parts market so that prices for any type of spare part are affordable. Customers should be able to purchase a vehicle at competitive prices and choose the supplier they want to carry out the repair and maintenance services, no matter which distribution system is chosen by the supplier.

The forthcoming legislative framework should guarantee that SMEs in the automotive sector supply chain are able to enjoy favourable conditions and prevent any growing dependency on major manufacturers. In addition, the new provisions of the regulations concerning the general block exemption regime in the automotive sector should be extended and include the definition of end users in order to take into account leasing as well.

Sari Essayah (PPE). – (FI) Mr President, Commissioner, it is very clear from previous speeches that Parliament is very worried specifically about the balance between car dealers and car manufacturers, which is also inevitably reflected in the services that consumers receive.

This balance needs to be evident in particular in small markets and sparsely populated areas, such as Finland and elsewhere in Scandinavia. For us, permitting the sales and purchases of multibrand dealerships takes priority and is the main prerequisite for guaranteeing that consumers have adequate access to the services of the automobile sector.

The population of Finland is five million, and around 100 000 cars will be sold this year. That probably sounds a ridiculously tiny number, and that is why it is extremely important that these changes do not in any way jeopardise multibranding.

The previous regulation that guaranteed multibranding in the car trade was an excellent one, and so we are bound to ask why it is being amended at this stage. Another major impact will be that dealers' hopes of catering for consumers in sparsely populated areas will possibly be dashed and it will probably make it hard for consumers to acquire vehicles locally. It might also mean that smaller brands will not be represented at all in areas other than large population centres, and, consequently, consumers will have significantly less choice among makes of vehicle.

Othmar Karas (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner, you have now listened to us and you could almost think of it as the difference between theory and practice. I can only repeat the plea that I made to the President of the Commission back in spring 2009.

We have unresolved issues for vehicle dealers, for the small and medium-sized enterprises, a financial and economic crisis and an uncertain growth and employment market. The best thing to do would be to extend the existing regulation rather than creating a new one that will just compound all of these problems. We have the problem of different national regulations if only single branding remains. We are opposed to a non-mandatory code of conduct and in favour of an efficient enforcement mechanism. We want the 30% limit for the purchase of replacement parts to be left as it is, because it allows authorised car dealers greater freedom of choice.

The guidelines are not clear enough to ensure that there is access to technical information as there was before. There are important contractual clauses that you have simply left out, namely those concerning the notice provisions and notice periods, multi-branding, the transfer of businesses and the settlement of disputes. Please stand up for small and medium-sized enterprises, too. Multi-branding is part of competition and helps to protect consumers. We want more competition. Restricting the options of small and medium-sized enterprises and car dealers will reduce competition. Please give serious consideration to the market, the enterprises and Parliament's resolution and use the 21 days that remain available to you.

Paul Rübzig (PPE). – (DE) Mr President, Commissioner, all of the speakers in Parliament have actually now spoken out in favour of an SME-friendly regulation. We need a strong distribution system. Small distributors employ a lot of people. It is important for them that competition within the system remains, just as it is for the dealers – regardless of whether they are large or small. Competition must work. I believe that, in the car sector in particular, consumers also have a right to competition that works, so that they are not faced with

very one-sided systems in which there is no longer freedom of choice. It is precisely this freedom of choice that will be important in the future, particularly for rural areas, and we need to ensure that rural areas are comprehensively provided for. I therefore believe that Mr Karas was absolutely right when he said that we have very little time left and we should therefore use it efficiently.

Seán Kelly (PPE). - Mr President, firstly I just want to say that everybody would agree at this stage that the car is no longer a luxury: it is a necessity. This was brought home very clearly to me two weeks ago when the volcanic ash struck. I had to go across Europe, across England, by car and train and ferry, and I never felt so independent and happy as when I sat in my own car.

So anything you can do to help the consumer to have choice etc. is very important, but not at the expense of the small to medium-sized car dealer. Most of these are family-owned enterprises in local towns and local villages. They are doing a good deal for everybody, trying to satisfy the market and compete, obviously, in very difficult circumstances, so I agree totally with Mr Karas and other speakers that these people have to be taken into consideration to ensure their viability as we go forward.

Jaroslav Paška (EFD). – (SK) Firstly, I would like to say that I understand the efforts to secure freedom of choice for consumers over the selection of the garage they would like to use.

On the other hand, however, I can see the objective limits to absolute freedom in this area. Just as it would not occur to any of you to send a European Airbus to a Tupolev workshop for servicing, so the owner of a given make of vehicle is dependent on the technology and work procedures of the producer of the vehicle when it comes to servicing.

If a vehicle producer provides the customer with a guarantee for the vehicle, he has the right to demand of the customer that servicing is performed in accordance with his specified instructions. If a consumer takes a vehicle for maintenance to a garage where the employees do not have the necessary expertise and skills, there is a risk that they will not do the job well, and even that the vehicle may be damaged. If we want to protect the consumer, therefore, we cannot expect that all garages will be equally capable of providing services for all makes of vehicle. As a consumer I would prefer to see well equipped garages with well-trained staff for a specific make of vehicle. Specialisation and a balanced relationship with the producer are also the best way forward for the customer.

Joaquín Almunia, Vice-President of the Commission. – (ES) Mr President, I first want to thank you for your superb chairmanship of this sitting and also all the Members who have spoken in this debate.

I would like to extend my very sincere thanks to all of you not only for your speeches here today, but for all your extraordinarily interesting and valuable contributions throughout what has, as I said in my speech, been a lengthy consultation process, in all directions, if I may say so. There has not just been consultation with Parliament, its Members and its committees responsible for car-related issues, competition amongst dealers and consumers, but also consultation with the Member States and consultation with all stakeholders and anyone else who has wished to express their opinion.

The aim of any regulation or decision regarding competition is to benefit the consumer. That is the objective, our central concern and principal aim of our regulation.

When consumers are preparing for the important decision of going to a dealer – because, as one of you said, it is a major expense for all consumers and households – they want to find out about prices and quality, to be able to make comparisons, and they can do that. They can probably do it more easily now than at any time in the past. They want to be able to make their choice without hindrance and without any obstacles arising from a lack of competition. We believe that, with the new regulation, this opportunity for choice will be extended; it will not be reduced, rather it will be extended. They can and must be able to choose – as many of you have said – after-sales services, the repair garage for their vehicle and the service garage for their vehicle; they want these garages, whether or not they belong or are linked to the vehicle manufacturer, to have the correct technical information and the spare parts and specifications they need.

The current proposal by the Commission improves all of that. All that is improved. Please look at what it says in the text that you have seen, the draft and the guidelines that accompany it. In all these respects, the future regulation will give consumers more benefits than the current one.

Small and medium-sized enterprises: what has happened there? It is important to listen to people's opinions and we listen to them with a great deal of attention and interest. I mean everybody's opinions, including yours, of course.

What has happened to small dealers in recent years? Have they increased or declined in number? Have they benefited and found it easier to enter the distribution circuit, the distribution market, or have they found themselves adversely affected or come up against obstacles? It has been mostly the latter. That is the truth of it. That was not, of course, the intention of those who drew up and decided on the Regulation in 2002 but that is what experience has taught us in recent years. That is what we wish to rectify.

What has been happening up until now or is still happening with certain garages and certain spare parts manufacturers? They have problems which will disappear under the new regulation and the new guidelines.

We are therefore proposing a regulation and guidelines which will increase the range of choice and opportunities for small enterprises throughout the whole chain, from the manufacture of spare parts to vehicle repair.

The dealers, whom many of you have mentioned and whom I have listened to directly, and not just through the texts of written consultations or of meetings in which I have not taken part; I have spent time with them and I have spent time talking with them, in an extraordinarily constructive meeting. Not all dealers share the same interests. There are large dealers, who have a strong presence in the market in some of the Member States, and there are also many small dealers who are happier with what we are currently proposing than with what has been in place since 2002, because they have seen that certain aspects, not intended by the legislator in 2002, have not been in their interest, but rather have made it difficult for them to withstand competition from the major dealers.

Finally, the deadlines for cancellation. We establish protection; we even create exceptions for each instance when we consider that competition is suffering under the current regulations, both the regulation on vehicles and the General Vertical Block Exemption Regulation, in spite of our intentions as legislators; and we can waive application of the Regulation if we see that it is not protecting competition. We can do so in the General Vertical Block Exemption Regulation and we shall be able to do so with the specific regulation on vehicles.

I therefore share your concerns. The fact is that I believe that they are addressed better under the proposed regulation than they have been until now, not because we are any more intelligent than eight years ago, but simply because we all learn from experience. It is important to listen to people's views, but it is also important to learn from experience.

President. To conclude the debate, I have received one motion for a resolution⁽²⁾ pursuant to Rule 115(5) of the Rules of Procedure.

The debate is closed.

The vote will take place tomorrow.

Written statements (Rule 149)

George Sabin Cutaş (S&D), in writing. – (RO) Buying a car is often the biggest expenditure households in the European Union have, after buying a house. The European Commission is proposing through the Motor Vehicle Block Exemption Regulation to remove the current exemption in the automotive sector and introduce general competition rules.

I believe that, once certain clauses in the current regulation in the sector have been removed, specifically those concerning the freedom to make up to 70% of sales through intermediaries selling several brands of car, the risk arises of increasing the dependency of the manufacturer intermediaries, restricting competition and limiting the options available to consumers on the European car market.

We are in a situation where a large number of intermediaries in the automotive sector, especially the small and medium-sized enterprises in the sector, which are more vulnerable, could disappear from the European market, thereby undermining the whole European automotive market.

Consequently, I call on the Commission to assess the consequences of its proposals, by taking into consideration the structure of the European automotive sector in which small and medium-sized enterprises play a fundamental role, as well as to submit, if this becomes necessary, a new regulation at the end of the three-year extension to the current regulation.

(2) See Minutes.

Bogdan Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz (PPE), *in writing*. – (PL) In contributing to today's debate about the Motor Vehicle Block Exemption Regulation, I would like to recall that in 2009 the European Commission published its communication on the future competition law framework applicable to the motor vehicle sector, in which it specifies the legal strategy concerning the distribution of motor vehicles and after-sales services after the expiry of Regulation (EC) No 1400/2002. Therefore, the problem now arises of an appropriate reaction from competition protection agencies concerning access to technical information, spare parts and authorised service stations, and also concerning the abuse of guarantees. I ask, therefore, whether the Commission is sure the solution it has applied will ensure comprehensive protection of competition in the sector?

Róza Gräfin Von Thun Und Hohenstein (PPE), *in writing*. – (PL) The Motor Vehicles Block Exemption Regulation is an extremely important document for the European Union, because it directly affects over 3.5 million people employed in the automotive sector in Europe in both the primary and secondary markets. This regulation brought in advantageous operating conditions which strengthened competition in the automotive market. It caused the creation of new jobs and enabled effective and stable development of the market, which lies in the interests of consumers, large automotive concerns and independent businesses. Also very significant is the fact that it ensures European consumers extensive access to services and goods in the automotive market. The document is of special significance to independent car service stations, which require access to technical information to be able to compete effectively with authorised service stations, as well as to independent producers of car parts. I was all the more pleased to hear that the European Commission has decided to prolong this regulation. In resolution B7 0245/2010, the European Parliament calls on the Commission to clarify the matters which I raised in a written question to the Commission of 16 April this year, such as access to technical information for independent producers, and to explain precisely the concepts 'parts of comparable quality', 'original parts' and 'technical information'. Those to whom the MVBBER is addressed, in view of their not insignificant role in the economy, need clear and precisely worded legislation.

24. Commission communication on Action against Cancer: European Partnership (debate)

President. The next item is the report by Mr Peterle, on behalf of the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, on the Commission communication on 'Action against Cancer: European Partnership' (COM(2009)0291 - 2009/2103(INI)).

Alojz Peterle, *rapporteur*. – (SL) Mr President, Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen, with this report we are taking a stance on one of the most difficult problems of the European Union. The epidemic spread of cancer is making it the number one disease in the Union and one in three citizens of the Union will encounter it.

I am pleased that, at the beginning of this term of office, it is not necessary to call on the Commission and the Council to take basic steps in order to combat cancer because we have the Council's clear conclusions of June 2008 and an ambitious project, the European Partnership for Action against Cancer, which the Commission presented in September 2009 and which forms the subject of this report. It is important to note that action is already underway. With this report we are supporting one of the most ambitious goals of the Commission, that we reduce the burden of cancer by 15% over a period of ten years.

I am also pleased that the partnership was developed in accordance with our health strategy resolution 'Together for Health: A Strategic Approach for the EU 2008-2013'. In that resolution, we upheld the importance of health for all and of health in all policies and placed major emphasis on cancer prevention.

It is an astonishing and worrying fact that, on average, Member States invest a mere 3% of their health budgets in cancer prevention. While it might appear to be a statistical error, this figure means that the health policies of Member States do not take prevention very seriously. What we really need is a paradigm shift towards more prevention in our strategic, technical, organisational and financial approaches. We know this and also we know, and it has been proven, that early detection of cancer can significantly reduce cancer mortality.

The second key word in the report is inequality, and several types of inequality at that. The most significant type is known as 'the Iron Curtain between the East and the West' in terms of major differences between the survival prospects of cancer patients, but we are also aware of significant differences within Member States themselves. Besides the differences in the success rates of treatments, we also have significant differences in the frequency, or scope, of early cancer detection, differences in palliative care and differences in the effectiveness of rehabilitation of cancer patients.

The Citizens of the European Union find it difficult to accept that there are such differences in the level of organisation of the fight against cancer given that some Member States have national programmes, while others do not. Differences exist in the acquisition of cancer data, too. Although even the Treaty of Lisbon only allows the European Union to take support measures, a coordinated and well-organised approach at this level is extremely important if we are to combat cancer effectively. The exchange of good practice would be unimaginable without encouragement from Community institutions.

The third key word in the report is partnership. We will be able to get closer to the Commission's ambitious goal only if we join forces both vertically and horizontally. The prerequisite for that is ensuring that the fight against cancer remains firmly on the political agenda of European and national institutions. A close relationship between doctor and patient is not enough. It is our task to contribute to a strong political partnership, to a political will, which will provide impetus for a faster momentum throughout the European Union.

On this occasion, I would like to place particular emphasis on the issue of rehabilitation of cancer patients. We ought to pay a great deal more attention to people who have beaten cancer. They must not be stigmatised or written-off, but given the opportunity to reintegrate fully into social life and to continue their professional careers. A key element in the fight against cancer in Europe today is proximity to the citizens.

I would just like to thank the shadow rapporteurs who have helped in the drafting of this report for their considerable assistance.

John Dalli, *Member of the Commission*. – Mr President, I am very pleased to see that Parliament continues to be enthusiastic and supportive of the Commission's work in the field of cancer prevention and control. I am grateful for the efforts that have been made in preparing this report, in particular by the rapporteur, Mr Peterle.

Strong action at European level can have an important knock-on effect at national, regional and local level. This underlines the potential of the European Partnership for Action against Cancer. The success of the Partnership largely depends on the active participation of its numerous and diverse partners. So far, Member States, health professionals, cancer institutions, NGOs, patient organisations and industry representatives have taken part in the preparation of concrete proposals for action to be carried out by the end of 2013. It remains to be seen, however, whether this new means of cooperation will result in more sustainable action to tackle cancer. I sincerely hope that it will.

The broad aim is to achieve more long-term goals and to make better use of available resources. This depends on the commitment of all partners and of course on adequate financial input. Parliament's support for the necessary resources to be secured in the future Community budget for health will be crucial. The report refers to a range of actions for a comprehensive approach towards cancer prevention and control, many of which have already been taken into account in the development of the Partnership, based on the Commission's communication.

The Partnership has five main pillars: health promotion and prevention, including promotion of the European Code against Cancer; screening and early diagnosis aiming at improved implementation of the Council recommendation on cancer screening; exchange of best practices in cancer care; cooperation and coordination in cancer research; and making available comparative information and data on cancer. A key task of the Partnership will be to help Member States improve the development and implementation of their cancer plans.

By the end of the Partnership, the objective is for all Member States to have integrated cancer plans. Some actions will build on the result of the good work done so far. Other actions will require additional help. The Commission stands ready to provide all the necessary support. In addition, the Commission will continue its close collaboration with the International Agency for Research on Cancer as regards its contribution to the Partnership. I should also mention the overarching objective of seeking to ensure better integration of health concerns into all our policy initiatives, which I shall take forward with relevant colleagues within the Commission. Of course we will continue our strong focus on prevention through our policies on health determinants as part of the fight against cancer. We will try to achieve the maximum possible with the limited resources available and I welcome very much the strong support of the European Parliament for these efforts.

Gilles Pargneaux, *on behalf of the S&D Group*. – (FR) Mr President, Mr Dalli, this draft report, which was presented just now by Mr Peterle, restates very firmly the guidelines from the European Commission

communication and is also inspired by the European Parliament resolution of 10 April 2008 on combating cancer in our European Union.

I would like to take this opportunity to endorse the aims of the European partnership envisaged by the European Commission in order to combat cancer more effectively, whether it be in terms of the importance of prevention and early detection, the creation of a new cancer prevention model or, above all, a reduction in the inequalities within the Member States.

I share the concerns and anxieties expressed in the European Commission communication and in the draft report. I should like to commend the work done by the rapporteur, Mr Peterle, in drafting this report, and the compromise proposals tabled for the purposes of including the various amendments.

As shadow rapporteur for the Group of the Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, I wished, among other things, to highlight the following issues: firstly, the increase in annual cancer-related deaths caused by exposure to carcinogens in the workplace, but also the importance of better access to information on medication for cancer patients; the implementation of the REACH Regulation and the regular updating of the list of substances of very high concern, which covers carcinogens; the support for initiatives seeking to prevent imports of goods containing cancer-producing chemicals and to intensify checks to detect such chemicals within the European Union; and, lastly, the drafting of guidelines for a common definition of disability covering persons suffering from chronic diseases or from cancer.

Those are the issues that we wished to raise, while at the same time lending our support to this draft report.

Antonia Parvanova, *on behalf of the ALDE Group*. – Mr President, first of all let me give my congratulations to Mr Peterle for his great work on this report, making sure that the fight against cancer remains a top priority on our public health agenda. There is no need to repeat the figures; we all know what the public-health, social and economic costs for the Union will be if we do not address this issue consistently and make the appropriate resources available, especially in order to overcome the disparities between the Member States.

The burden of cancer is a threat for the sustainability of our public health systems, and the EU should definitely take the lead in responding to it adequately. Whether we speak about prevention, diagnosis, treatment, research or information, of course we speak about partnership, but we will manage to combat effectively the burden of cancer in Europe only if we make sure that all stakeholders – and particularly patients' groups – are involved in the long run, if we ensure an efficient exchange of good practices between Member States and if we guarantee that the functioning of such a partnership will be closely monitored and supported.

I hope that the Commission will play its role and make sure the partnership delivers its objectives. I would like to stress one particular point: the call on the Commission to use the existing ECDC and to add non-communicable diseases to its mandate. I believe this could definitely strengthen the expertise and recommendations.

Finally, the issue of timely and equal access to prevention, diagnosis and care should be closely looked at if we want to ensure that the fight against cancer also contributes to the objective that we should all keep in mind the reduction of health inequalities in Europe.

Commissioner, I look forward to seeing you tomorrow at Patients' Rights Day, because this is extremely important for all patients' groups, and your commitment matters to all of us.

Kartika Tamara Liotard, *on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group*. – (NL) Thank you, Mr President, Commissioner and rapporteur. Cancer is a horrific disease, a disease about which, at its worst, nothing can be done. Fortunately, however, we *can* do something. We are living longer and, unfortunately, the longer we live, the greater the risk that we will develop cancer. The older the population, the more cases of cancer can be expected. That is why all Member States have to do their utmost to pursue an effective and socially-focused health policy. Targeted, preventive action through preventive screening programmes and affordable anti-cancer drugs – that should be the focus of our attention.

Another point about which we *can* do something is the large number of carcinogenic substances in the environment. We have toxins everywhere in our homes: just think of asbestos, kitchen utensils and even toxins in our food. The EU needs to protect its citizens from such toxins, whether or not that is to the detriment of industrial interests. The interests of citizens and the health of citizens is paramount!

Anna Rosbach, *on behalf of the EFD Group*. – (DA) Mr President, cancer is a widespread disease that, thanks to some intensive research, we are starting to know a great deal about. We now know that a person can be

genetically disposed to developing cancer and that at least one enzyme is involved in triggering the disease. Stress, lifestyle, chemicals and viruses can also cause cancer. This year, almost two million European citizens are expected to die of this disease. Thus, cancer does not stop at national borders. I am therefore pleased that the Commission has taken the initiative to draw up an ambitious plan for action against cancer at European level. I have two questions. Where does the Commission stand with regard to research? Can the financial resources that have been allocated ensure effective research and what level of priority is it being given? The Commission points out that the screening volume is low in relation to the Council's recommendation. Therefore my second question is how will the ambitious target be converted into real patients in our countries? Can we realistically double the effectiveness of our screening throughout Europe?

Claudiu Ciprian Tănăsescu (NI). – (RO) I wish to begin by expressing my thanks to Mr Peterle for the effort he has put into this report.

According to the medical data, cancer is the second biggest cause of mortality in Europe, affecting men and women equally. The European Commission's involvement in the partnership created to promote action against cancer offers a new chance of life to those affected by this terrible disease and to their families. It is vital for us to continue to combine all our efforts to establish permanent cooperation in terms of both increasing specialist knowledge and devising solutions to the new challenges arising in such cases.

The European partnership for action against cancer must therefore ensure the proper use of the resources, skills, not to mention funds which are available to all Member States. It must ensure that the results from the progress made in the battle against cancer in the European Union's various countries are made available to the whole of Europe.

Edite Estrela (S&D). – (PT) Mr President, Commissioner, the fight against cancer must be a priority. Almost 30% of cancers can be avoided and their consequences alleviated through early detection and treatment. Some types of cancer affect women and men differently. Every year in the European Union there are more than 275 000 women with breast cancer and it has been shown to be increasing, even among younger women. Every year, 50 000 European women are diagnosed with cervical cancer and 25 000 die from this disease.

Nevertheless, cervical cancer can be practically eliminated by making vaccination and scanning programmes widely available. That is why it is urgent that all Member States extend their vaccination and scanning programmes to all women who are in the right age group to benefit from them. It is also necessary that they promote health-education campaigns, make the public aware of the importance of early diagnosis and inform people about the available programmes and services. I therefore welcome this initiative by the Commission.

Elena Oana Antonescu (PPE). – (RO) I too would like to thank the rapporteur for the fine job he has done. According to the Commission Communication to Parliament, the number of cancer screening tests carried out in the European Union is less than half the minimum annual number of investigations which could have been carried out. I think that we must ensure that cancer screening is accessible to as many people as possible so that achieving the target number becomes feasible.

Research in this field has made progress in terms of reducing the costs for tests and of increasing the accuracy of cancer screening through the use of biomarkers. A recent invention, awarded a prize at the International Exhibition of Inventions of Geneva, makes it possible to screen for certain types of cancer in less than six minutes at a cost of less than one euro. It is a sensor invented by Romanian researcher Raluca-Ioana van Stade, which can screen for types of cancer before the symptoms appear, providing the most accurate method available on the market, thereby facilitating a higher rate of treatment success.

I hope that the Commission, through the Joint Research Centre, shows an interest in this invention and that it will be eligible to be recommended for introduction in diagnostic programmes.

Petru Constantin Luhan (PPE). – (RO) The partnership established by the European Commission last year is a vitally important instrument, given that cancer is the most common cause of death after circulatory disease. Unfortunately, there are large discrepancies between Member States in terms of quality of medical care and access to treatment. Some recent statistics highlighted that men living in the countries of south-eastern Europe are two times more likely to die of cancer than men in the Nordic countries, for instance.

I think that intervention is needed at European level for the benefit of Europe's citizens in order to prevent great differences in terms of diagnostics and treatment in EU Member States. The European Commission must allocate funds for research in this area. Successes like the invention by the Romanian

Raluca-Ioana van Stade, which is a sensor that can determine the presence of cancer in the human body at molecular level, directly from a person's blood, using a simple procedure lasting less than six minutes, must be supported and capitalised on to the full.

Olga Sehnalová (S&D). – (CS) As many previous speakers have already said, an effective fight against cancer must include the full spectrum of measures, from prevention to screening, including diagnostics, special treatments and palliative care. I would like, however, to mention one other very important aspect of this disease: the families of patients who are losing the fight against cancer. The family should be a place of relief, support and encouragement for its members. However, it is enormously difficult to be faced with a progressive disease, and families must not be left alone in this predicament. Therefore, when we talk about the struggle against cancer, we must also think about the conditions for a dignified end. This should take the form both of systematic care and advice for families facing arduous long-term care in the home, as well as a system of accessible specialised facilities providing expert and above all humane care for patients in the final stages of this disease.

Pat the Cope Gallagher (ALDE). - Mr President, it is estimated that 3.2 million European citizens are diagnosed with cancer each year, and, as the European population ages, current trends would indicate that the number of citizens diagnosed each year is likely to double – unfortunately – over the next 20 years.

We must, of course, address the plague of cancer. Cancer is caused by many factors. I want to outline what I believe: that smoking, being overweight, low fruit and vegetable intake, physical inactivity and excessive alcohol consumption are contributory factors. It is essential that health promotion strategies at European level and, indeed, at national level are strengthened and properly resourced. Early detection is vital, and we have seen when we have early detection that it is so important that many people are still alive who would not have been if not for early detection.

Through cancer research, the European Union can play a leading role: importantly, over EUR 750 million has been devoted to cancer research under the seventh Framework Programme, and I would hope that more funding could be made available over the coming years. In conclusion I want to pay tribute to all of those, particularly to those in my own country, who provide such exceptional care to cancer patients.

Angelika Werthmann (NI). – (DE) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, health is a precious thing that it is important to preserve. Cancer is a global problem that continues to persist, despite medical advances. According to estimates by the World Health Organisation, in 2004 13% of all deaths were caused by cancer. In the EU, around 3.2 million people develop cancer each year. The main types of cancer are lung, bowel and breast cancer. Screening, particularly as we get older, also plays an important part in maintaining health. The principle that prevention is better than cure has proven to be true here. The most cost-effective strategy with the best prospects of success is screening.

Seán Kelly (PPE). – (GA) Mr President, without a doubt cancer is a terrible disease, and as they say in my own country, it is killing the country, as both young and old people are dying from the disease every day. The statistic which shows that one in every three people may get cancer would terrify anyone. At the same time, professors, nurses and doctors who deal with this disease have made great progress. In the future, however, it will be important to spend more money, particularly on research.

The European Union has an important role in relation to this: first of all, in providing money for research, and secondly in organising this research, and in particular, in encouraging cooperation between institutes who are carrying out this research. If we do that, we will have made better progress in the future, and fewer people will contract cancer and will die as a result of it.

Krisztina Morvai (NI). – (HU) Please forgive me for the unusually personal note, but while we have been discussing the programme against cancer and many people emphasised what a terrible illness this really is and how many people die of it, I could not help remembering that four years ago I too was suffering from this illness, and at this very time of year I think I managed to set some sort of record, according to the oncology department. From head to foot I had 14 tubes dangling out from me, and spent weeks in intensive care; however, I am now here, I am a Member of the European Parliament, I am raising my three children and I am able to live a full life. I would like to use my story to encourage women, in particular, as well as all European citizens to go for screenings. Based on my experience, I would like to send a message to all those who are suffering from the illness, to their friends and families and their physicians to never to give up hope. I wish them all the best, and my thoughts are with them.

John Dalli, *Member of the Commission – (MT)* Mr President, I am very satisfied with the enthusiasm exhibited in Parliament today towards coming together in this concerted struggle against cancer. I would like to thank Mr Peterle for the report he has drawn up, and I would also like to thank Mrs Morvai, who has just delivered her speech, for having shared with us the aspect of hope, and the positive aspects; all is not lost when one contracts this disease. Many points have been raised; many of the thoughts you expressed in Parliament were given consideration in the Commission's communication, and I assure you that the suggestions you are putting forward today, and those you mentioned in the report, will be given very careful consideration in our programme of activities.

With regard to the environmental aspect, I can state that the environment is a truly important factor – indeed a determining one – in the struggle against cancer. However, one must also state that the high standards we currently enjoy in Europe are of great help in lowering the incidence of this disease. Therefore, we should increase our efforts to ensure that these high environmental standards are maintained. We must also keep stressing the importance of research. Now that the pharmaceutical industry is part of my portfolio and of my responsibilities as Commissioner, there is a much greater opportunity for working with the industry and possibly coordinating research in a better way, thus ensuring its efficacy.

One of the pillars which I would like to build my work upon in the coming five years is the widest possible accessibility to medicines available on the market; one of the biggest problems we have in Europe – it was mentioned here today as well – is the inequality in the health sector. This is something we must especially ensure: accessibility to medicines that come onto the market. I would like to thank you once again. By way of conclusion, may I reiterate that we must all work as hard as possible to convince people of the importance of prevention, for example, of the importance of screening for breast cancer which was repeatedly mentioned today. It is important that, since this facility exists in many, if not all, parts of Europe, we must strongly encourage all women to undergo this procedure.

Alojz Peterle, *rapporteur. - (SL)* I must say that I really enjoyed the debate this evening and I offer you my sincere thanks for your support and thoughtful words. I am pleased that we have been speaking the same language to such a great extent and that we share the same objectives. We share an awareness of the wider context and of the causes of this disease, just as we share an awareness of the need for a united fight against cancer in partnership with each other.

Due to the time constraint, I had no time earlier on to say a few words about a healthy lifestyle. I firmly believe that we politicians could play a major role here in leading by example and we need to promote a healthy lifestyle. As I myself have been diagnosed with a condition similar to that of Mrs Morvai, I would like to congratulate her even more warmly on her victory. I believe that in this way we are showing that cancer does not necessarily have to be synonymous with a death sentence.

I would like to thank Commissioner Dalli, in particular, for his attention and for announcing more rapid action, because cancer has its own dynamic and so we, too, need to act dynamically. I offer my services to the Commissioner for close cooperation in the future, too. I think that our cooperation so far has been exemplary and that together we can achieve a lot more.

I would also like to say that we will shortly be re-establishing the members' group for the fight against cancer which was known under the acronym MAC (*Members Against Cancer*) during the previous term. I think that this time, perhaps with an even stronger group, we will be placing particular emphasis on prevention and on the dynamism of our fight. Thank you and I wish you all a good night.

President. – The debate is closed.

The vote will take place tomorrow.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Cristian Silviu Bușoi (ALDE), *in writing.* – I cannot but welcome the Commission proposal for a partnership on the fight against cancer, which is a serious public health concern in the EU. I fully support the approach of the rapporteur who places a special emphasis on the preventive action. In this perspective I strongly believe that comprehensive national cancer plans are more than welcome. I would also favour the cooperation on this topic in the field of research. We need to clearly identify the main causes generating this disease so that we can also identify the main elements on which we need to focus within our prevention efforts. This is absolutely necessary for an effective preventive action. I also believe that it would be reasonable to build our future action upon existing initiatives such as the European Code against Cancer or the Council

Recommendations on screening for breast, cervical and colon cancer, which are already a good basis for action. Of course, prevention can't be done without a proper level of financial resources. I therefore call on the Member states to allocate the necessary funds to the prevention plans so that the 15% target for the reduction of the number of new cases remains realistic.

Nessa Childers (S&D), *in writing*. – I warmly welcome this initiative and the possibilities it affords to the many millions of Europeans predicted to be affected by cancer in the years to come. One of the most significant targets contained in the report is to dramatically reduce the burden of cancer by achieving 100% coverage in terms of screening for breast, cervical and colorectal cancer by 2015, by providing 125 million examinations to EU citizens per year. The onus must also pass to us as MEPs to use our access to the media and to our constituents to implore Europeans to avail themselves of these crucial checks. There continues to be an alarming lack of knowledge both of the risks of cancer and of the opportunity for cancer screenings, and only through continuous education of these facts will this initiative enjoy the success that it and European citizens badly need.

Elisabetta Gardini (PPE), *in writing*. – (IT) The effort is global. However, despite the continued improvement in knowledge and the progress in terms of treatment, the fight against cancer is still, today, an ongoing challenge. It is a challenge to which we must continue to rise by putting our best resources forward, because the effects of this disease are devastating in terms of mortality but so too are the psychological, social and economic aspects associated with it.

It is clear that the approach must be global not only in terms of research and treatment, but also in terms of prevention. We need to achieve a critical mass, creating the conditions to ensure that the result of one person becomes the legacy of us all. That is why it is important to create a European partnership for action against cancer that will facilitate the exchange of information and coordination among the individual Member States. The work carried out within networks should concern not only research and health, but also education, diet, communication and the environment. It should seek the participation and contribution of civil society, including in an effort to introduce people to healthy habits and healthy lifestyles. The Commission's ambitious target of reducing the burden of neoplastic diseases by 15% between now and 2020 can be considered realistic only if this methodology is applied and bolstered by adequate funding.

Anneli Jäätteenmäki (ALDE), *in writing*. – (FI) The report on the Commission's communication entitled 'Action Against Cancer: European Partnership' is very important and relevant to the times. At present cancer is the second biggest cause of death and illness in Europe. More cooperation and resources for the study of cancer and preventive treatment are very important. Member States need to take carcinogenic chemicals off the market and replace them with harmless ones. Preventive screening is necessary and effective, and adequate sums of money must be set aside for this. Information campaigns should also be focused on educational institutions. The fight against cancer needs clear goals, which the Commission and the Member States need to work towards together. The Commission and the Member States need to have the courage to commit to investment in the future, research into cancer and its prevention, because both money and human life will be saved in the long term.

Siiri Oviir (ALDE), *in writing*. – (ET) Cancer is a very costly disease for society, a disease which is becoming considerably more expensive to diagnose and treat, and which often causes long-term disability, invalidity and premature death. Despite the many achievements of medicine, the spread of cancer in the world today is nevertheless very much on an epidemic scale. Every third European will be diagnosed with cancer in his or her lifetime, and every fourth European will die as a result of this disease. The Member States, and in particular their national strategy for preventing cancer, have an important role in stopping the spread of the disease. Since, in the fight against cancer, it will only be possible to achieve the results laid out in the strategy through long-term and consistent action, I call on all Member States in the present economic crisis not to cut financial resources for the fight against cancer and for the needs of both primary and secondary prevention. Parsimony today may lead to all kinds of expenses tomorrow. Preventative methods play a large role in the fight against cancer, as a third of cancer cases can be avoided with the help of preventative action. Another important matter concerning preventative action, in my opinion, is the raising of awareness in the area of gender-specific forms of cancer; we need to raise standards of prevention as well as to advance screening studies of these diseases. To finish my speech, I would like to welcome the Commission's proposals to relaunch the European partnership initiative for adopting anti-cancer measures in the period 2009-2013, in order to support the anti-cancer action taken by the Member States. Only through collective effort can we achieve success in fighting an enemy like cancer.

25. Mobilising Information and Communication Technologies to facilitate the transition to an energy-efficient, low-carbon economy (debate)

President. – The next item is the report (A7-0120/2010) by Mrs Toia, on behalf of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy, on mobilising information and communication technologies to facilitate the transition to an energy-efficient, low-carbon economy (COM(2009)0111 - 2009/2228(INI)).

Patrizia Toia, rapporteur. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, the report which we are debating this evening and on which we shall vote tomorrow is part of a major effort to implement the 20/20/20 package, which I believe is still one of the most far-sighted and significant things to have come out of the last European parliamentary term. If asked what I would save from the last five years, I would definitely place the 20/20/20 package at the top of the list.

I believe that it is important to add that some very intense work went into this report, on the part of both the European Commission – a communication and a recommendation preceded this report – and the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy and others. They enriched the initial report and our work with many suggestions, additions and amendments.

I believe that there is still a slight difference of opinion within Parliament over one point, and I hope that it can be overcome with tomorrow's vote. It concerns the more or less binding nature that we wish to attribute to the contents of this report, which I would like to make a point of saying was drafted in a context of great understanding and great unanimity.

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) represent an important sector, not least, in fact, because of the weight they carry in the European economy: they account for 7% of the labour force – of the European labour force – and 6% of GDP, thus a significant share of the European economy and of the European productive and labour force too.

They are also very important not only, precisely, for what they represent, but also for the contribution they can make and for the essential, significant role that they can play in terms of trying to achieve this transition from our economy to a situation in which the economy, though still developed, produces fewer emissions and has a lower carbon content and will thus pollute less for our future and for that of the generations to come. In short, they can represent – not in words, but in concrete actions – changes that can lead to a way of producing, living, travelling and consuming in our society, and to that industrial revolution that, for many, will actually characterise the future of social and economic life, not only on our continent but throughout the entire world.

How can ICTs make this major contribution to transforming our economy? Firstly, by changing the sector itself: the report is intended to demonstrate how this sector can, first and foremost, look within itself to see how it can produce communication, microelectronic and other instruments that consume less energy, and are thus inherently more efficient.

Next, they can make an enormous contribution in the major sectors, in the housing and transport sectors. The latter two – I am quoting data from the Commission – are sectors in which greater efficiency, according to the European rules and the targets also laid down by the 20/20/20 package, can lead to a very substantial reduction in these emissions – since, today, the transport sector consumes 26% of the energy in Europe, and 40% is consumed in homes for heating and cooling, depending on the season – and can achieve very high levels of efficiency.

This is without mentioning that the scope, in the case of the major sectors, affects our lives in very significant areas. I am thinking of the entire banking sector, of the relationships within public administration, of the entire e-government sector and of all the services, in short, which, with the application of these technologies, will be able not only to reduce their carbon emissions but also to save time, with a consequent improvement in the quality of life of Europeans and in the quality of social life.

This is, therefore, highly significant. However, I believe that this report will be all the more significant if Parliament approves its binding character tomorrow. I would like to offer just two examples, Mr President, if I may: smart meters and the smart grid, and smart cities. Only yesterday, 700 European mayors concluded a new agreement in this House, before our President and the European Commissioner, aimed precisely at improving the efficiency of cities, which are home to more than 70% of European citizens and which can thus make a major contribution to increasing efficiency and economic and social development.

Silvia-Adriana Țicău (S&D). – (RO) I wish to welcome the conclusions of the European Council meeting held on 25 and 26 March 2010, which clearly stipulate for the first time as a European Union objective a 20% increase in energy efficiency. Energy efficiency can be improved in the buildings sector by using information and communications technologies and efficient metering systems, and in the transport sector by implementing intelligent transport systems at a European level. In fact, ICT-based systems can cut energy consumption in buildings by up to 17% and emissions from the transport sector by up to 27%.

I believe that in order to achieve a 20% cut in energy consumption by 2020, electricity networks should become smart, offering a flexible power flow, while being controlled by and based on the use of ICT. The EU must make boosting the European economy a priority through investments in the development of online services, new technologies and, in particular, through the development of broadband communications in all Member States.

John Dalli, Member of the Commission. – Mr President, the Commission very much welcomes your interest, support and valuable recommendations on mobilising ICT to facilitate the transition to an energy-efficient, low-carbon economy, and has read the Toia report with care.

It is important to recognise the significant role the ICT sector can play as an enabler to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and we need to make sure that this potential is embraced and made a reality.

The Commission intends to make a priority of this issue under the European Digital Agenda which will be adopted soon by the European Commission.

As you mention in the report, ICT can help to significantly improve energy efficiency in other areas, such as buildings and transport in particular. We also concur with you that smart grids and the roll-out of smart meters by Member States are key to realising this potential. The roll-out needs to be driven forward within Member States, so as to deliver more active consumers who can exploit renewable generation and energy-efficient technology.

A common measurement framework for the ICT industry's own emissions is also essential. A rigorous measurement framework, widely agreed and adopted by the industry, is a must to quantify the real benefits of information and communication technologies. This must be taken into account in considering the beneficial impact of ICT used.

Since the adoption of the recommendation on this topic in October 2009, the Commission has undertaken a number of actions with stakeholders to drive the agenda forward. Let me mention a few that address concerns raised in your report.

In February 2010 the ICT for Energy Efficiency Forum was launched. The Forum brings together leading EU, Japanese and US high-tech industry associations. They will set targets on the basis of a common measurement framework for the ICT sector's own energy and carbon footprints, to be developed by the end of 2010.

The Forum is also looking at the contribution the ICT sector can make to improve the efficiency of other sectors, such as building and transport. Major European cities have signed up to the Green Digital Charter. These cities commit to reducing their own ICT carbon footprints by 30% by 2020, and to deploying five large-scale ICT pilots per city by 2015. The total number of cities committed to the Green Digital Charter has increased from 14 to 21.

Energy retail market issues are becoming increasingly important, as markets move closer to consumers, to the introduction of new technology and systems in the form of smart meters and smart grids. Work with the Commission's Smart Grids Task Force is also advancing. The aim is to advise the Commission on policy, a regulatory framework, as well as to coordinate the first steps towards the implementation of smart grids under the provisions of the Third Energy Package. A set of recommendations is expected by the end of 2011.

To conclude, let me emphasise that the Commission is very committed to contributing to achieve the 20-20-20 targets by 2020 as set by the Heads of State and Government, and ICT has an important role to play in this. We thank you for the valuable input provided by your report and look forward to cooperating with you to ensure that we adopt a good policy to achieve these targets.

President. – The debate is closed.

The vote will take place tomorrow.

26. Protection of the Communities' financial interests - Fight against fraud - Annual Report 2008 (debate)

President. The last item is the report (A7-0100/2010) by Mr Cozzolino, on behalf of the Committee on Budgetary Control, on the protection of the Communities' financial interests and the fight against fraud – Annual report 2008 (2009/2167(INI)).

Andrea Cozzolino, rapporteur. – (IT) Mr President, ladies and gentlemen, at a time when the Treaty of Lisbon is giving Europe a more incisive role in the lives of millions of Europeans, the challenge of transparency and legality is crucial. Hence the report that we are presenting is the result of a highly coordinated effort. The work was confined, first and foremost, to the scenario outlined by the Court of Auditors, whereby the financial impact of irregularities fell from more than EUR 1 billion in 2007 to EUR 783 million in 2008.

The fall concerns all spending areas except direct expenditure and pre-accession funds. Areas of major concern still exist in relation to the Structural Funds too. However, absolute amounts and values alone do not tell us where the urgent problems are hidden and where the situation is under control. Our analyses and meetings over recent months have led us to prioritise two requirements. Firstly, the urgent need to make the Member States more responsible for identifying fraud and irregularities, and for sharing the information needed to combat fraud, waste and distortions in expenditure and in the collection of taxes.

Secondly, the importance of presenting proposals and working hypotheses in order to make it easier to implement measures in the Member States, with administrative procedures and management strategies that give priority to the quality of the projects and to their impact on the living and working conditions of European citizens.

In order to achieve these objectives, we propose that Parliament insist on certain priorities: firstly, we propose that OLAF draw up 27 profiles, analysing with due care and attention the strategies followed by each individual Member State in combating fraud and irregularities in the use of European resources, with a precise map of the authorities responsible for performing checks in each individual country and data on the quantity and quality of the checks performed and on their effects.

Secondly, reducing the number of irregularities and significantly improving the regulations. We are embarking on a legislative and regulatory simplification programme, intended in particular for the Structural Funds. Moreover, the fight against corruption, financial crime and breaches of public procurement rules must be stepped up. In this year's report we have made progress on this point with the support of the entire committee. Thanks to an intense, concerted effort, proposals have been drafted on the main problems in this area. From the relationship between the EU and tax havens, to the databases on beneficiaries of European funds, the report makes a practical contribution to increasing the transparency of expenditure and to strengthening the anti-fraud and anti-corruption strategies.

Lastly, with regard to OLAF, it is crucially important to guarantee its full operational independence, the full cooperation of the Member States and an appropriate human resources strategy, which it most definitely needs. We must keep the debate alive and kicking in Europe so as to establish the role of a single European Prosecutor.

To conclude, I believe it is vitally important to fight together for the transparent and efficient management of European resources. In this regard we must ensure that the problems that do exist are not exploited in any way in order to call into question instruments of fundamental importance to the European project, such as cohesion policy and development aid. Rather, we must look clearly at the problems, at the distortions that still exist in the various European spending areas and use these data to take new, determined steps forward, thereby making the management of our finances more efficient and transparent.

I believe that, by making this effort, the various European institutions really will make progress in the construction of a Europe that is stronger, more integrated and able to better satisfy the needs of Europeans.

Elena Băsescu (PPE). – (RO) I think that European funds must be made accessible to citizens in a fair, transparent manner. One feasible method for possibly eradicating corruption in public procurement is to introduce a transparent system in the form of an online tender system.

According to the Commission's report, the declining financial impact of irregularities in 2008 indicates that some of the legislative and institutional measures aimed at discouraging fraud were implemented successfully

by Member States. Greater financial control is still required, along with effective legislation for combating tax fraud, especially relating to VAT.

The protection of the European Union's financial interests is a priority for the Romanian Government as well. As part of this, the Fight Against Fraud Department was set up. It provides the single point of contact in Romania with OLAF for European funds.

Monica Luisa Macovei (PPE). - Mr President, as EPP shadow rapporteur I would like to start by expressing my gratitude to the rapporteur and to the other colleagues from the political groups for their excellent cooperation. We paid particular attention to increasing transparency and better rules for public procurement, as this is the area most vulnerable to fraud and corruption which distort the market and increase the prices paid by consumers.

Moreover, beneficiaries of EU funds from all Member States should be published on one website and based on the same criteria. I also called for the mutual recognition of disqualifications, such as the exclusion of fraudulent offenders from acting as chief executives. OLAF's activities should be supported; we ask for statistics and reasons in cases where national authorities did not file indictments following reports by OLAF, which happens in 73% of the cases initiated by OLAF.

The report also proposes to ban companies which operate through offshore havens from concluding business agreements with companies residing in the Union if their offshore location has unilaterally delayed the adoption of cooperation agreements with the Union.

Let me conclude by saying that the Union must treat fraud and corruption as interlinked and as a matter of priority.

Seán Kelly (PPE). - Mr President, I think it is not an exaggeration to say that the current economic crisis was brought about by a moderate crisis initially, a moderate crisis that saw greed triumph over generosity, corruption triumph over integrity and self-interest triumph over solidarity; and until we get back to generosity, integrity and solidarity being at the heart of corporate and government affairs we will never get out of the trouble we are in at the minute.

I agree totally with every effort made to fight fraud. I have seen programmes in Ireland showing people who were claiming social welfare in the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland and England every week, people flying in to Cork airport and out again having claimed social welfare. The worst of all was the banks – Allied Irish Bank and Irish Nationwide – playing ping-pong with accounting practices to hide their true situation.

This has landed us in terrible trouble in Ireland, and every effort must go to ensure that fraud is stopped. The message has to go out loud and clear that it is going to be pursued and dealt with very strongly at European level and at every level.

John Dalli, Member of the Commission. – Mr President, honourable Members, on behalf of my colleague, Commissioner Šemeta, I would firstly like to thank the rapporteur for his constructive report and the proposals put forward for improving the protection of the Union's financial interests.

The Commission appreciates that Parliament strongly underlines the joint responsibility of the EU institutions and the Member States in this respect. Let me just make a couple of remarks.

Regarding the reporting of irregularities by the Member States, OLAF has established a new web-based reporting system called IMS: Irregularities Management System. This has brought about considerable improvements in the reporting of irregularities by Member States, including those which you criticise in your report. The Structural Funds is an area of particular concern both for the Parliament and the Commission. The Commission has taken strong actions to remedy weaknesses in the most affected areas and programmes in the framework of the action plan for structural actions in 2008, including a vast simplification exercise.

With his fellow commissioners, my colleague Commissioner Šemeta, will pursue efforts aiming at reducing further the error rate in cohesion policy. The Commission will assist and monitor the Member States for the closure of the 2000-2006 programmes and will make sure that the management and control systems under the new programming period will deliver their benefit. Moreover, the Commission will liaise with the Member States' authorities to ensure that they fully assume their responsibility in shared management as reinforced by the new provisions in the Lisbon Treaty.

Considerable progress has been achieved concerning transparency about the beneficiaries of EU funds. In the area of agriculture the Council has agreed that publication of the beneficiaries of funds is the responsibility of the Member States. The information has to be made available on a single website in each Member State, in line with the principle of shared management. To provide an overview and facilitate access to the Member States' websites, the links to these websites are linked on the Europa web page.

I come now to OLAF. I thank the rapporteur for the strong support he explicitly states for the work of OLAF. My colleague Commissioner Šemeta fully agrees that the office should concentrate on its core tasks of conducting investigations, although OLAF also has other important duties to fulfil, in particular in the area of fraud prevention. He also agrees that the focus for OLAF should be on the more important cases and that small-scale fraud should be handled by other bodies.

In 2008 OLAF revised the financial follow-up procedures relating to OLAF cases by establishing de minimis thresholds. Commissioner Šemeta has taken good note of your comments on the need for OLAF to work together with the internal audit services, which he fully shares. OLAF and IAS have been cooperating closely since 2003. They exchange information and provide each other with specific training to improve their respective staff knowledge on issues of mutual interest. OLAF is willing to cooperate still more closely with the IAS.

Regarding procedural rights, the new OLAF manual adopted in December 2009, which has been transmitted to Parliament, already provides comprehensive guidance for OLAF investigators. More detailed rules on procedural rights will be included in the legislative proposal for revision of the OLAF regulation. In this respect the Commission would also recall that the reflection paper on the legislative reform of OLAF will be submitted to Parliament and the Council before the summer break.

Commissioner Šemeta looks forward to presenting this paper to the Committee on Budgetary Control at its meeting in July. Finally, he looks forward very much to working with Parliament as an ally in the task of improving the efficiency of OLAF and the protection of EU taxpayers' money.

President. – The debate is closed.

The vote will take place tomorrow.

Written statements (Rule 149)

Alain Cadec (PPE), in writing. – (FR) The fight against fraud is a crucial challenge that the European Union and the Member States must take up. The importance of the public funds pledged under the heading of cohesion policy demands the utmost vigilance given the potential for misappropriation of those funds. The credibility of the Structural Funds among Europeans is at stake. In this connection, I welcome the efforts made by the European Commission and the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) to combat fraud more effectively. As the rapporteur points out, the financial impact of irregularities on structural actions has decreased significantly. Furthermore, the increase in the number of irregularities reported to the Commission testifies to the progress of the fraud prevention systems. It is important for the Commission and the Member States to continue this fight as rigorously as possible. However, it is also essential not to discourage potential beneficiaries of the Structural Funds with overly harsh restrictions. Intentional fraud is one thing; a lack of precision when organising projects is quite another. While the former must be considered as a criminal activity, it is important to simplify the procedures in order to limit the impact of the latter.

Tamás Deutsch (PPE), in writing. – (HU) The crisis unfolding in some countries of the euro area presents an unprecedented warning to European decision makers to unconditionally protect public funds and the Community's finances. The economy and the international markets react with exceptional sensitivity to any measure taken by the European Union, such as, for instance, the rescue packages adopted in recent days. Entire national economies could be threatened if crisis management is not handled appropriately and on a European level. Therefore I would not be exaggerating when I say that the eyes of the whole world are on our finance ministers and on the European institutions. To this day, the governments of certain Member States, by pursuing their personal interests and functioning like oligarchies, have brought their own economies to the brink of bankruptcy and made any future prospects unattainable for entrepreneurs, families and qualified young people. Because of this we can only welcome the rapporteur's intention to increase the accountability of Member States. Today this is one of the key issues for successful crisis management. Rigorous monitoring, in order to end the era of corrupt governments, is more important than ever in this critical period.

Franz Obermayr (NI), *in writing*. – (DE) The report on the fight against fraud indicates a fundamentally positive development. From 2007 to 2008 there was a reduction in the negative financial effects of irregularities in all sectors. However, this was not the case with regard to pre-accession aid. Here the negative effects have increased by 90.6%. In this regard, I would point out that since 2002 the EU has been providing financial support for Turkey's 'efforts' towards EU accession, with successively higher amounts being paid out each year. For the period 2007 to 2013, Turkey will receive the sum of EUR 4.84 billion. This is the case even though the Commission is aware that Turkey is making nowhere near the required amount of progress in respect of the accession criteria. The money is continuing to flow nevertheless and in ever higher amounts. The most recent special report by the European Court of Auditors states, in addition, that with regard to the accession aid for Turkey in particular the money is being invested without sufficiently explicit objectives and benchmarks. Without a clear strategy, money is being used with no specific plan and in an unconstructive way. We must put an end to this madness.

27. Agenda for next sitting: see Minutes

28. Closure of the sitting

(The sitting was closed at 23.55)